

# History in Your Home

## Introduction

- This activity allows students to look at the physical items they interact with every day and examine them as though they were future historians looking at primary sources. By examining only a select group of items, students will consider what it means to draw conclusions from incomplete evidence and what that means for how we study history and make inferences more broadly based on a limited amount of information.

## Materials Needed

- Each student will need 3-5 items from their room or home that they use regularly or find meaningful.

## Preparatory Work

- If desired, prime students for this activity using the Library of Congress activity titled, [“Lincoln’s Pockets”](#), in which students examine a de-contextualized set of items that are revealed to be items that were in Abraham Lincoln’s pockets on the night of his assassination.
- If you skip the “Lincoln’s Pockets” activity, be sure to provide students with examples and definitions of what primary sources are.

## Instructions

- Ask students to select three to five items from their room or home that they use regularly or are important to them.
- Then, divide students into small groups and present them with the following questions:
  - i. Why did you pick these items?
  - ii. If you were a historian 100 years from now studying these items, what questions might you have?
  - iii. If you were a historian 100 years from now studying these items, what would these items tell us about you and your daily activities?
  - iv. If you were a historian 100 years from now studying these items, what story does your group of items tell?
  - v. Are these items significant? Why or why not?
  - vi. Do you think a future historian would be able to understand everything about you based on these items?
  - vii. Optional: Pick two additional items. Do these two new items change your answers to the previous questions?
- Note: Some students will likely select phones, game systems, or other devices as their objects. Consider incorporating a brief discussion or including comments about the technology in our lives. Will this technology be usable in 100 years? Will historians be able to fully understand our lives without an understanding of how we used technology and what we did on our individual devices? To delve more deeply into this discussion, complete the [Your Digital History activity](#).
- Optional: This activity can be scaled down to an introductory or icebreaker activity using a single item.