Becoming Modern: America from 1880-1910
School Resource Kit

Central Michigan University
Museum of Cultural and Natural History
The Care of School Resource Kits

Each School Resource Kit is comprised of authentic artifacts and modern reproductions.

Handling these particular objects is encouraged. Touching the objects and passing them around is allowed, but please remember that some items are delicate and should be treated with care.

Objects in plastic should remain in plastic though they may still be passed around for closer inspection.

Why do we ask you not to touch certain objects? The oils, dirt and moisture from your fingertips can stain textiles and etch metals, permanently changing them. One touch may not seem like much, but hundreds of touches in a year can wear a hole in a cotton dress or a notch in a wooden axe handle.

There are some items in certain kits that may be considered weapons in your school; be aware of your school’s policy regarding weapons and take appropriate action (i.e. inform the principal).

These items have been specially chosen for “hands on” learning and educational programs. In any museum, items on display and in the collection should never be touched unless a museum staff member has invited you to do so.

If an item is damaged, please gather all the pieces into a plastic bag and return it with the kit. When you return the kit, please let a staff member know that there is a damaged object.

If you find an item is missing or already damaged, please inform the museum’s student staff when you return the kit.

There are numerous benefits to the school resource kits. The “hands-on” aspect is one. Look closely at the materials used to make these historic objects. Look at their colors and decorations. Feel how light or heavy they are. Look at how they were manufactured. Consider who would have used these objects. Then, compare these historical artifacts to objects we use today. How are these items made today? Do we even use these objects today? What is different? What has remained the same?
Michigan Grade Level Content Expectations

History

Living and Working Together
Use historical thinking to understand the past.
K – H2.0.4 Describe ways people learn about the past (e.g., photos, artifacts, diaries, stories, videos).

Living and Working Together in Families and Schools
1 – H2.0.1 Demonstrate chronological thinking by distinguishing among past, present, and future using family or school events.
1 – H2.0.6 Compare life today with life in the past using the criteria of family, school, jobs, or communication.

Living and Working Together in Communities
2 – H2.0.4 Describe changes in the local community over time (e.g., types of businesses, architecture and landscape, jobs, transportation, population).
2 – H2.0.6 Construct a historical narrative about the history of the local community from a variety of sources (e.g., data gathered from local residents, artifacts, photographs).

History of Michigan (Through Statehood)
3 – H3.0.1 Identify questions historians ask in examining the past in Michigan (e.g., What happened? When did it happen? Who was involved? How and why did it happen?)

History of Michigan (Beyond Statehood)
4 – H3.0.4 Draw upon stories, photos, artifacts, and other primary sources to compare the life of people in towns and cities in Michigan and in the Great Lakes region during a variety of time periods from 1837 to the present (e.g., 1837-1900, 1900-1950, 1950-2000).

Geography

Human Systems
Understand how human activities help shape the Earth’s surface.
1 – G4.0.1 Use components of culture (e.g., foods, language, religion, traditions) to describe diversity in family life.

Environment and Society
Understand the effects of human-environment interactions.
1 – G5.0.1 Describe ways in which people modify (e.g., cutting down trees, building roads) and adapt to the environment (e.g., clothing, housing, transportation).

Economics

Market Economy
Use fundamental principles and concepts of economics to understand economic activity in a market economy.
1 – E1.0.1 Distinguish between producers and consumers of goods and services.
1 – E1.0.2 Describe ways in which families consume goods and services.
2 – E1.0.3 Describe how businesses in the local community meet economic wants of consumers.
2 – E1.0.5 Use examples to show that people cannot produce everything they want (specialization) and depend on trade with others to meet their wants.
Introduction

In the time period between 1880 and 1910, new inventions and discoveries revolutionized the way that people interacted with the world. Inventions like Thomas Edison’s light bulb and the Wright Brothers’ plane changed peoples’ concept of the world. These inventions signified the change from one way of life, that of hand or manpower, to one of machine or industrial power. Some of the simplest aspects of life were affected.

This kit is intended to familiarize students with some of the artifacts that were typical of most households during the late 1800s and early 1900s. As your class studies these artifacts from the turn of the century, we suggest that you point out both similarities with modern examples (i.e. the light bulb) with the changes that these inventions have gone through (compact florescent bulbs).

