LESSON 5
Unlocking the Secrets of a Time Capsule

ESSENTIAL QUESTION
How can we work together to create an open, supportive, and reflective learning community?

GUIDING QUESTIONS
• What will learning history look like, feel like, and sound like in this class?
• How do historians construct a narrative to understand the past?

LEARNING OBJECTIVE
Students will analyze primary and secondary source materials in order to construct a historical argument about the story of the United States that the materials tell.

OVERVIEW
In previous lessons, students reflected on their names and identities, considered the relationship between individuals and their communities, and engaged in the hard work of creating a classroom contract. Now that they have decided on the norms and expectations that will guide their discussions of the difficult histories that they will encounter this year, your students are ready to delve into the content of the course. This lesson provides a sweeping overview of topics students will study this year and introduces some of the historical thinking skills they will develop. In this lesson, students analyze the contents of a time capsule in order to construct a historical argument about the story these “artifacts” tell. Through this process, students will experience some of the challenges historians face when trying to reconstruct the past—challenges that they will encounter this year as they consider the validity of sources, analyze primary and secondary evidence, and debate controversial issues in their study of US history.

DURATION
50-minute class period

TEACHING STRATEGIES
• Exit Cards

MATERIALS
• Handout: Time Capsule #1
• Handout: The Story of the United States
• Handout: The Time Capsule and Me Exit Card
SEL COMPETENCIES AND PEDAGOGICAL MOVES

1. Develop relationship skills by challenging students with real-world tasks.

While it isn’t every day that historians have the opportunity to analyze the contents of a newly discovered time capsule, it can and does happen. As recently as 2014, a small time capsule dating back to 1901 was discovered inside the sculpture of a golden lion that sits atop the roof of the Old State House in Boston. Some items in the time capsule included newspapers, campaign buttons, photographs, business cards, Civil War-related items, and a piece of music. As your students will do in this lesson, historians analyzed each piece of evidence in order to better understand the story that the individuals who created the time capsule wanted to tell about their city, state, and country. When you give students real-world challenges, it heightens their level of engagement and provides them with valuable opportunities to practice important life skills: cooperation, communication, and navigating differences of opinion.

2. Practice identifying emotions and communicating them to others.

Taking time in each class period for individual journal reflection and exit card responses can help students name their feelings in order to better understand themselves and their reactions, as well as communicate this information to you in a private manner. In this lesson, students consider the ways in which they believe that their identities and personal or family stories are or are not represented in the lesson’s materials and activities. When you provide opportunities for students to share aspects of themselves and ask them how they are feeling, it contributes to their socio-emotional development and shows that you care about their well-being, especially when you follow up in one-on-one conferences and check-ins.

3. Use think-alouds and models to help students understand your expectations.

Every teacher has different expectations for how classroom routines, such as group work, discussions, and note-taking, should work. It can be confusing for students to understand what is required of them in any given class when they have five to seven different teachers, each with their own set of rules and expectations. You can help clarify your expectations by using “think-alouds,” where you model a teaching strategy or handout by doing a piece of it while explaining your process and the decisions you are making. Students gain valuable insight into what you expect of them and can understand the (often invisible) “moves” you are making to accomplish the task at hand. You can also provide models of finished products, such as an essay or project, or something smaller, like a completed handout or graphic organizer, to help students get a sense your expectations and of the learning goals they are striving to reach.
NOTES TO TEACHER

1. Preparing the Time Capsules in Advance

We have provided a collection of primary and secondary sources for this lesson's main activity, in which students analyze the contents of a time capsule to construct a historical argument about the story of the United States. The time capsules require some advance preparation, but you can use the materials in multiple class periods, so you only need to make one class set. Before the lesson, print the time capsule handouts and place each set in a folder or large mailing envelope so each group of four in your class can receive one set of images. Build anticipation for the activity by writing “Time Capsule: Buried in 1975. Open after 2018!” on the outside of each folder or envelope.

2. Customizing Your Time Capsule with Care

You can customize your time capsule by adding or replacing sources to reflect the key historical time periods and events you will teach about this year. If you choose to replace images or to add additional sources, it is important to be thoughtful by keeping in mind that graphic images and texts can traumatize some students, desensitize others, or trivialize the history your students will be studying. We don’t recommend using graphic material at any time in your class, especially early in the year, when you don’t know your students, they don’t know you, and you are still working together to create a classroom community that fosters trust and a sense of belonging. You can find supplemental images and primary source documents at the Library of Congress website and in their collection of primary source sets.

