

Featured Artifact: Satellite Lunchbox

<http://www.historyexplorer.si.edu/resource/?key=769>

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

The Soviet launch of the Sputnik satellite in late 1957 sparked interest in the United States in science education even among elementary school children. In 1958, King Seeley Thermos produced this imaginative box evoking space travel and landings on distant moons and planets. Children provided a receptive audience to this imaginary yet hopeful view of scientific achievement in the early years of the space race. This is one of the few pop culture lunch boxes from the late 1950s not designed around a television show.

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

Analyze: Address the following object-specific questions:

- The historical background information tells you that most lunchboxes depicted cartoon or television characters. Why do you think space exploration was so compelling?
- Do you still see lunchboxes like this today? Why do you think this is the case?

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?