Included in this kit are: artifacts, images and descriptions, lesson plan supplements, relevant State of Michigan Grade Level Content Expectations and an evaluation form to be returned completed with the kit.
Artifacts

Slate Board (H69.397): A slate board was used in schools before notebooks and paper were readily available. Paper was once too valuable and expensive to be used by students. Each student used a slate board (or shared one) to do homework or assignments in class.

Slate Pencil (H73.275a): This pencil was made out of German slate. German slate was very similar to chalk and used to write on the slate board.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION
1. What do we have now instead of slate boards and slate pencils?
2. What are the benefits of using a slate board?
3. Which would you prefer to use, the slate board or paper? Why?
Artifacts

Milk Bottle (H77.112): Milk and other dairy products were delivered every morning by the milkman. Because most families did not have refrigerators, dairy products would spoil within a day. This meant that families needed fresh deliveries constantly.

Milk bottles were reused so households were responsible for cleaning out the containers themselves. The milkman would come and bring full bottles in exchange for the empty ones.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How do you get your milk and dairy products?
2. What would you think about reusing the same milk bottles over and over?
3. Why was it important for families to wash the bottles every day?
4. What other foods would not be available if your family did not have a refrigerator?
5. What were the advantages to this system that was used in the past? What were the disadvantages?
6. Why do you think we don’t use glass milk bottles anymore?
Artifacts

Cookie Tin (H77.153a-b): Tin containers were used to keep various foods fresh. An advantage to tin containers is that they are reusable. Containers were sometimes even used as banjos.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What do you use today to keep foods fresh?
2. What foods today are stored in tin containers?
3. What are the advantages/disadvantages of these containers?
4. Why do you think tin containers are not used as much now?
Artifacts

Canning Jar and Lid (H71.486a-b): This spring-lid type of canning jar was a common household item. It dates back to the early 1800s. With no refrigerators or freezers at the time, canning jars were essential to keep foods fresh.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What types of food do we can today?
2. What other types of food do you think that people during the turn of the century canned?
3. If your family does not can, how is your food kept fresh?
Artifacts

**Medicine Bottle (H70.126):** Much of the medicine before and after the turn of the century made glorious claims about all of the illnesses that could be cured by these miracle serums. Instead of going to the store to pick up cough medicine or headache pills, one would buy one bottle of medicine that would be a cure-all. Unfortunately most of these cure-all miracle drugs were simply made with alcohol, sugar and water and had no real medicinal value.

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. What are some medicines you see when you go to the store?
2. Do you know what ingredients are found in medicine today?
3. Why do you think that medicines were cure-all miracle drugs, but did not have any real medicinal value?
Artifacts

**Spectacles (H69.274):** The first spectacles were created in the late 13th century in Italy.

Spectacles at this time generally did not fix an individual’s eye problems but instead worked as mini magnifying lenses.

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. How would your life be different if all that we had were magnifying glasses (remember your parents, grandparents and friends)?
2. How has eye-wear changed today?
Curling Iron (H69.286): Curly hair was fashionable in the late 19th century and early 20th century. The metal portion of the iron was placed on or near a wood stove in order to heat it.

Damp hair was wrapped around the heated metal producing curls.

It took skill for women to use these curling irons, and the irons were not very effective. Sometimes if the iron was too hot, it would singe ladies’ hair or scalp. But if the iron was too cold, it would not curl the hair at all.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How do curling irons work today?
2. Which type of curling iron (modern or turn of the century) would you rather use? Why?
3. Which iron do you think would take more time to prepare and use? Why?
Artifacts

Kerosene Iron (H69.58): In the early 1800s, women used irons made of heavy cast-iron to press clothing. These irons were extremely heavy and bulky and were often overheated and left clothes scorched.

The kerosene in these irons kept the iron at a fairly steady temperature. Unfortunately the kerosene fuel in the iron often burst into flame, burning the user. For this reason they quickly became unpopular.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Do your parents use an iron to press their clothes? If so, how long does it take to iron a shirt?
2. How safe are irons today compared to kerosene irons?
3. What technology that people use today is often more trouble than it is worth?
**Artifacts**

**Coffee Mill (H68.60):** A coffee mill was a common kitchen object. It ground coffee beans for brewing. If you look closely, you will notice that the crank on this coffee mill has been repaired. Usually only the very wealthy could afford to buy a new item if their old one broke, so most people of this time period would just fix the broken object. Why spend the money for a whole new coffee mill when they could just fix the old one for free?

