



Additional Program information for *Decoding the Past*

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Best for 4th to 8th grades, can be adapted for up to 12th grade

✓ At METC

X Outreach

✓ Live Virtual

✓ Digital Written Lesson Plan

X Digital Video Lesson Plan

Much of the work that historians do resembles the work of detectives. Historians draw on a variety of primary sources, both documents and artifacts, from the time periods that they study in order to understand the ways in which people lived, the tools they used in their daily lives, the choices they made about their work and their families, and the challenges they faced.

In this program, students will have the opportunity to experience the work of “history detectives” by interacting with the Museum’s collection of historical artifacts from the 18th and 19th centuries. Students will work in teams to examine 19th century documents and artifacts, then try to figure out who would have used them and for what purpose.

STANDARDS & PRACTICES

6.1.5.HistoryUP.5: Compare and contrast historians’ interpretations of important historical ideas, resources and events.

6.1.8.EconNE.4.b: Analyze how technological innovations affected the status and social class of different groups of people and explain the outcomes the resulted.

Gathering & Evaluating Sources; Developing Claims and Using Evidence



PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Students will:

1. Learn how to examine an object to find clues as to its design and purpose.
2. Explore how changes in the tools of everyday life reflect changes in society and its technology.
3. Speculate what future generations will think about the objects we currently use in our daily lives.

SUGGESTED PRE-PROGRAM ACTIVITY

21st Century Artifacts

Have your students make a list of 5 objects that could be found in their backpack or room at home (use the worksheet on the next page). Invite them to think creatively and also to be specific where possible. (ie: "Book" is ok, but a specific book title is better).

After completing the "Decoding the Past" program with your students, and coming to understand how objects are used to learn about people who lived in the past, revisit the lists your students created. Read each list of objects (anonymously) to your class and have your students pretend that they are historians in the year 2220 who have come across this set of objects. With this setup in mind, ask your students to make inferences about the person who owns those objects. Look at all of these inferences together to draw broader conclusions about the society in which these individuals live.

This can also be done in small groups, or even in pairs, with each group examining several (random) sheets and then reporting back to the group to build the bigger picture. See how close these conclusions are to the reality of life in the 21st century.



MUSEUM OF EARLY
TRADES & CRAFTS

SUGGESTED POST-PROGRAM ACTIVITY

Museum of Everyday Citizens

The Museum of Early Trades & Crafts is dedicated to the preservation and presentation of objects that tell the story of the ordinary people who lived in the 18th and 19th centuries. Many years from now, it is possible that a museum will be dedicated to the lives of people like us—students, teachers, employees, family members—who never achieved wealth, fame, or notoriety.

Have your class imagine that they are putting together a time capsule of objects for the *Museum of Everyday Citizens* (to be established in the year 2220). Discuss with your students what specific objects they would choose to represent their lives, incorporating the areas of their families, neighborhoods, school, ethnic groups and/or religions. Discuss why each object is important and what story it would tell. Create a brainstorming list and then have your class illustrate and present objects or images that could be part of this future museum's exhibit. Use the brainstorming notes to create museum labels that will accompany the objects. Invite other classes to visit your museum, or put pictures of it up online, and have your students serve as tour guides to their exhibit.

If you have any questions or require any additional information, please feel free to contact the METC Education Department at 973-377-2982, x12 or education@metc.org



MUSEUM OF EARLY TRADES & CRAFTS

DECODING THE PAST

Preliminary Activity

1. In the left hand column below, list 5 different items that can be found in your room at home and/or in your backpack.

Items	What does this item tell us about its owner?
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

Owner's name: _____

2. Try to draw some conclusions about a person who owns these items. You can do this as a group, or mix up the papers and work individually.