

PROJECT TITLE: “What Was Life Like for Children in the 19th Century (150 years ago) and How was it Different From the Lives of Children Today?”	
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CLASSROOM PRACTICE

1. Teaching Thesis & Guiding Questions:

The concept of “past and present” is very difficult for young children to grasp, yet critical to their understanding of history. Through investigating how the lives of children from the Civil War Era differs from the lives children lead today, students will develop a better understanding of the concept of the past. This will be accomplished through primary source photographs which will illustrate the hardships faced by children of the 19th century. Additionally, because not all children from the past lived impoverished, labor dominated lives, children will investigate how the lives of children of wealth differed from the lives of children today.

2. Significance & Relevance:

Students struggle with understanding history, yet teachers are charged with instilling the concept of the “past” without a specific context within which children can comprehend it. In these lessons, students will understand that life was different for children in the past, and the “past will be given relevance in the form of Abraham Lincoln’s lifetime. This timeframe has relevance since learning about the life of Abraham Lincoln is also in the state standards for VA.

Selected State & National Standards –

- Virginia SOL-History

1.1 The student will interpret information presented in picture timelines to show sequence of events and will distinguish among past, present, and future.

1.2 The student will describe the stories of American leaders and their contributions to our country, with emphasis on George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Abraham Lincoln, George Washington Carver, and Eleanor Roosevelt.

- OAH Historical Inquiry Skills –

1. Chronological Thinking

Students will gain a more highly developed sense the concept of the past by investigating the daily lives of children through primary source photographs. They will compare the expectations placed on children of the 19th century with the expectations placed on themselves with regard to both the amount and type of work and the quality of their playthings.

2 Historical Comprehension

Students will be able to describe the differences between expectations placed on the average child of the 19th century and children of today, with regard to the amount and type of work and the quality of their playthings. The children will use historical photographs and illustrations to gain these insights, and they will recognize that the events that took place during the industrialization of America, also took place in England.

2. Suggested Grade Level and Length of Activities- 1st grade- 3-30 minute lessons

3. Lesson Objectives

- **Students will be able to (SWBAT) Students will use primary source documents (photographs) and describe how children of the past are alike and different from children of today.**
- **Students will enter their ideas on a Venn diagram and then share their ideas with the class**
- **Students will demonstrate their understanding that toys of the past were often home made by constructing a toy of their own from found objects. Students will describe their homemade toy.**
- **Students will determine the country or continent of origin of certain toys and then locate the place on a map of the world.**

4. Lesson Plans or Instructional Activities –

Lesson One- Children of Yesterday and Today-This lesson allows students to use primary resources to investigate the lives of children of the 19th century as compared to their own lives. Students will view photographs of children of the past. Students will work in groups and discuss what the children’s lives might have entailed using evidence from the photographs.

Lesson Two- Toys and Games of the Past-In this lesson, students will use photographs to learn about some of the toys and games of children of the 19th Century. They will learn that families often constructed their own toys and games when they could not afford to purchase them. Students will then invent and construct a toy or game of their own from “found’ objects.

Lesson Three- The Origins of Toys and Games of the Past- In this lesson, students will learn from which countries some toys originated. This will reinforce the understanding that some toys of the past are no longer used today. It will also help children gain a global perspective when they learn that many toys came to this country when people emigrated here from other countries.

5. Related Materials & Resources –

Lesson Plans for all three lessons, with worksheets, documents, and web links are provided separately in folders for each lesson.

6. Technology (if applicable) –

No Technology is needed for these lessons.

7. Modifications, Differentiation, and Extensions –

- Group work allows for students of varying abilities to work together.
- The photographs will likely generate discussion which will support the insecure learner.
- High ability learners may want to go beyond the lesson by writing about what they discover, or writing instructions for the game or toy they invent.
- Another challenge would be to invite high ability learners to investigate further. (Child labor laws, jobs of children of the 19th century, or the evolution of the board game might all be topics of interest to the exceptional learner.)

8. Annotated Instructional Bibliography-

Works Cited

- Bovet, Howard, Marlene Baranzini, D. J. Simison, and James J. Rawls. *USKids history* . Boston: Little, Brown, 1998. Print. This non-fiction work is filled with drawings and some photographs depicting life during the Civil War. It should be used sparingly with small children, but it does include some interesting facts about children.
- Harvey, Brett, and Deborah Kogan Ray. *My prairie year: based on the diary of Elenore Plaisted*. New York: Holiday House, 1986. Print. This is the true story of a young girl and her family who moved to the prairie during the westward expansion. It is based on the diary of Elenore Plaisted.
- Johnson, Angela, and Loren Long. *I dream of trains* . New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2003. Print. A young slave boy learns of the story of Casey Jones and associates the trains with freedom.
- Johnston, Tony, and James Ransome. *The wagon* . New York: Tambourine Books, 1996. Print. A young boy who is born into slavery sees hope in the wagon his father builds. The boy identifies and imagines himself chopping wood with Abraham Lincoln.
- McCully, Emily Arnold. *The bobbin girl* . New York: Dial Books For Young Readers, 1996. Print. The story of a young girl and the harsh realities of working in a textile mill before the age of child labor laws.
- Sinnott, Susan. *Welcome to Kirsten's world, 1854: growing up in pioneer America*. Middleton, Wis.: Pleasant Co. Publ., 1999. Print. This American Girls Collection Book is filled with primary source

photographs and provides a good source for daily life in the mid 19th Century.

Sinnott, Susan. *American Girl: Welcome to Addy's World, 1864: Growing Up During America's Civil War..*

Middleton, WI.: Pleasant Co. Publications, 1999. Print. This book, from the American Girls

Collection is filled with great photographs and drawings. It slightly sugar coats the slavery aspect,

but is very suitable for young readers/listeners.

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