

# Activity Plan

<i>Title</i>	<b>A Lens Into the Past</b>
<i>Subject</i>	Art: Connecting
<i>Author</i>	ArtsEdge: <b>Rebecca Haden</b> <i>Adaptation</i>
<i>Grade level</i>	3-6
<i>Time duration</i>	120mins
<i>Overview</i>	This lesson will use photographs to create a deeper understanding of the lives of early 20th century immigrants to the United States. Students will gain an understanding of the new life of immigrants in this country, and will learn how the medium of photography can record and recount history. They will also gain historical perspective by comparing and contrasting images of the past and the present
<i>Objective</i>	Students will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Demonstrate an understanding of the immigrant experience, immigrants' reasons for coming to America, and their lives in America.</li><li>• Realize that photographs are a primary source of historical information.</li><li>• Analyze photographs from the late 19th to early 20th century and use them to construct a timeline.</li><li>• Gain a historical perspective by comparing and contrasting images of the past and the present.</li><li>• Better understand the differences and similarities between immigrant life a century ago and their own lives by creating a display composed of their photographs and magazine pictures.</li></ul>
<i>Materials</i>	<b>Materials</b> <b>Resources</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Printable</b></li><li>• <a href="#">You Whoever You Are</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Vocabulary</a></li></ul>

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*Activities and procedures*

- [Parental Consent](#)
- [Suggested Time Capsule Contents](#)
- [Assessment Rubric](#)

**Required Technology**

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- 1 Computer per Classroom
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- Printer

**Technology Notes**

Classes may prefer to create digital displays rather than physical ones; if so, programs such as Corel Digital Studio, PowerPoint, Keynote, Photoshop, PhotoStory, or Picasa can be helpful. Picasa is a free download.

**ENGAGE**

**1. Display and discuss a variety of historical photographs.** Ask students to look at the photos and discuss what they see. Were the photographs taken in the present day? How do you know? What do you see that is specifically different from what we see today? Guide students to focus on these elements:

- Clothing
- Transportation
- Streets
- Housing
- Recreation
- Facial expressions
- Occupations

**2. Record student responses on a chart by topic.** Lead a group discussion about how these photographs are a form of historical documentation. Emphasize that these are primary sources, not someone else's interpretation, and that makes them especially important as evidence.

**3. Read aloud to students the poem "[You, Whoever You Are](#)" by Walt Whitman.** You may choose to pass out the handouts or to write or project the poem so the class can see the words.

**4. Distribute the [Vocabulary](#) handout located within the Resource Carousel and assist students in interpreting the message of the poem.** Ask them to consider the possible meaning of these phrases:

- "Indifferent of place"  
*Regardless of your country of origin*

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- "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*

Elicit from students the observation that the overall message of the poem is to welcome immigrants to America and reinforce the opportunities that await them. Ask students how the poem and the viewed photographs are connected. Guide students to make the connection that the photographs are of immigrants in America.

### **BUILD KNOWLEDGE**

**1. Prepare for a neighborhood photo walk.** Have students take home the [Parental Consent Form](#) located within the Resource Carousel and obtain permission, and if possible, assistance, from their parents. Have students work in cooperative groups and look through old magazines for objects that they might see on their neighborhood walk. The magazine pictures can be put in their journals or glued into a sketch book. These magazine photographs can be brought along on the walk and compared with actual objects.

**2. Briefly review key themes in the historical photographs previously discussed:**

- Clothing
- Transportation
- Streets
- Housing
- Recreation
- Facial expressions
- Occupations

Explain to students that the purpose of the walk will be to identify and/or photograph those same elements in their own community. Plan a route that will allow observation of those elements.

**3. Encourage students to take pictures from different angles with interesting subject matter while on the walk.** For example, students could take a photograph of a vehicle with people walking past it rather than just the vehicle alone.

**4. Take the recently viewed photos on the class walk for comparison.** Have students compare and contrast their neighborhood to the photo. For example, compare Lewis W. Hine's photograph, [Playground in tenement alley, Boston, 1909](#), with a local playground or school yard. Try to take a comparable picture.

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**5. After the walk, look at the photos and discuss what you've learned.** Ask students if they think they captured the elements they were looking for. Students can compare and contrast them with the photos they viewed during the earlier lesson. 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. Sort the historical photos chronologically.** Add them to the class timeline, or make a timeline of them, either digitally or on a bulletin board. Ask students what they've learned about the past from these photos.

**2. When this understanding is demonstrated, ask the children how they think we could show future generations what our life is like today.** As children respond, list their suggestions on the board. If students don't do so, 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. Plan to use photos of objects, as well as ephemera of the kinds listed on the [Suggested Time Capsule Contents](#) handout located within the Resource Carousel.

**3. As a class, brainstorm a list of photos that could be included in a time capsule.** List students' responses on a chart. For further inspiration, refer to the Suggested Time Capsule Contents handout. Discuss these items and have the children 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 that is the most practical option.

**4. Create the time capsule as a class by decorating an appropriately sized box or container.**

**5. Place objects and photos into the time capsule and compose a letter to be included.** 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. In determining a secure location for its safe keeping, request input from the principal and/or custodian.

#### *Conclusions*

#### **REFLECT**

**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? in comparative pairs?*) and create either a bulletin board or a digital display.

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*Adaptations*  
*Links and Websites*

**ASSESS**

Assess the student's work using the [Assessment Rubric](#) available within the Resource Carousel.

**Teacher Background**

Knowledge about the lives of immigrants at the turn of the 20th century, and of tenement life:

Tenement [Life](#)

New [York](#) City Tenement Life

Ellis Island Immigrant [Experience](#)

**Prior Student Knowledge**

Ability to use a camera

Understanding of chronological order and dates

Basic information about immigration at the turn of the 20th century