# Integrating Technology into Elementary Social Studies

# Contents

The goal of social studies education is to develop citizens who have powerful inquiry and critical thinking skills and are ready to face and solve society's issues today and in the future. This guide includes resources to help you develop social studies learning environments and instructional tasks that engage students in deep thinking about history and community.



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# How Do You Know and Why is it Important?

*The importance of asking good questions to drive engagement and effective learning cannot be understated.*

Someone once said the best thing you can do with a question is consider it, polish it, and hand it back. Not answering a child's questions is extremely difficult. Many teachers feel that refusing to answer a question is inconsistent with what teaching and learning is all about.

Our ultimate goal as teachers is to create curious problem-solvers and critical thinkers. Answering every question sends the message that they cannot do it for themselves and even discourages creative thinking and exploring new directions for solutions.

Effective inquiry skills are essential for success in our rapidly changing world. Helping students figure out how to ask good questions (and be thoughtful in finding their own answers) prepares them for "their future; not for our past," explains David Thornburg. He suggests changing our focus from a 'What' driven curriculum to one driven by processes – the 'How' and 'Why' questions. When 'How' and 'Why' drive our classrooms, there is no need to explore content first. The 'What' of a subject is explored as we investigate the 'How' and 'Why.'Take Six: Elements of Good Storytelling

Dan Rothstein and Luz Santana have developed a Question Formulation Technique (QFT) designed to engage students in divergent thinking, convergent thinking, and metacognition. They suggest teachers approach a subject with a question that is broad enough to invite inquiry, but not too broad to be confusing. Students work together through a process of brainstorming questions, looking at open and closed questions, improving the questions, prioritizing the questions, identifying next steps, and finally reflecting on "what was learned, how it was learned, and what they now know or feel differently about."

Asking good questions is essential to building student inquiry skills. We have all been steeped in looking for the right answer, and responding to questions with facts, so it's imperative that we learn to step outside that box and explore different approaches. Peter H. Johnston shares, "It is the perception of uncertainty

that enables dialogue... If there is certainty, or only one view, there is nothing to discuss and nothing to learn."

Johnson offers two questions for us to consider:

1. The three main causes for the Civil War were…?
2. From the perspective of the white male living in the 20th Century, the main reasons for the Civil War were…? (p. 51)

Which question strikes you as more interesting? Why? You have no doubt noticed that the "The" in the first question indicates there is a single right answer, for which assessment can easily occur.

There are many interesting aspects to the second question. First, the implication that there might be different perspectives is intriguing. Second, it calls attention to the fact that context makes a difference. Such questions promote the important ideas of inquiry and research through uncertainty.

Nancy Lee Cecil supports this view and promotes its use as early as possible, "the sooner children begin to realize that there are many ways of thinking about an issue, the more likely it is that they will grow up with the freedom to look at a the world in a variety of ways." She continues, "The question is a pivotal - if not the pivotal - component in critical thinking."
In his book, Lost and Found, Jamie McKenzie promotes "wondering and wandering" and highlights the importance of encouraging students "to wrestle with quandaries, dilemmas, and enigmas, whether it be through novels, history, or scientific anomalies." He proposes that the importance of mystery as we approach the core curriculum should be the rule rather than the exception.

If you are looking for a fresh approach, project-based learning (PBL) provides a solid method of encouraging inquiry. Starting with a driving question, PBL sets the stage for students to pursue their interests on a challenging curricular topic that encourages exploration, critical thinking, engagement, drawing conclusions based on evidence, making the learning relevant, and deep understanding on a topic. If you are not yet familiar with PBL, explore ideas found in the **Project-based Learning** section at Creative Educator, and start with a small project.

Even if you agree with the value of encouraging thoughtful questions, changing instruction will be a challenge. My suggestion is that we explore our own "wonderings and wanderings," looking at what interests us, and thinking about how we can answer our own questions. Have fun, keep exploring, and enjoy the journey!