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. How do people today grind their coffee beans? Do they grind their own beans?
2. What are the similarities between these grinders and the modern day method of buying coffee at the store? The differences?
Artifacts

Ladies’ Fan (H69.294): Hand held fans like this one were not only fashion statements but a necessity. At the turn of the century, there was no such thing as air conditioning. The electric fan, although invented, was much too expensive for the average consumer.

A woman would carry this small personal fan everywhere—from walks outside to a visit to a friend’s house to parties.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How does this method of cooling differ from the way that you cool yourself now? How is it similar?
2. Imagine what life would have been like without air conditioners and electric methods of cooling. How would you adjust your life to deal without these inventions?
Artifacts

**Shaving Mug and Brush:** These shaving mugs and brushes were used by a barber in shops. Each patron left his own personalized mug and brush at the barbershop for sanitary reasons. Often mugs were decorated with the symbols of civic groups, fraternal organizations or occupation.

Barbers would open the man’s pores by wrapping a hot towel around the lower face and beard. After that, the barber would use a moist brush made of either boar or badger hair to swirl a special soap placed in the mug making a thick lather. The lather was then brushed on the beard using a swirling motion. The barber used his skill to remove the beard with a straight razor. Men would receive cuts from a shave if an unskilled person performed the shave.

Barbershops were not only a place to get a haircut. There were also a place for socialization and fraternization.

**QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION**

1. How is this method different from the way that men (and women) shave today? How is it similar?
Suggested Classroom Activities

Writing Activity:
Bring in modern day objects that correspond with these artifacts. Students could write a journal using observation, descriptive words, and compare/contrast techniques about one pair of objects. For example, a student could compare and contrast the early light bulb and more modern fluorescent lights.

Timeline:
Over the course of 30 years, the United States made huge improvements and changes. This country’s timeline during these years includes many milestones, like the light bulb and the first flight. Have the students create a timeline of their lives. What are their major milestones? What’s happening in their lives now? What do they expect in the future? After this is complete, have students research what things have been invented during their lifetime. Then add these inventions to their timelines.

Venn Diagram:
Over time, businesses have changed dramatically. In this kit, milkmen and barbers were discussed. Those businesses are not as popular as they once were. Have students create a Venn Diagram showing what is similar and different between businesses of the past and present. For example, in the past people received milk from a milkman in glass containers. Now we get milk from the store in plastic jugs. But we’ve always gotten milk from cows and farms.

Discussion:
Primary and secondary sources are two important tools to study history. Have students pretend that they are real historians studying this time period. Students should make a list of questions they have about the turn of the century. Then, in partners, have them discuss how they would research and answer their own questions. How would they study the past? What primary and secondary sources would they use? Who might they interview? What questions would they ask in the interview? What artifacts would they use to study the past?
Credits

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We acknowledge the use of materials from the following sources:

http://www.randomhouse.com/features/americancentury/oldnew.html
http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/timeline/riseind/city/
http://www.socialstudiesforkids.com/subjects/19thcenturylet.htm
http://xroads.virginia.edu/~MA02/rodriguez/GildedAge/home.html

Every effort has been made to find and credit the sources of information used in this publication. If a source has been inadvertently omitted or errors made, please contact the Museum of Cultural and Natural History. Any oversights will be remedied.

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School Resource Kit Evaluation Form: Becoming Modern

Kit Use:  ___ Mid Tier Lesson
 ___ Student Teaching
 ___ College Classroom Presentation (Class Number __________)
 ___ Elementary Classroom (Grade Level __________)
 ___ High School Classroom (Subject Area __________)
 ___ Other (_____________________________)

1. Did the kit meet your needs? Yes ________  No ________

2. Was the kit easy to use and understand? Yes ________  No ________

3. Is there anything not included in this kit that would be useful? Yes ________  No ________
   If yes, please include your suggestions: ________________________________________________

4. Was the printed guide easy to use and understand? Yes ________  No ________

5. Was the kit in good condition? Yes ________  No ________

6. Would you use this kit again? Yes ________  No ________

7. Would you recommend this kit to a colleague? Yes ________  No ________

8. Is there a topic that you would suggest we develop a loan kit for?
   If yes, please include your suggestions: ________________________________

Additional Comments: ___________________________________________________________________
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Thank you for your feedback!
-The Museum of Cultural and Natural History