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A Lens Into the Past

What do photographs tell us about people and events throughout time?

Grades: K-3 | **Grade Band:** 3-5 | **Arts Subject:** Visual Arts, Media Arts | **Other Subject:** History

Summary

In this 3-5 lesson, students will use photographs to gain a deeper understanding of the lives of early 20th century immigrants to the United States. They will learn how the medium of photography can record and recount history to gain a historical perspective. Students will create a class time capsule with objects and photos that represent modern times.

Learning Objectives

Demonstrate an understanding of the immigrant experience, immigrants' reasons for coming to America, and their lives in America.

Analyze photographs as a primary source of historical information.

Discuss photographs from the late 19th to early 20th century.

Gain a historical perspective by comparing and contrasting images of the past and the present.

Identify differences and similarities between immigrant life a century ago and their own lives.

Write an informative text with supporting details.

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Standards Alignment

National Core Arts Standards

- VA:Cr2.3.3a Individually or collaboratively construct representations, diagrams, or maps of places that are part of everyday life.
- VA:Cr2.3.4a Document, describe, and represent regional constructed environments
- VA:Cr2.3.5a Identify, describe, and visually document places and/or objects of personal significance.
- VA:Pr6.1.3a Identify and explain how and where different cultures record and illustrate stories and history of life through art.
- VA:Pr6.1.4a Compare and contrast purposes of art museums, art galleries, and other venues, as well as the types of personal experiences they provide.
- VA:Pr6.1.5a Cite evidence about how an exhibition in a museum or other venue presents ideas and provides information about a specific concept or topic.
- VA:Re.7.2.3a Determine messages communicated by an image.
- VA:Re.7.2.4a Analyze components in visual imagery that convey messages.
- VA:Re.7.2.5a Identify and analyze cultural associations suggested by visual imagery.
- MA:Cr1.1.3 Develop multiple ideas for media artworks using a variety of tools, methods and/or materials.
- MA:Cr1.1.4 Conceive of original artistic goals for media artworks using a variety of creative methods, such as brainstorming and modeling.
- MA:Cr1.1.5 Envision original ideas and innovations for media artworks using personal experiences and/or the work of others.

NATIONALCORE ARTSSTANDARDS
https://www.nationalartsstandards.org/content/national-core-arts-standards

State Standards

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.7 Use information gained from illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur).
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.7 Interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively (e.g., in charts, graphs, diagrams, time lines, animations, or interactive elements on Web pages) and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text in which it appears.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.7 Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.8 Recall information from experiences or gather information from print and digital sources; take brief notes on sources and sort evidence into provided categories.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.8 Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; take notes and categorize information, and provide a list of sources.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.8 Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; summarize or paraphrase information in notes and finished work, and provide a list of sources.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS INITIATIVE

http://www.corestandards.org/

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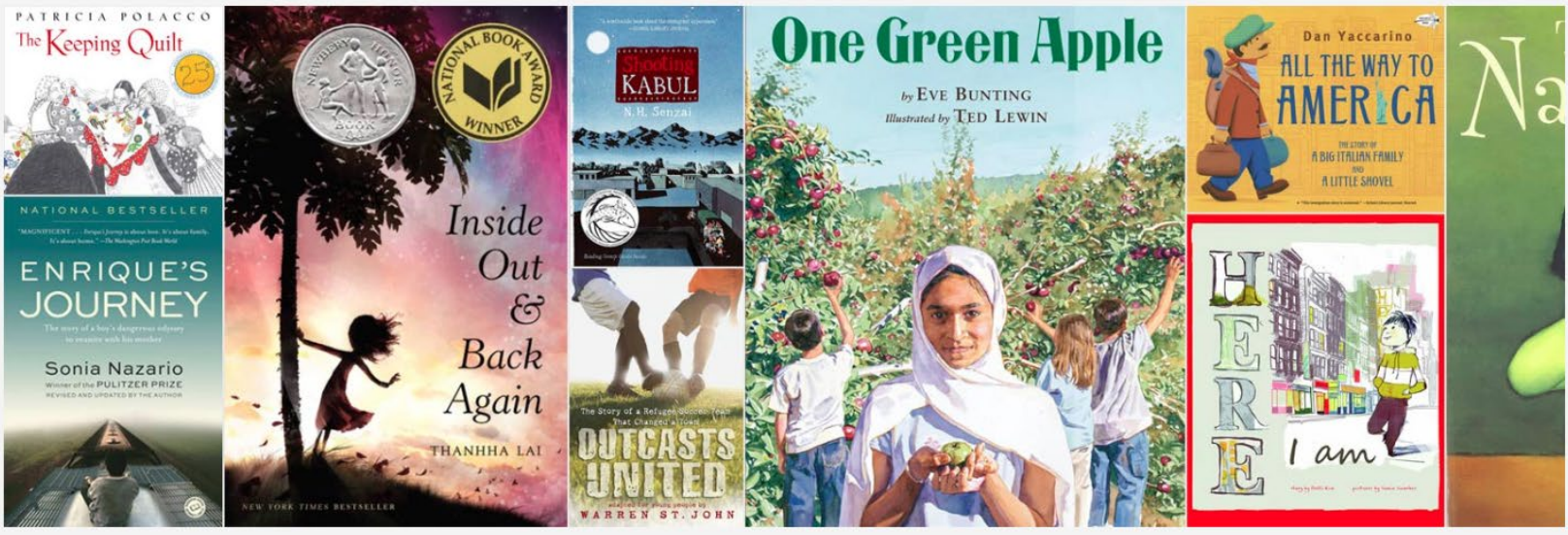
Background & Materials