## Bibliography


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## Author


Sara Armstrong, Ph.D., (sgaconsulting.org) brings nearly 40 years of experience as an educator to her speeches, writing, and workshops on topics including project-based learning, asking good questions, information literacy, and digital storytelling.

# Using Digital Primary Sources

*Entice students to question and analyze with natural complexity.*

Educators often struggle to find meaningful and relevant materials that support the curriculum, promote higher order thinking, and engage students. Digital primary sources, because they require both the use of technology and by nature are authentic and complex, are a perfect enticement to encourage students to question and analyze.

By providing unique information in a temporal context, a primary source offers students a glimpse of an event or artifact which can aid in their discovery of the context and truth surrounding it. Work with primary sources provides both a personal and an emotional experience that results in deep, lasting understanding.

Regardless of the grade or content area, a relevant primary source can support and enhance exploration. This type of resource provides a channel for students to cite evidence, and establish historical context, purpose, and meaning - all traits of higher order thinking.

## Getting Started with Primary Sources

Countless digitized original resources are free and readily available from art galleries, libraries, and museums worldwide. These institutions provide teachers and students free access to primary sources which may include maps, manuscripts, newspapers, prints, photographs, film, and audio recordings.

### National Archives - Teacher Resources

Cross curricular lesson plans, analysis worksheets for all types of primary sources, reproducible copies of hundreds of resources from 1754 to the present (categorized by era), and more.
http://www.archives.gov/education

### National Archives Experience - DocsTeach

Tools to create seven different interactive activities that promote historical thinking. -building time.
http://docsteach.org/

### Library of Congress - Digital Collections

Links to resources that may be rare and are found nowhere else in the world.
http://www.loc.gov/library/libarch-digital.html

### Library of Congress - Teacher Resources

Materials and classroom resources for all content areas as well as professional development options.
http://www.loc.gov/teachers

### Smithsonian Institution's - Educators Page

Hundreds of state standards-aligned online resources and materials to promote cultural understanding, teach history, art, science, invention, and innovation.
http://www.si.edu/Educators

### National Gallery of Art - Resources for Educators

More than 500 resources that can be downloaded or borrowed, including brochures, teaching packets, DVDs, online interactive lesson units, and podcasts. Many are cross-curricular.
http://www.nga.gov/education/index.shtm

### National Archives Experience - Digital Vaults

Students can create an historical poster or movie from a database of over 1,200 primary sources to share via email or select and solve Pathway Challenges by discovering the relationship between sources.
http://www.digitalvaults.org/

### Picturing Modern America

Interactive exercises that use documents from the American Memory Collection of the Library of Congress to deepen student understanding of American history from 1880-1920.
http://cct2.edc.org/PMA

### Docs in a Box

Eleven thematic kits that include copyright free and easily downloadable images, documents, and audio recordings to help students in grades 5-12 create their own digital documentaries.
http://www.digitaldocsinabox.org/kits.html

## Frameworks for Inquiry

Using a framework of inquiry to investigate primary sources can spark students' curiosity and be the catalyst to engage them and increase their interest in the content. Barbara Stripling's **Model of Inquiry** includes six phases: Connect, Wonder, Investigate, Construct, Express, and Connect. The **SCIM-C Strategy** by David Hicks, Peter E. Doolittle and E. Thomas Ewing uses the first four phases (Summarizing, Contextualizing, Inferring, and Monitoring) as the scaffold for the final phase (Corroborating).

As students move between phases in this recursive process, they naturally deepen their own understanding and are at the same time empowered to become the masters of their own learning. Using these techniques to investigate primary sources helps students learn to question, reason, and verify their thoughts, enabling them to construct their own, personal interpretation of the historical evidence.

## Students as Historians

Educators can help students to become student sleuths - modern day investigators of history past - by providing opportunities to analyze historical figures or events. This can be nurtured by having students conduct research centered on related primary sources, developing the skills necessary to comprehend and understand these resources from multiple perspectives and determine their historical context and significance.