3. Pacing This Lesson

If you teach a block period or have time to extend this lesson over two class periods, teach this lesson’s first Extension activity, which adds two additional time capsules and one more day to the main activity. Using multiple time capsules helps students understand the role that individual historians, as well as the evidence and sources they are using, can play in how they construct the story of a people, time, place, or event. We have provided you with the materials for two additional time capsules, and ideas for how to modify this lesson to include them, in the first Extension activity.
ACTIVITIES

1. Investigate the Contents of a Time Capsule
   • Start the class by arranging students into groups of four. Give each group a time capsule (folder or envelope with the set of time capsule handouts) and instruct them not to open it at this time.
   • Explain to students that their folders contain artifacts from a time capsule that was recently dug up during the renovation of their city or town hall. Aside from the information engraved on the outside of the capsule, “Time Capsule: Buried in 1975. Open after 2018!” nothing is known about its creators or what’s inside. Local officials have asked the historians in this class help them understand the contents of the time capsule and what message the people who buried it intended to convey about life in the United States.
   • Invite students to open their time capsules and examine the artifacts with their groups. Circulate to take note of their observations and discussions.

2. Invite Students to Start a Historical Investigation
   • Next, pass out the handout The Story of the United States and model how you would like groups to analyze the contents of their time capsules. Sit with one group and facilitate a “think-aloud” with them for the first artifact while the rest of the class observes and listens.
   • Then circulate while groups discuss their artifacts and add notes to their handouts.
   • After groups have completed their graphic organizers, have one volunteer from each group share the story of the United States that they think the artifacts tell. Record each group’s idea on the board. Encourage students to comment on the similarities and differences that they observe as more groups share their work.

3. Discuss the Factors that Impact a Historian’s Work
   • Project or pass out the following questions for students to discuss in their small groups while you circulate to listen:
     » What does this activity suggest about how historians tell the story of a place, people, time period, or event in the past?
     » What factors can influence how a historian interprets sources and evidence in order to understand history?
     » What challenges do you think historians face when trying to interpret the story of a person, place, or time period from one or more artifacts?
     » What challenges do you think textbook writers and editors face when deciding what histories, stories, and images to include in their publications? How can their choices impact your understanding of history?
   • Have groups share highlights from their discussions, and then discuss the following question as a whole class: What lessons from the time capsule activity should we remember as we learn about the history of the United States this year?
4. Learn What Students Are Feeling at the End of the Lesson

- Close the lesson by having students respond to the questions on the handout The Time Capsule and Me Exit Card.
- Collect the exit cards at the end of the lesson and use the information to inform your planning and instruction for your first unit.

ASSESSMENTS

- Add your observations from the small-group discussions and exit cards to the information you have been collecting this week about your students’ readiness to engage with the course material, interests, and learning profiles.
- Assign as homework for students to create their own personal time capsules. Have them list or draw five to eight items that could help someone 100 years in the future understand who they are and what they value. Underneath their lists, ask them to reflect on the following question in a short written response: Taken together, what story about you does your time capsule tell? Start the next class period with the Concentric Circles teaching strategy, having students explain one artifact in their time capsule and share the story it tells in each round. As always, students should have a choice about which artifacts they want to share with their peers during their discussions and which ones they might want to keep private.
EXTENSIONS

1. Add Complexity to the Story of the United States  
   *(Note: This activity creates a two-day lesson.)*

   Modify this lesson by using three time capsules in order to help students see how working with different historical sources can lead to different stories about the past. Prepare the three time capsules in advance of class as instructed in the first item in the Notes to Teacher section. Each group of four will need one time capsule, and you will have a multiple groups working on each one.

   **Day 1:** On the first day, teach Activities 1, 2, and 4 as written. Add an additional step to Activity 2 in which each group writes its story on chart paper or uses markers to write them on white paper so they can be read from afar.

   **Day 2:** Before the next class period, hang the images from each time capsule on different walls of your classroom. Then hang the groups’ posters with their stories underneath or alongside the corresponding time capsule. Start the second day of the lesson with a gallery walk so students can examine the contents of each other’s time capsules and the stories of the United States that each group created. Then use the **Jigsaw** strategy to configure the class in new groups. Each group should have students who worked with each of the three time capsules. Then follow the instructions for Activity.

