

Featured Artifact: Family Photo Album

Era 9: Postwar United States (1945 to early 1970s)

<http://historyexplorer.americanhistory.si.edu/resource/?key=1511>



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)?

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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?

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Background Information

Family photograph albums hold the history of generations, preserving the memories of birthdays, holidays, travels, and all general aspects of life. African American Mary Taylor used her 35mm Bell and Howell camera to document her family's life in the black community of Los Angeles, California, during the mid-20th century. She turned a discarded wallpaper sample book into a treasured family heirloom.

Taylor's family photographs including 19th-century tintypes, turn-of-the-century hand-colored portraits, and albums from the 1950s to the 1970s provide insight into the African American experience in the United States over the past century.

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

Analyze: Address the following object-specific questions:

- Why do you think keeping this album was so important to Ms. Taylor?
- How does this provide insight into the African American community? How might it be more valuable than a traditional historical perspective?

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?

Analyze: Address the following era-specific essential questions:

- How did the post-WWII era change politics, society, and economics in the United States?