History is much more likely to have significance and meaning for students if educators encourage their efforts to closely examine historical claims and weigh the supporting or refuting evidence. By analyzing various primary sources and searching for the "truth," students can often discover multiple accounts of the same event. This allows them to consider approaching the experience from the different perspectives of those involved by establishing the context and connections to this and other historical situations. Events cannot be separated from their time and place - the context of any happening is crucial to its understanding.

As 21st century educators, we have access to more tools, materials, and resources than at any other time in our history. Leveraging these resources engages and stimulates our students' minds, helping them reach their maximum intellectual and creative potentials. Their futures, and perhaps even ours, depend upon it. Organizing story prompts around the type of communication expected of authors helps focus students as they develop the content of their stories. Here are four ideas for types of communication that connect storytelling with curriculum.

## Author: Stevie Kline

A former middle school teacher, Stevie (Stephanie) Kline, currently serves as the Technology Integration Mentor/Teacher Trainer for Intermediate Unit 1 in Coal Center, PA. She has presented numerous workshops on using primary sources as well as coordinates Techapalooza, a 21st Century Teaching and Learning Institute.

# Connecting Students to History

*Using primary sources and digital storytelling to connect students to history*

*"The story of our past, our history, is pieced together through things that have survived the passage of time. Letters and journals provide us a look into every day lives of those living the history. By carefully looking into what people left behind in their writing, we can meet those who lived in the past. Their words help us experience the world they lived in." -Gillian Ryan*

As my students and I explored Colonial Times in our history studies, I found they didn't really comprehend what it must have been like to leave family, friends, and community and start over. Although we had discussed the perils of the journey, up until this time students had only read about the journey through secondary sources both in print and online.

I decided to use primary sources to help my class experience the world through the eyes of someone who had lived the history we were studying. To better understand the journey to the New World, my class and I read the journal of German schoolmaster, Gottlieb Middelberger. In this journal, Gottlieb shares his account of the treacherous journey across the Atlantic Ocean to the New World in 1750.

To continue to immerse them in the story, we began the process of digital storytelling. After reading his account, students created a digital version of his journal. I assigned students different passages which they shared through summaries, quotes, and supporting illustrations.


It wasn't until students used Wixie to write and illustrate the risks taken by passengers and crew making the journey and record the author's words to go with each picture that they truly comprehended the significance of the sacrifices that people were willing to make for a chance at a new life in the Americas.".

# Lesson Plans

The following lesson plans provide specific, detailed examples of the ways creative technology tools can be applied in the elementary math curriculum to engage students and improve content knowledge and retention.

Each lesson includes:

- the **task** students will perform,
- ideas to **engage** students in the content,
- a description of what students will **create** with a technology tool,
- ways to **share** student work beyond the classroom walls, and
- tips for **assessing** student work.

# Map It!

*Students create maps to show the geographic features, regions, and economy of a state or region.*


**Apps**: Wixie® or Pixie®

## Task

A cartographer is someone who makes maps and charts to help people get information about a place. In this project, you will become an expert cartographer as you make maps that show geographic features, political features, and economic information for your state.

## Engage

Collect a variety of maps you can share with students. You will want to have examples of political maps, physical maps, and maybe even topographic maps. Have students collect examples of maps they find in newspapers, magazines, and brochures.

As students collect and explore these maps, activate prior knowledge by having the class brainstorm some of the different things they find on the maps. Ask students to identify the compass rose, scale, and legend on the maps. Have the class brainstorm reasons why it is important to have these items on a map. How do they help us read and understand maps?

List the features found on a political, physical, or economic map. As a class, determine why each type of map is important. What information can you find on these different types of maps?

Then, have students sort the sample maps into groups of the same type. As a class, identify key features that make a map political, physical, topographical, or economic.

Let the students know that you will be asking them to apply their knowledge of maps as they show what they know about their state by creating a political, physical, and economic map for it.

