Section 1: Historical Thinking Activities
Lesson 1a: Introduction to Reading Historical Documents

Introduce students to analyzing and interpreting documents through the use of contemporary pieces.

1. Ask students to bring in a document or photograph from home to share with the class. This item should be something they saved from the past. It could be a photograph of when they were a baby, a birthday card, their birth certificate, a newspaper article, an award certificate, etc.

2. During your turn in class, present your document providing the following information:
    a. What type of document is this?
    b. What is the date of the document?
    c. Who created the document?
    d. How does the document relate to you?

3. Consider, for your document and the documents of your classmates, responses to the following questions:
    a. What does the existence of this document say about whoever created it?
    b. What does the existence of this document say about whoever saved it?
    c. What does the existence of this document say about American life in this era?

4. Is there a comparable item from 100 years ago? If so, how is it the same or different?
    a. What does that say about American life 100 years ago?

Lesson 1b: Introduction to Analyzing Objects

Introduce students to analyzing and interpreting artifacts through the use of contemporary pieces.

1. Analyze objects in your classroom such as a desk, chair, table, computer, etc.
2. Describe or draw the object. What is it made of?
3. How is it made? Is it made by hand? In a factory? Is it the only one of its kind or are there many?
4. How is it used?
5. Who uses it?
6. What does this object say about schooling in the United States today?
7. Is there a comparable item from 100 years ago? If so, how is it the same or different?
    a. What does that say about American life 100 years ago?