

Featured Artifact: Shofar

<http://historyexplorer.americanhistory.si.edu/resource/?key=2425>

Era 6: The Development of the Industrial United States (1870-1900)



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

The shofar, one of the earliest known musical instruments, is usually made from a ram's horn. Used in biblical times to signal important events, it is also blown on High Holy Days (10 days in the fall of the year). It is sounded many times during the services of Rosh ha-Shanah (the Jewish New Year) and once to conclude Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement).

The blasts of the instrument are meant to wake slumbering souls to review their actions of the past year, to make amends, and to renew their devotion to work for the social and communal good in the coming year. This shofar is of a form typical of central European instruments, with a straightened shaft and flattened mouthpiece. It belonged to Curator Cyrus Adler's grandfather, Leopold Sulzberger, who was born in Germany. Sulzberger arrived in the United States in 1838, and died in 1881.

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

Analyze: Address the following object-specific questions:

- Can you think of any similar instruments to the Shofar? How or why are they similar?
- Why might it be important to a cultural group to maintain a tradition like this? How are culturally-based traditions and customs still considered “American”?

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 massive influx of immigrants after 1870 change the face of America?