Have the class brainstorm things they know about the state or region you are studying. Using chart paper, a

white board, or sticky notes, put the words they brainstorm in a place where all students can see them. As a class, group ideas together into topics such as political, economic, geographic, historic, environmental, and entertainment. This will help them begin to think about the different types of information they can add to a map..

## Create

Have students use tools like Wixie to create a political map. If you are studying only your state, have each student make a political map of their state. If you are studying the entire country, have each student create a political map of a different state. Students can use the Text tool to identify important cities and places and the Paint tools to add more specific details.

Next, have students create a physical map of their state. They can use Wixie's Paint tools to show the geographic regions in their state. They can use Pixie's Map Icon stickers to show prominent geographic features.

If you are learning about economics, you will study industrial and agricultural production in your state. Have students use Pixie's Map Icons stickers to identify where in your state products are produced and services are rendered.

Make sure students print a copy of each of their maps. Have students develop illustrations for each question and answer and record the interview. They can create original illustrations, find photographs, and even capture their image to add to the project using a digital camera or web cam.

## Share

Display the printed maps by type in your classroom so everyone can see them. Have the students identify similarities and differences between the maps. Have students identify new information that they learned from other students' maps.

## Assessment

You can assess for prior factual knowledge as you have the class brainstorm information about your state. As students explore and sort the different map examples you share, you will be able to assess their understanding of the different types of maps and what information they convey. Their ideas on how the compass rose, scale, and legend help us read and understand maps will also help you assess their understanding before they begin creating their maps.

You will be able to specifically assess their factual knowledge about your state through their research. Their political, physical, and economic maps will also allow you to assess both map making skills and factual knowledge about the state.

## Resources

**Atlapedia Physical and Political World Maps**

**Color Landform Atlas of the US**

**Map and Geography Games**

# Historical Journal

*Students will create a historical journal from a fictional character's point of view.*

**Apps**: Wixie® or Frames®

## Task

When we think about the Civil Rights Movement, we often focus on the progress toward equality for African Americans. There have also been movements toward equality before the law for many different groups.

Your local history museum wants to include journals from the Civil Rights era for their history and culture virtual exhibits to interest kids in equal rights before the law. Your task is to create a historical journal from the perspective of an individual who might have been faced with indifference during a movement for civil rights.

## Engage

Historical research comes alive when students explore a range of alternate genres instead of writing a traditional research report. Using journal writing as a learning method requires learners to reflect on new information, and promotes critical self-reflection when evolving worldviews are challenged.

Many students will have already read “The Diary of Anne Frank,” while others may have read or seen the movie, “Diary of a Wimpy Kid.” Explore examples of diaries, journals, and family scrapbooks. Let students know that they will explore one group’s move toward civil rights by creating a fictional historical journal.

Students are probably most familiar with the African American civil rights movement in the United States. This movement was characterized by nonviolent marches, speeches, and campaigns that were often met by a very violent response. As a class, explore important events in the African American journey toward civil rights. Ask students what it might have felt like to be on both sides of this movement.

Ask students to brainstorm other movements for civil rights. For example:

- Gender / Equal Rights Amendment
- Chicano Movement
- LGBT
- American Indian Movement (AIM)

Have students choose a movement to research and explore further. Have them complete a Venn diagram to compare events in these movements with events in the African-American civil rights movement. Encourage critical thinking and allow students to come to their own conclusions about these events.

## Create

As they start to complete research about a movement, ask students to develop a fictional character from which they will write their perspective. Have student's list character traits for this person and create a character analysis focusing on the events in the civil rights movement they are studying. Things to consider for the character include:

- The 5 W's
- The character's actions in response to the outcome an event
- The character's emotional state
- Effects of the character's behavior on other individuals (family, friends, community)
- The character's fears of what might happen if things do not go according to plan

Once the character analysis is complete, students should prepare an exciting script for their historical journal including:

- Three events that take place in the movement
- Vivid descriptions each of these events
- Narration of these events from the perspective of their character
- An interesting hook to introduce the character

Students can take these resources and combine them into a rough draft of the journal entries. Have students share their drafts with a peer for feedback and make appropriate edits.

