

Artifact Analysis

Recommended for Grades 3 - 12

Great Chicago Stories is based on the collections of the Chicago History Museum. These authentic pieces of history—ranging from mementos, to images of the past in the form of artistic renderings and photographs, to personal belongings, to written documents—provide us with a window into history. These material culture objects are all things made and used by people in the past. The interpretation of these items as evidence of past activities encourages students to construct their own meaning and ideas about the history that surrounds us.

Analyzing primary source materials is an important first step in using them more extensively. The attached analysis worksheets are specific to different kinds of sources including artifacts, photographs, and documents. Download and print the worksheets to use as is or adapt them to best meet your classroom needs. You can use the worksheets as a framework for verbal discussion or distribute them to students to complete written responses individually or as a group. The worksheets are tools that will help guide your students through stages of analysis from concrete observations to higher-order thinking and interpretation about how the source was used and why it is important.

You can use the artifacts found as PDFs at the start of each story at various points in your instruction and in a variety of ways. Download and print the artifact images to:

- Make content predictions before students read the narrative.
- Distribute while reading the narrative aloud and refer to specific artifacts or photographs of places when mentioned in the story.
- Use after reading the narrative. Return to the original predictions and add to and change the list. Ask students to select an artifact and do some kind of written response from a simple caption to a longer descriptive essay. Compare and contrast primary source materials from the time of the story to contemporary life. Ask students to create illustrations of modern counterparts or complete venn diagrams.

State Learning Standards

State Goal 2: Read and understand literature representative of various societies, eras, and ideas. Learning Standard B: Read and interpret a variety of literary works.

State Goal 3: Write to communicate for a variety of purposes. Learning Standard B: Compose well-organized and coherent writing for specific purposes and audiences. C: Communicate ideas in writing to accomplish a variety of purposes.

State Goal 5: Use the language arts to acquire, assess and communicate information. Learning Standard B: Analyze and evaluate information acquired from various sources. C: Apply acquired information, concepts and ideas to communicate in a variety of formats.

State Goal 16: Understand the events, trends, individuals, and movements shaping the history of Illinois, the United States and other nations. Learning Standard A: apply the skills of historical analysis and interpretation.