Recommended Materials

- Slide: A Lens Into the Past
- #metkids Time Machine
- Vocabulary: A Lens into the Past "You, Whoever You Are"
- Time Capsule Parental Consent
- Immigration Stories of Yesterday and Today
- Time Capsule Suggestions
- Time capsule box or container
- Camera device

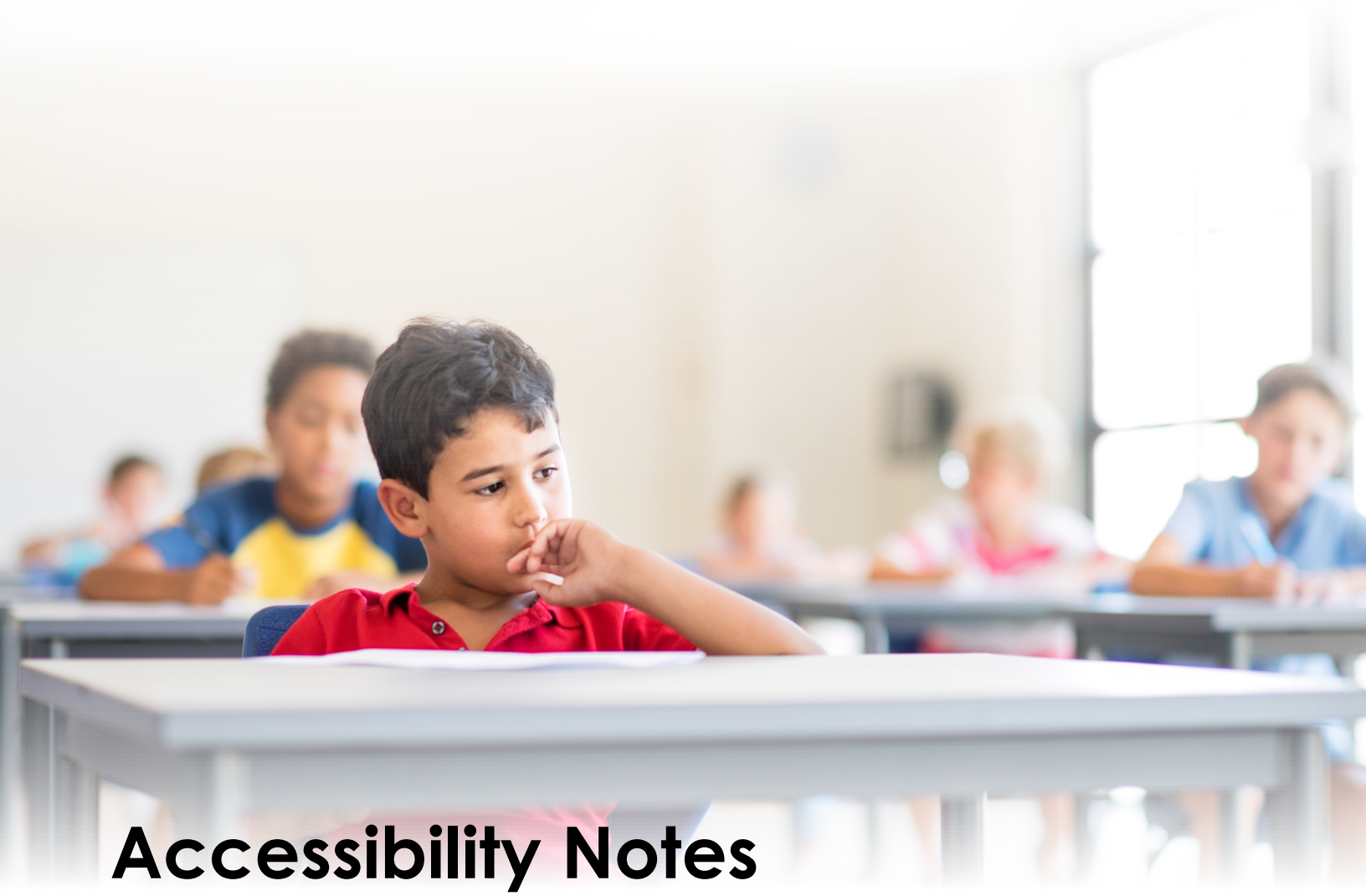
Teacher Background

Teachers should have knowledge about the lives of immigrants at the turn of the 20th century and of tenement life. Review Brightly's Book List for suggestive readings about the experience of immigrants in America.