Have students translate their writing into a visual map or storyboard that includes information on which portion of the journal each page will include. Students should also identify images and sound files they will use to support each entry. Have students add the text for their journal entries to different pages in the project.

Give students an opportunity to find images, music, and sound effects that will support their script and storyboard. They may want to explore the collections at the Library of Congress. They can also add copyright-friendly images from Pics4Learning using the Library in Wixie. Students can also use the drawing tools to create their own illustrations.

## Share

Host a school-wide gathering where students present their journals. You might choose to include them in the library by printing the journals or creating an interactive civil rights research kiosk.

If students are creating videos, play them on the morning announcements. If students have used media that is copyright-free, submit their work to museums of tolerance and civil rights. Share your students' work to help bring awareness of the civil rights movement to others!

## Assessment

The final historical journal is a great summative assessment for student skill communicating in a visual medium. During the process, you can assess their progress using their Venn diagram and character analysis planning sheets. Having students turn in their scripts and storyboards prior to creating the historical journal on the computer will help make sure they are on the right track during the process.

## Resources

Landau, Elaine. **The Civil Rights Movement in America**. ISBN-10: 0531187659

Historical Journals and Diaries

Diary of a Wimpy Kid

# Design a New Dollar Coin

*Students will design a new dollar coin that represents the work of a person who impacted history and write persuasively about why this person should be chosen for this honor.*

**Apps**: Wixie® or Frames®

## Task

In 1979 the United States Mint placed Susan B. Anthony on the silver dollar because of her impact on the civil rights movement as well as for being a leading abolitionist. Susan B. Anthony was the first woman to ever be honored with her own coin. However, many other people have had a positive impact on history.

This year, the US Mint has decided to accept applications for yet another person's portrait on a silver dollar. It is your job to convince the Board of Directors to use your design and to persuade the Directors to choose your selected person.

## Engage

Start by exploring the impact different people had on history. You could focus their work on the contributions of women for March's women's history month. You could also use this project as part of your class's study of famous Americans, famous Virginians (insert your state or country here), Black History month, or even famous writers.

Based on prior knowledge, or after you have given them a list and time to begin research, have each student should choose the person they want to place on the coin.

Explain that students will also need to craft a persuasive argument for their person and design. When writing persuasively, we try to convince others to agree with our facts, share our values, accept our argument and conclusions, and adopt our way of thinking. A persuasive argument should include:

1. Facts that support your argument.
2. Details that make your perspective clear.
3. Examples that support your ideas.
4. Ideas in an order that builds your argument.
5. An appeal to your reader's emotions.

## Create

Once the students have completed their research, have them plan their dollar design. What does a coin usually include? What with they choose to represent their person and accomplishment on the back side of the coin?

Approve each student's design choices and have them use the paint tools, like those in Wixie, to create a unique design for the front and back of the coin to honor the person they chose and to commemorate the work this person has done.

Have students add pages to their Wixie project and use the information from their research to persuade the US Mint Board of Directors, convincing them that both their person and their coin design should be chosen. Each persuasive presentation should include:

1. A title page with the honoree's and the designer's names.
2. Biographical information about the person being honored, including their accomplishments.
3. The design of their dollar coin.
4. A persuasive argument about why the student's design should be chosen.

## Share

Students should present their persuasive presentations to the rest of the class, community members, and outside experts like graphic designers if you can't get someone from a US mint to join you.

## Assessment

The Design Your Own Coin project will be assessed on the creativity of the coin design and the quality of the persuasive presentation. During the process, formative assessment can take place, based on 1) the student's choice of a person to honor, 2) their research on this person, 3) their coin design, 4) their persuasive argument, and 5) their oral presentation.

## Resources

HBO Home Video. *Iron Jawed Angels* (2004). Available from Amazon.com.

