



Exploring the Second World War Through Objects

Overview

This lesson is an introduction to the Second World War Discovery Box. Students will use historical thinking as they examine objects and determine what artifacts can tell us about Canada and Canadians during the Second World War.

Grade Levels

Grades 7 to 12, Secondary 1 to 5 in Quebec

Estimated Time

1 or 2 class periods

Curriculum Connections

Social studies, language, media arts

Historical Thinking Concepts

- **Evaluating Evidence:** What can we tell about how people lived by examining the clues they left behind? What questions remain?
- **Historical Significance:** How do we decide which and whose stories to tell? What evidence do we use? What evidence do we leave out?
- **Historical Perspectives:** How can we better understand the people of the past? How do different people experience the same events?

Objectives

- Explore and identify the objects contained in the Second World War Discovery Box
- Appreciate how objects can shape our understanding of the past
- Learn about the different ways Canadians participated in the Second World War

Materials Required

- A selection of objects from the Second World War Discovery Box (one object per group of students)
- Corresponding contextual images
- Corresponding artifact labels
- Corresponding artifact backgrounders
- Tools for measuring – ruler, tape measure, etc. (optional)
- Photocopies of worksheets 1 and 2
- Interactive whiteboard (optional)

Handling the Objects

Some of the objects in the Second World War Discovery Box were made or used during the war, more than 75 years ago. Others are reproductions made recently, based on actual items from that time.

You and your students are free to touch and examine all the objects and try on the clothing. Remember, however, that the objects, whether authentic artifacts or reproductions, are valuable and breakable. **Please handle them with care.**

Part A: Introduction

Objects from the past help us understand how people lived.

Start with a discussion about artifacts. As a class, come up with a definition of “artifacts” and talk about the role artifacts play in informing us about the past. Discuss how museums collect and use artifacts to tell stories about the people and events that have shaped Canada.

Not all objects become part of a museum’s collection. Generally, a museum will choose objects that:

- are unique, special or rare;
- represent a person or an event, or reveal information about them;
- are related to the museum’s purpose or the subject it focuses on.

Part B: Artifact Exploration

Divide the class into groups of 2 or 3 students.

Distribute one object from the discovery box to each group. Do not distribute the contextual images, artifact labels or artifact backgrounders yet. The idea is to spark the students’ curiosity.

Hand out a copy of Worksheet 1 – Artifact Inquiry to each group.

Have students record their observations and add any previous knowledge they may have about the object or the time period it came from. (Think)

Next, have them circulate and discuss with their classmates. What new information can they gather? (Pair)

Finally, have students prepare a hypothesis as to what the object is, why it was made and who might have used it. Have them share their findings with the class. (Share)

Part C: Research

Keep students in their original groups with the same objects.

Distribute to each group:

- The corresponding artifact label
- The corresponding contextual image(s)
- The corresponding artifact backgrounder

Hand out a copy of Worksheet 2 – Artifact Analysis to each group.

Have students answer the questions within their groups.

Option: Have students present their findings to the class.

Suggestions for Assessment

Did the students demonstrate good observational skills? Did they make connections between their objects and ideas discussed in class? Did they contribute to group discussions and express their ideas clearly? Did they generate strong inquiry questions?

Extension Activity

- Explore the thematic content developed in conjunction with the Second World War Discovery Box. It can be found on the website or on the USB flash drive included in the Discovery Box. Find examples of people who might have used the objects you've explored.

Worksheets

1. Artifact Inquiry
2. Artifact Analysis

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Artifact Inquiry

Students' names:

Part A: What do you see?

Colour(s) :

Material(s):

Weight:

Dimensions:

Markings:

Other physical characteristics:

Artifact Inquiry - Continued . . .

Part B: What do we know?

What do we know about this object?

What do our friends know about this object?

Part C: What do we think?

What is this object?

Is it a reproduction or an authentic artifact?

What was its purpose?

Who might have used it?

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Artifact Analysis

Students' names:

Object's name:

After examining your object and reviewing the new information you have, answer the questions below.

After examining the additional information, has your thinking about the object changed?

What is it?

Is it a reproduction or an authentic artifact?

What was its purpose?

Who might have used it?

Artifact Analysis - Continued . . .

Can you think of a similar object that is used today for a similar purpose? If not, why not?

What does the object tell us about Canadians during the Second World War?

If you could talk to a person who made or used this object, what questions would you ask?

What new questions do you have about the Second World War?

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