

Featured Artifact: Edison New Year's Eve Lamp

<http://historyexplorer.americanhistory.si.edu/resource/?key=4818>

Era 7: The Emergence of Modern America (1890-1930)



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

Thomas Edison used this carbon-filament bulb in the first public demonstration of his most famous invention, the first practical electric incandescent lamp, which took place at his Menlo Park, New Jersey, laboratory on New Year's Eve, 1879.

As the quintessential American inventor-hero, Edison personified the ideal of the hardworking self-made man. He received a record 1,093 patents and became a skilled entrepreneur. Though occasionally unsuccessful, Edison and his team developed many practical devices in his "invention factory," and fostered faith in technological progress.

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

Analyze: Address the following object-specific questions:

- What modern inventions were possible because of Edison's light bulb?
- How is this light bulb different from one you might use at home?

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 Progressives and others address problems of capitalism, urbanization, and political corruption?