

Featured Artifact: Arthur Ashe's Tennis Racket

Era 10: Contemporary United States (1968 to the Present)

<http://historyexplorer.americanhistory.si.edu/resource/?key=1517>



Look at the artifact presented to you. In a few sentences, respond to the following questions:

Describe: Objectively describe the artifact. What do you think it is made of? What does it look like? Does it look old or new? Is it intact, or is it damaged in some way?

Analyze: When, where or how do you think this item was used? What kind of person may have created or used this item? What significance do you think the object held, either for the creator or the user? Do you see words or images on the artifact that connect it to others (besides the creator and user)?

.....

Share your conclusions with a partner, then discuss the following:

Evaluate : Justify why you came to those conclusions about the artifact. What further questions do you have about the object? Of those questions, which could you solve by observing the object in person and which would you need to solve with research?

.....

Background Information

Arthur Ashe (1943-1993) bought this Head tennis racket in 1975 and used it in competitions including Wimbledon and the Davis Cup. When he began his career in 1955, he was challenged by racial prejudice. But the young man from Richmond, Virginia, broke down these barriers, becoming a Grand Slam tournament winner and the U.S. Davis Cup team captain. Ashe's premature death from complications caused by AIDS, contracted through a blood transfusion, helped to educate the public about the disease's threat.

After reading and considering the background information, compose a response to the following:

Analyze: Address the following object-specific questions:

- Consider Arthur Ashe's birth and death dates. What momentous changes for the black community would he have experienced in his lifetime?
- Why might Ashe have been a particularly influential figure in his activism?

Synthesize: What does this object tell us about the era in which it was created, or the American experience as a whole? How would you describe the social, economic, or political climate of America during this time? What connections can you make between this object and other things that you have seen, read, or experienced?

Era-Specific Essential Questions

- How have economic, social and cultural developments in contemporary America shaped who we are as a country today?