

Investigate: Civil War Artifacts (Grade 3-12)

Program Description:

During the *Investigate* program, students will take the role of Museum curators and use close observation and critical thinking to discover the origin, meaning, and importance of real objects from the Museum’s Collection. Students will learn how to handle and study primary sources and will be pushed to consider how singular objects or groups of objects can tell meaningful stories about our place.

What content standards align with this program?

Michigan K-12 Social Studies Standards: H1 The World in Temporal Terms: Historical Habits of Mind, H3 The History of Michigan and the Great Lakes Region, H4 The History of the United States, U5 Civil War and Reconstruction, P1 Reading and Communication, P2 Inquiry Research and Analysis

NGSS Science and Engineering Practices: Constructing Explanations, Engaging in Argument from Evidence

ELA Common Core Standards by Domain: Research to Build and Present Knowledge

Museum Program Strand:

- Empower individuals to use observations and inquiry to understand arguments and design creative solutions.
- Help learners tell, interpret, create, and share compelling stories so no history is ignored or untold.

This program is aligned with the following Museum Learner Outcomes:

Holders of Foundational Knowledge	Masters of Fundamental Literacies	Original Thinkers for an Uncertain World	Generous Collaborators for Tough Problems	Learners For Life	
X	X			X	

What will students know and be able to do after completing this program?

- Learners will be able to analyze primary sources (artifacts and photographs) and make inferences about the story or significance of the sources.
- Students will be able to explain the broad causes and players in the Civil War and describe what life was like for a Civil War soldier.

What questions will students answer?

- What is a primary source?
- What is an artifact?
- How can we ‘read’ a primary source in order to learn from it?
- Who were the players in the Civil War? What was Michigan’s role?
- What was life like for a Civil War soldier?

Key Vocabulary

Artifact
Primary Source

Civil War
The Union vs. Confederate States of America
Observations
Inferences

Materials List and Setup:

Collection of artifacts
Slideshow of photographs from museum's collection (to provide context for the investigation).
Gloves
Artifact Investigation Handouts
Reflection sheet
Whiteboard and expo markers or chart paper and markers

Program Activities: 60 minutes

1. Engage
 - a. Informally assess student prior knowledge of key terms: artifact, primary source.
 - b. Introduce essential question for artifact investigation: What was life like for a Civil War soldier during the Civil War, between 1861-1865?
2. Explore
 - a. Instructor will lead a class discussion of a series of Civil War-era photographs from the GRPM collection to provide context for the following artifact investigation.
 - b. Small groups of students will perform a close and detailed analysis of the artifacts at their table, using an artifact investigation handout.
3. Explain
 - a. Supplementary materials will be distributed to help groups fill in missing details about the artifacts.
 - b. Groups will share out the results to the rest of the group. Instructors will give prompts as needed.
 - i. What did your group think this object was used for? What does this teach us about the Civil War?
 - c. Instructor will record responses on the whiteboard in the form of a web map.
4. Elaborate
 - a. Now, we will focus on the story of the collection as a whole: Discuss the ways the Civil War impacted life for people and connections to Grand Rapids specifically.
 - b. Tell students they just created a class exhibit. What would be a good way to title this exhibit? What's the takeaway message?
 - i. Each table group will discuss and report out their thoughts.
 - c. Instructor will place the artifacts and student-created labels in a glass display case; this display will remain up until the next class participates in the program, thus giving the class an authentic audience for their work.