

Featured Artifact: Pancho Villa Candle

<http://www.historyexplorer.si.edu/resource/?key=2430>

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



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

Pancho Villa is one of the most recognizable leaders of the Mexico Revolution. This civil war, which lasted from 1910-1921, was fought to curb U.S. corporate interests and to redistribute agricultural lands, especially for indigenous communities. It was a social revolution that reasserted popular culture and the value of "Mexican-ness." It was also a prolonged, violent conflict that spread death and hunger throughout Mexico, spurring migrants north, mostly into El Paso, Los Angeles, and other historically Mexican U.S. cities. With them came ideas, images, and language for organizing laborers and the rural poor. These ideas and images percolated in the popular culture of Mexican Americans and reappear in the art and activism of Chicanos in the 1960s and 1970s. On the back of this candle depicting Villa are prayers written in English and Spanish asking him to grant the petitioner some of the insight and prowess that enshrined this bandit, social revolutionary, and media star in the mythology of modern Mexico.

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

Analyze: Address the following object-specific questions:

- Why may the symbol of Pancho Villa have been re-adopted in the 1960s and 1970s? How could the message of his likeness have changed over the years?
- What typifies the value of "Mexican-ness"? Why is important for any culture to maintain its specific values, traditions, and customs?

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?