

Featured Artifact: Greensboro Lunch Counter

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

<http://historyexplorer.americanhistory.si.edu/resource/?key=3409>



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

On February 1, 1960, four African American college students--Ezell A. Blair, Jr. (now Jibreel Khazan), Franklin E. McCain, Joseph A. McNeil, and David L. Richmond--sat down at this "whites only" lunch counter at the Woolworth's store in Greensboro, North Carolina, and politely asked for service. Their request was refused, and when asked to leave, the students remained in their seats in protest.

For the six months that followed, hundreds of students, civil rights organizations, churches, and members of the community joined the protest and boycotted the store. Their commitment ultimately led to the desegregation of the F.W. Woolworth lunch counter on July 25, 1960. Their peaceful sit-down was a watershed event in the struggle for civil rights and helped ignite a youth-led movement to challenge racial inequality throughout the South.

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

Analyze: Address the following object-specific questions:

- Why do you think this particular lunch counter was chosen as a venue for such a momentous event in the Civil Rights movement? Did something make it unique or noteworthy?
- Why do you think this particular form of protest was so effective?

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 questions:

- How did the postwar era change the political, social, and economic climate of the United States?