Stevens, Doris. (1995) *Jailed for Freedom: American Women Win the Vote.* NewSage Press. ISBN: 0939165252.

**Women Change America Gazette. National Women's History Project**

**African-American Biographies**

**100 Most Influential People of 2006**

**The Presidential $1 Coin Program**

# Persuasive and Presidential Writing

*Students will learn persuasive writing and presentation skills.*

**Apps**: Wixie® or Pixie®

## Task

Mt. Rushmore, sculpted between 1927 and 1941 by Gutzon Borglum with the assistance of over 400 local workers, is one of the most notable American treasures. But the mountain still has a bit more room! In this project, you will research a U.S. President and create a presentation to persuade the National Park Service to add another face to Mt. Rushmore.

## Engage

Discuss the history of Mt. Rushmore with your students. You might want to use online resources such as the Oh, Ranger! web page on the making of Mt. Rushmore.

As a class, discuss the qualities a president should posses to belong on Mt. Rushmore. You can begin with the qualities of the presidents who are already on the monument. Work together to develop a list of these qualities. Discuss which ones students think are most important and rank the qualities in order of importance. This will help students craft a strong argument.

Discuss with the students that they will research a president they feel has these qualities and should be added to Mt. Rushmore. This research will be used to write a persuasive argument for the addition of this president to Mt. Rushmore.

Give students some time to think about the president they think should be added. You may want to assign a bit of research about several lesser-known presidents before having them choose, or ask them to survey family and friends for their opinions.

Have students choose the president they think should be added to Mt. Rushmore. You might have them complete a KWL worksheet to help them identify what they already know about this president, as well as identify topics that they will need to research.

## Create

The goal of persuasive writing is to convince others to agree with our facts, share our values, accept our argument and conclusions, and adopt our way of thinking. Discuss the elements of persuasive writing with your students. Let each student know that when writing his or her argument, he or she should:

1. **Establish facts** to support the argument for his or her president.
2. **Clarify relevant values** for the audience. Why should this president be chosen? How has this president helped society? What are his accomplishments? This should include factual information about accomplishments while in office.
3. **Provide examples** using pictures or other data.
4. **Prioritize, edit, and** sequence the facts and values in importance to build the argument.
5. **Form and state conclusions** to "persuade" the audience that their conclusions are based on agreed-upon facts and shared values.
6. **Provide an emotional appeal** for the argument.
7. **Logically communicate** the argument in the presentation.

Discuss the structure of the essay with your students. Explain that the topic sentence should be a position statement, such as "The New Mt. Rushmore should include President_____ because...". The rest of the first paragraph should state the three main arguments. Each of argument should be clarified in a supporting paragraph. The final paragraph should restate the position and include the most compelling parts of the argument.

Have each student use his or her research to write a persuasive essay about why his or her president should be carved alongside the four existing presidents on Mt. Rushmore. Have students share their rough drafts with another classmate before editing and submitting their finished written arguments.

Once the essay is complete, students are ready to craft a persuasive presentation. To assist students in organizing the project, have them complete storyboards, highlighting the main ideas on each page. For example:

Page 1. Title Page
Page 2. Description
Page 3. Position Statement and Three Main arguments
Page 4. Argument 1
Page 5. Argument 2
Page 6. Argument 3
Page 7. Response to at Least One Counterargument
Page 8. Picture of This President Added to Mt. Rushmore
Page 9. Conclusion

Students can find pictures of Mt. Rushmore and each U.S. President in the Photos folder in the Library.

## Share

Have students share their persuasive presentations with the rest of the class. You might have one student record characteristics and qualities from each presentation so that as a class you can compare the presidents.

## Assessment

As you introduce this project to your students, the students will begin to brainstorm the qualities of a president who should be placed on Mt. Rushmore. You should be able to make an informal assessment on their knowledge about their ideas and realistic possibilities for additional choices for Mt. Rushmore.