Student Prerequisites

Students should have a basic understanding about immigration at the turn of the 20th century and know how to use a camera.



Accessibility Notes

Modify handouts, text, and utilize assistive technologies as needed. Provide preferential seating for visual presentations and ensure the community tour has accessible routes. Allow extra time for task completion.

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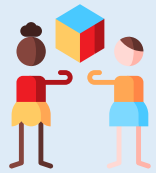
Instruction

Engage



1. Display and discuss a variety of historical photographs on slides 2-5 from the resource, Slide: A Lens Into the Past. Ask students: What do you notice? What similarities and differences do you see compared to today? Discuss changes in clothing, transportation, housing, recreation, facial expressions, and occupations.
2. Have students explore #metkids Time Machine. Encourage students to view different time periods, inventions, and fashion. Have them gather interesting details on the Capture Sheet: A Lens Into the Past. Ask students: How are these photographs a form of historical documentation?
3. Distribute the resource, Vocabulary: A Lens into the Past. Review the vocabulary with students.
4. Share the poem "You, Whoever You Are" by Walt Whitman. Read the poem together or independently, then interpret the poem using the vocabulary resource as support.
   "Indifferent of place"
   (Regardless of your country of origin.)
   "Health to you! Good will to you all, from me and America sent"
   (The poet is wishing immigrants good health on behalf of America.)
   "Each of us is limitless—each of us with his or her right upon the earth"
   (All individuals possess unique talents and should have the right to develop them freely.)
5. Show students slide 5 again from the resource, Slide: A Lens Into the Past. Ask students: What is the overall message of the poem? The message welcomes immigrants to America and reinforces the opportunities that await them. Ask students: How are the photographs connected to the poem? Guide students to make the connection that the photographs are of immigrants to America.
6. Send students home with the Time Capsule Parental Consent form.

Build

1. Have students work in partners to explore Immigration Stories of Yesterday and Today. Allow time for students to explore the "Meet Young Immigrants" section to read and hear stories about real children that have immigrated to the United States. Have a class discussion about the realistic scenarios these immigrants faced based on historical laws and events. Ask students: How do these stories relate to the photographs we viewed from slide 5 from the resource, Slide: A Lens Into the Past?

2. Tell students they are going to create a collage of familiar things in their community. Have students locate objects in magazines or on the web to create a collage. Share the Pics4Learning resource with students that choose to make a digital collage.

3. Prepare for a neighborhood photo walk. Show students Lewis W. Hine's photograph, Playground in tenement alley, Boston, 1909 on slide 6 from the resource, Slide: A Lens Into the Past. Tell students they are going to make a comparable picture. Design a plan and create a list of objects students will need for the photo.

4. Briefly review key themes in the historical photographs previously discussed: clothing, transportation, housing, recreation, facial expressions, and occupations. Explain to students that on the walk, their goal is to identify and/or photograph similar elements in their own community. Plan a route that allows for observation of those elements. Offer students the option to bring their collages on the community walk to compare with the actual objects.

5. Allow time for students to take pictures. Encourage them to take photographs from different angles. For example, students could photograph people posing next to a vehicle, children jump roping, or people having a picnic.

6. Create a collage or album of the photos taken around the community. Have students compare and contrast their neighborhood to the photos from the resource, Slide: A Lens Into the Past.

7. After the walk, look at the photos and discuss what you've learned. Ask students: How are these photos the same? How are they different? How has our use of photographs helped us to understand how life has changed over time? Have students also note aspects of the quality of the past and present photographs, including lighting, angle, color, and subject.

Apply

1. **Engage students in a discussion.** *Ask students: How could we show future generations what life is like today?* As children respond, list their suggestions on the board. Introduce the idea of a time capsule. Define a time capsule as a collection of objects representing aspects of life from a particular time period to be saved for a future age.

2. **As a class, brainstorm a list of objects that could be included in a time capsule.** List students' responses on a chart. Review the Time Capsule Suggestions list with students. Discuss these items and have students decide how they can be represented in the time capsule. Each student will then select one item from the list to bring in. Students should be given a few days to collect and bring in photos or other items. Items can also be photographed in the classroom if they do not want to include the object in the time capsule.

3. **Create a class time capsule by decorating an appropriately sized box or container.**

4. **Compose a class letter to be included in the time capsule.** Address the letter to the finder of the time capsule. The letter should explain the time capsule's contents and how each item played a part in a student's life. Write and edit the letter together, print it out, seal the letter and ceremoniously place it inside the capsule.

5. **Place objects and photos into the time capsule.** Consult with the principal and/or building management to determine a secure location for safekeeping.

Reflect

1. **Use the historical photos and those from the class walk to create a display comparing the old and new images.** As a class, discuss how to organize the images (chronologically, comparative pairs, etc.) and create a bulletin board or digital display.
2. **Assess the students' knowledge with the following writing prompt:** *How do historical photographs inform us about the past? What do historical photos tell us about an immigrant's experience?*

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Credits

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"*Lesson Connection: A Butterfly's Life Cycle Dance*,"

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