   **Time Capsule #2**  
   **Time Capsule #3**

2. Create a Classroom Time-Capsule Timeline

   Hang the artifacts from this lesson’s time capsule(s) somewhere in your classroom so students can refer to them over the course of the year. You can arrange them chronologically or thematically, depending on how you organize your course. When you reach one of the historical events or time periods, have students revisit the handout **The Story of the United States** to see their original thinking about the artifact and to reflect on their learning. You can also have students repeat this lesson at the end of the year as a way to review the course content, prepare for a final exam, and celebrate their growth and learning.
TEACHER REFLECTION QUESTIONS

After teaching this lesson or at the end of the day, take some time to reflect on the following questions. You can think about your answers as you plan for the next class period and/or record your ideas in writing on your lesson plan or in a teacher journal so you can refer to them this year and when planning next fall.

1. What do you feel went well today?

2. If you could teach this lesson again, what would you change?

3. Use this week’s exit cards and your observations to reflect on the following questions:
   • What do you notice about individual students’ readiness to engage with the course content? How can you use this information to inform your teaching?
   • What did you learn about individual students’ interests this week? How can you tap into their interests to spark engagement?
   • What did you learn about individual students’ learning preferences this week? How will you use this information to plan activities and develop assessments that allow your students to demonstrate their understanding?

4. What are you excited about at the end of the first week of school?

5. What are you nervous about at the end of the first week of school? Where can you go for help?
INSTRUCTIONS

For this activity, students will work in small groups. Before the class period, print enough time capsules so each group has one set. You can help build anticipation and get students excited for the activity by organizing each set of images in a folder or large mailing envelope that you label “Time Capsule: Buried in 1975.”
THE FIRST CONVENTION
EVER CALLED TO DISCUSS THE
Civil and Political Rights of Women,

SENeca Falls, N. Y., July 19, 20, 1848.

WOMAN’S RIGHTS CONVENTION.

A Convention to discuss the social, civil, and religious condition and rights of woman will be held in the Wesleyan Chapel, at Seneca Falls, N. Y., on Wednesday and Thursday, the 19th and 20th of July current; commencing at 10 o’clock A. M. During the first day the meeting will be exclusively for women, who are earnestly invited to attend. The public generally are invited to be present on the second day, when Lucretia Mott, of Philadelphia, and other ladies and gentlemen, will address the Convention.

*This call was published in the Seneca County Courier, July 14, 1848, without any signatures. The movers of this Convention, who drafted the call, the declaration and resolutions were Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, Martha C. Wright, Mary Ann McClintock, and Jane C. Hunt.*
SIOUX INDIANS ON THE GREAT PLAINS OF THE DAKOTA (1905)
CHINESE BASEBALL TEAM, HONOLULU (1910)
ARRIVING AT ELLIS ISLAND (1915–1920)
"THE AMERICANSE WALL" (1916)

THE AMERICANSE WALL, AS CONGRESSMAN BURNETT WOULD BUILD IT.

UNCLE SAM: You're welcome in— if you can climb it!
The Anti-War League

Neutral "War against War" Non Partisan

The Anti-War League

of the

District of Columbia

WILL HOLD

A big Peace Meeting in Bethesda Hall

On Rockville Electric Line

BETHESDA, MD.

Thursday, December 16th, 8:00 P. M.

Rev. Martin L. O'Donoghue and Wm. V. Mahoney

Will deliver brief and intensely interesting speeches against what it termed "Preparedness"

One Congressman has Promised to address us.

A prominent woman suffragist will also speak. Watch the Newspapers for further particulars.

ADMISSION FREE

You are invited to be present and tell your friends that THIS WILL BE THE BIG MEETING OF THE YEAR at Bethesda, Md.

Ladies welcome, free literature on the Peace question can be obtained after the meeting. Questions will be answered by the speakers.

The hysterical demand for Preparedness in the thin veil for covering a gigantic plan to stampede this nation into adopting European Militarism, all for the sake of huge profits to war speculators and munitions manufacturers. Hear both sides, come to this meeting and get the facts.
MIGRANT MOTHER (1936)
SECOND DAY OF WOOLWORTH'S LUNCH COUNTER SIT-IN (1960)
CESAR CHAVEZ PICKETS SAFEWAY (1973)
**DIRECTIONS**

Work together to analyze each time capsule artifact and record notes in the chart below. Then discuss the question on the next page and write your answer in the space provided. Be prepared to share your ideas with the class.

<table>
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<th>Artifact title</th>
<th>What do you think this artifact is about?</th>
<th>What questions does this artifact raise for you?</th>
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DISCUSSION QUESTION

Taken together, what story of United States history do you think the individuals who created this time capsule were trying to tell? What makes you say that?
# The Time Capsule and Me Exit Card

**Name:**

1. Where did you see your story or your family history reflected in the artifacts?  
   If it wasn’t part of the time capsule, what would you add so it’s represented?

2. How are you feeling at the end of this short opening unit?

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