During the presentation portion of the lesson, you can evaluate their writing skills, creativity, design and planning skills, and more.

## Resources

Bausum, Ann. *Our Country's Presidents.* ISBN: 0792293304.

St. George, Judith, & Small, David. *So You Want to Be President?* ISBN: 0399251529.

American Presidents

# Virtual Museum

*Students create an online museum, displaying artifacts and their stories to engage others in the heritage of their community.*

**Apps**: Wixie® or Frames®

## Task

The International Council of Museums explains that museums serve our society by sharing the "heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment." As you can imagine, it takes a lot of time and money to create, develop, and support a traditional museum. New digital-age tools make it easy to create a user experience that doesn't exist physically, providing opportunities for community members to learn without having to travel.

Your local community wants you to share the history and influences of how the community was founded and has grown over the years. They don't have money or space to build a physical museum; instead, they hope that technology can help share this heritage using online exhibits. Your task is to build an online museum to share the stories of the people, historical sites, and artifacts that make the history of your community unique.

## Engage

Bring an object from your home that has is both historical and important to your family. For example, grandma's rolling pin, a quilt made by your aunt, or a few baseball cards from your dad's collection. Share a story or two about the object or the time period from which it came.

Talk with your students about your decision whether or not to let them touch the object or objects. Can they touch objects in a museum? Why or why not? It is important to see the object in real life, even if they can't touch it?

To help get your students thinking about how to share stories through artifacts at a digital exhibition, show examples of online museums with your students. Examples might include History Day exhibitions like Out of the Box and Into the Oven and digital extensions of

existing brick-and-mortar structures like the Anne Frank House. How do these sites connect the viewer with artifacts and information?

Rather than providing students with a survey of the history of your community and boring them with facts and dates they may not care about, ask students to share what they already know about local celebrities and important historical events. You can prompt them with pictures of people and places if necessary, but you will likely be surprised at what they already know.

Record the people, events, and information students share in this discussion. Don't organize by timeline; instead, work together to group similar items together. You may want to give students a day or two to add to the list.

You can also task students with asking a parent, older family member, or neighbor about the past of your community. Great exhibitions include human stories, and learning to talk to adults will help them be more confident if they need to conduct interviews for their online museum exhibition.

## Create

Choose a group of student team leaders. Have them choose an item from the list they want to learn more about. Then let other students form groups of 3-5 around the selected topics. If some topics do not generate sufficient interest or you have leftover students, have them choose another topic with the caveat that they must find at least 3 like-minded team members.

Student teams should begin the research process with a brainstorm about how and where to find information. It may be hard to find books on local, so be prepared to encourage them to move beyond the library and Wikipedia to include local experts and community institutions.

Part of this process is learning how to be a historical detective. Giving them a set list of research resources doesn't require them to think about how to find information. Have them share their initial ideas with the other teams in the class. Encourage groups to share ideas for resources.

As teams begin collecting factual information, images, and maybe even interviews, they should begin to determine the story they want to tell. Who are the central characters? What is the conflict or problem?


A great museum isn't just a collection of artifacts. Compelling collections include stories to place the objects in their historical context. As they begin research and developing the story for their exhibition, teams should create a flow chart storyboard that outlines the progression of artifacts and supporting media people will experience in their museum.

As students clarify their flow charts, they should continue to research and collect facts, stories, and media artifacts. They will need to collect media for each part of the exhibition's story. Media artifacts can include:

1. Photographs of artifacts, people, or locations
2. Audio recordings of interviews
3. Musical performances connected to a time, place, or person

At this point, or possibly even earlier, you will want to talk with students about issues of copyright and permissions. Because they are creating an online museum intended to be a real community resource, student work will not fall under the Fair Use Guidelines for Educational Multimedia.

Rather than relying on copyrighted work, have students take original photographs of physical objects they have found during their research. They should request written permission from the subjects of photos and videos as well as from people who have allowed students to take photographs of their property or possessions.

