

Memory Lane

Lesson plan level: secondary education

Common core standards met: CC.8.5.9-10.A. (social studies reading) and CC.8.6.9-10.H. (social studies writing; drawing on informational texts)

- **Essential Questions**

- How did Americans use books as sentimental memorabilia during the 19th century?
- How did the invention of photography transform the way Americans memorialized their loved ones and special life events?
- What are the similarities and differences between the way people saved important personal books and images during the 19th century compared to the present day.

- **Objectives**

- Students will be able to identify the types of books used for sentimental value during the 19th century.
- Students will describe the role that photography played in personal books of the 19th century.
- Students reflect and compare how we store books and pictures today, and compare that to the 19th century.

- **Procedures**

- *Anticipatory writing assignment for students:*
 - Think of an image, book, or other belonging that is really special to you. Describe your belonging. What is it? How and when did it come into your possession? Most importantly, why is it so significant to you?
- *Read intro to Memory lane as a class:*
 - People like to save sentimental memorabilia, the small ephemera of our daily lives that remind us of a special moment or a loved one. Books serve this purpose well. Friendship albums, scrapbooks, yearbooks, and photo albums hold our memories between their

covers. Some photograph albums from the late 19th century blurred the line between parlor decoration and book. They were meant to sit out on display and were often made out of wildly diverse and unusual materials. Some photo albums even had musical mechanisms that played when the book was open, making it a truly multi-media experience.

- *Article on Photography in American history* (recommended for high school)
 - Martha A. Sandweiss: *Photography in Nineteenth Century America*
 - <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/art-music-and-film/essays/photography-nineteenth-century-america>
 - Questions that go with the reading:
 - How did Photography allow Americans to become familiar with far off places?
 - What were some of the first major events in American history captured by photography? What impact do you think these images had on Americans at the time?
 - Photographs are often used complimentary to literary sources.
 - Why does Sandweiss think it is important to treat photographs themselves as primary sources?
 - When examining a photograph, why is it important to understand the context of the photographer, the time, and the purpose for which the picture was taken?
 - Why does Sandweiss claim that photograph's "spark the historical imagination"?
 - Why will our imagination be inevitably limited when examining a historical photograph?
- *Mental Photography Project*
 - Handout: <http://thelivingbook.librarycompany.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Mental-Photographs.pdf>
 - Each student will each choose a friend to feature in their mental photography handout.

- Students will interview their friend answering the questions in the mental photography handout.
- Students will paste a photo of their friend being interviewed in the mental photography book.
- *Essay*
 - Now that students have learned a little bit about the history of photography and modeled how 19th and early 20th century Americans used sentimental books and pictures, have students compare what they have learned about the past with how they presently capture and organize memories of their friends or loved ones.
 - Respond to the following prompt in 500-600 words:
 - Describe how you store and keep sentimental photos of friends and loved ones and compare that with how Americans in the 19th and early 20th century organized photos. What do you like about the way that they used to do it in the early days of photography? What do you dislike? What is better about the way you store your photos? What is worse? Use examples from the *Memory Lane* section of *The Living Book* exhibit and draw on what you have learned about photography from the Sandweiss article.

Materials:

- Mental photography book handout (print out copy for each student):
<http://thelivingbook.librarycompany.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Mental-Photographs.pdf>
- Pencils
- Paper
- Access to the memory lane Living Book's online exhibit:
<http://thelivingbook.librarycompany.org/section-2-memory-lane/>
- Access for each student to Sandweiss' *Photography in Nineteenth Century America*.

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