How times change

# Artefacts

The [Australian curriculum: History glossary](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Australian%20Curriculum.pdf?a=H&e=7) defines primary sources in history as ‘objects and documents created or written during the time being investigated’. Examples of primary sources include official documents (birth certificates, treaties) and personal documents (diaries, letters, photographs).

When historians find a primary source from the past they look very closely for evidence. Then they can write or talk about what they see, feel, hear, smell and find out.

The Australian curriculum: History glossary also defines an artefact as ‘something made or shaped by humans for their use, such as a stone tool, a metal sword, a plastic toy’*.*

## Describing artefacts

Collect some objects of your own from the present. Have each object concealed by a cover. Talk about an object describing:

* its appearance
* how it might be used
* where it came from and how you came to have it.

Ask a student to reach under the cover and describe what they feel. Ask another student to do the same. Did they both describe it in a similar way or differently? Talk about how we have different ideas, opinions or points of view.

Select artefacts for students to examine, using the [Framework for examining historical artefacts](http://ppds.ie/images/stories/curriculum_pages/history/using_evidence/framework_for_examining_artefacts.pdf) as a guide. Encourage them to contribute items of their own. Parents could provide a short narrative to provide a historical context, where possible.

You could choose four or five toys to place on the floor or along a ledge to form a timeline of the objects from the oldest to the most recent.

Read more about [Using artefacts](http://www.curriculumonline.ie/en/Primary_School_Curriculum/Social_Environmental_and_Scientific_Education_SESE_/History/History_Teacher_Guidelines/Approaches_and_methodologies/Using_artefacts/).

## Examining primary sources

Collect primary sources, such as objects or documents from your own past. Ask:

* ‘What can old things and places teach us about our past?’
* ‘Why do we keep them?’
* ‘Why are some old things important to us?’
* ‘Why are some things more valuable as they get older?’

Follow the instructions to play variations on the [Lost luggage game](http://ppds.ie/images/stories/curriculum_pages/history/using_evidence/using_artefacts_with_junior_classes.pdf) which models how to use clues and scaffold questions to discover who a bag belongs to. It can be a fun and engaging way to teach students how to handle and examine objects. Looking closely at primary sources can assist students to formulate their own inquiry questions.

Read more about [analysing primary sources](http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Analyzing_Primary_Sources.pdf).

## Using the slide shows

Click ‘What is used now?’ and ‘What was used then?’ to open each slide show.

The slide shows are not substitutes for real artefacts which students can touch and investigate. Rather they offer further opportunities to develop students’ historical knowledge and understanding of the past and the present.

Suggestions for engaging students in the slide shows include:

* using the ‘Screen Shade’ or ‘Reveal Tool’ available with IWB software to mask, then reveal one or more parts of an image
* playing the audio description while masking the image and asking students to draw the object
* using the ‘Spotlight Tool’ to focus on parts of an artefact
* using a Magnifier Tool or the Zoom function on your computer to allow closer examination for more detail.

## Responding to the slide show

Each image has a written description with audio support providing a model for students to write their own descriptions of artefacts.

As with actual artefacts, students can talk and/or write about:

* the appearance of the object
* how the object might have worked or been used
* the design of the object
* the age of the object
* where the object came from
* what the object is
* how an object feels because you have touched a similar one before e.g. a refrigerator like the one you have at home.

Assist students to record their open-ended questions.