Local history sites may also have archives that include copyright-free media. The Library of Congress is a great resource for primary source documents, all of which include information about the copyright status of the artifact. When in doubt, assume you do not have permission. Remind students to ask sources for permission and to create as much original content as possible.

Teams should write informational text, narration, and captions for each stop in their online museum. As they work to build their collections, they can organize each stop on the flow chart tour with a single artifact or story.

Students can use online tools like Wixie or Google Sites to create their virtual exhibitions. Since so much work has gone into using storytelling to connect the viewer with the past, teams may want to make their exhibitions self-running.

## Share

By definition, the online museum can be shared with the world by distributing its URL. Although these virtual exhibitions exist online, you may want to invite parents and community members to a celebration to showcase the work students have done.

If students use Wixie to develop their virtual museums, have them share the URLs with potential "visitors." Students can use Share to create an online museum complete with images, narration, and videos, or use other tools like Google Sites to create the pages.

You may also want to create a web page or classroom blog post with links to each group's project. You can also use Share to create a home page with links to each student-created exhibition.

If students create virtual museums related to local history, be sure to invite your city council person and members of the historical society. Remember to have a sufficient number of devices on hand so students can act as docents while sharing their online museums.

## Assessment

The virtual museum is a great "writing across the curriculum" performance task, where students engage much more deeply with content as they read and write outside of language arts class. This allows you to evaluate students' content knowledge about a time you are studying in a fun way.

The research process helps them build important literacy skills in Social Studies and Science as they practice finding and evaluating research materials and reading data and primary source materials. Their use of graphic organizers and charts can help you "see" their understanding. Their writing gives them an opportunity to practice sharing scientific and historical information through a combination of informative and narrative writing.

During the process, you will also want to complete formative assessments so you can better determine which supports or additional instruction students need to better comprehend the content they are exploring and the skills they need to complete the project. For example you could do a 3-2-1 style exit ticket after work each day, where individuals share three things they learned, two things they found interesting, and one question they have.

You can also evaluate student groups for teamwork, responsibility, organization, and problem solving during the process.

## Resources

Janet Hoskins. *Biographical Objects: How Things Tell the Stories of Peoples' Lives.* ISBN: 0415920124

Dawn Raffel. *The Secret Life of Objects.* ISBN: 193754303X

**Smithsonian - Stories from Main Street**

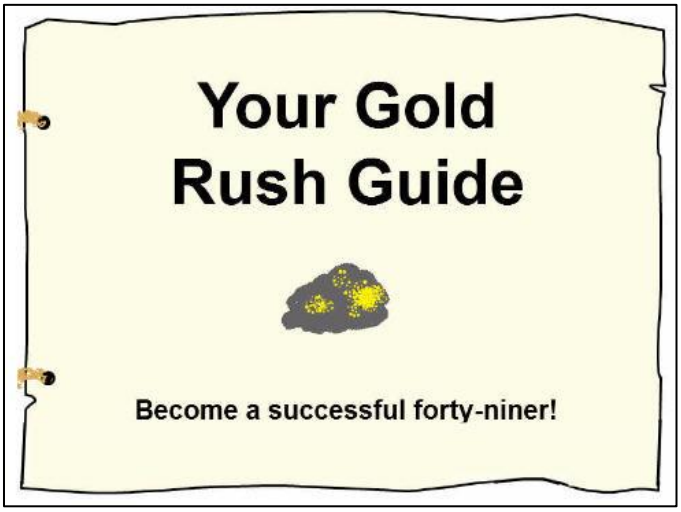
**List of Virtual Museum Sites**

# Additional ideas from real student projects

## Historical Newsletter


Develop newsletters that recall and retell historic events. View sample online.

## Historical How-to Guides




Create a guide to help others survive and succeed during a time in history. View sample online.

## Docudramas

Students can create docudramas to tell the story of an important event or era in history. View sample online.

## Artifact Interviews

Students can interview an artifact or historical site to share perspectives on the past. View sample online.