RECOMMENDED GRADE LEVEL: Grades 7 to 12

OVERVIEW
This activity is designed to accompany the Artifacts section of the Black Americans in Congress website, history.house.gov/exhibitions-and-publications/baic/artifacts/artifacts/. Students have the opportunity to analyze artifacts associated with Black Americans who served in Congress. Students are encouraged to think about how artifacts can be used in the study of past events and people.

CURRICULUM CONNECTION
• U.S. History, American Government, African-American Studies, Social Studies, Art
• Civil Rights Movement, Women’s Rights, Material Culture

OBJECTIVES
1. Students will define, describe, and analyze artifacts.
2. Students will analyze the relationship between artifacts and the historical record.
3. Students will analyze the relationship between artifacts and the African Americans who served in Congress.

LESSON PLAN
1. To help introduce students to the upcoming activity, lead a brief discussion using the questions below:
   a. What are artifacts?
   b. Who makes them and why?
   c. How can artifacts be utilized by historians to study past events and people?
2. Based on the class discussion, create a definition for the word artifact.
3. Divide the class into small groups. Each group will choose, or be assigned, three artifacts from the online House Collections page, history.house.gov/collection/. Make sure to have your students click on the African-American Members tab. Instruct students that only one of the three objects should be a campaign button.
4. Distribute the “Artifact Analysis” worksheet (p. 1 of first Student Activity). Review the directions and ask students to complete the worksheet.
5. Have each group read the Black Americans in Congress profiles for the Members highlighted in the artifacts. Go to history.house.gov/exhibitions-and-publications/baic/black-americans-in-congress/ and click on Member Profiles for a list of African Americans who have served in Congress. Distribute the “Congressional Snapshot” worksheet (p. 1 of second Student Activity). Review the directions and ask students to complete the worksheet.
6. Have students choose one artifact and one of the options below to present their findings from the “Artifact Analysis” and “Congressional Snapshot” exercises to the class:
   a. An exhibit for a museum or historical society featuring the artifact and the Member
   b. A unique artifact designed by students to distribute to people for an event honoring the Member
   c. An interactive timeline featuring the artifact and the Member
   d. A two-page narrative with images for a history magazine entitled “If This Artifact Could Talk...” that explains the relationship between the object and the Member
7. If time permits, conduct one of the Suggested Extended Activities.
SUGGESTED EXTENDED ACTIVITIES

1. Invite a curator to speak to your class about the historical value of artifacts.
2. Organize a history fair to display products created by students (timelines, exhibits, artifacts, and narratives).
3. Have students perform a series of skits which use artifacts to describe the careers of the highlighted Members of Congress.

ONLINE RESOURCES

History, Art & Archives  |  U.S. House of Representatives
A collaborative project between the Office of the Historian and the Clerk of the House's Office of Art and Archives. Together, the offices serve as the House's institutional memory, and a resource for Members, staff, and the general public.
history.house.gov

Online Biographical Directory of the United States Congress
Searchable database that contains biographical information on every person who served in Congress.
bioguide.congress.gov

Senate Historical Office
Includes information on the history and art of the U.S. Senate such as facts and milestones, historical statistics, featured biographies, and a photographic collection.
senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/Senate_Historical_Office.htm

Congress.gov  |  Library of Congress
Searchable database of congressional legislation from 1973 to present (bill text and roll call votes are available from 1989 to present).
congress.gov

GPO Federal Digital System
Includes links for searchable databases of the Congressional Record and House Journal (1994 to present) as well as information on how to find the nearest federal depository library.
gpo.gov/fdsys
ARTIFACT ANALYSIS

A box of artifacts has been found in the basement of the Capitol. Images of these artifacts can be found on the online House Collections search page, history.house.gov/collection/ (African-American Members). Historians need assistance in identifying, describing, and explaining the significance of the objects. Analyze each of your three congressional artifacts and then answer the questions below.

1. DESCRIPTION (EACH OBJECT)
   a. What person or idea is featured on the object?
   b. What are some of the unique features of the object?

2. PURPOSE (EACH OBJECT)
   a. How was the object used? What was it made for?
   b. Is the purpose of the object the same today as when it was first made? Explain.
   c. Are there multiple functions/uses for the object? If so, please list.
3  **INFERENC**E (EACH OBJECT)
   a. Why was the object created?

   b. What can the object tell us about the time period that it represents?

   c. How could historians use this object to learn more about the featured Member?

4  **COMPARISON (THREE OBJECTS)**
   a. What are two similarities between the objects? What are two differences between the objects?

   b. Collectively, how can these three objects help historians better understand the past?
CONGRESSIONAL SNAPSHOT

Choose one of the former Members highlighted in your artifacts. Then use his or her Black Americans in Congress profile and your completed “Artifact Analysis” worksheet to answer the questions below.

1. When and where was the Member born?

2. When was the Member elected?

3. When did he or she serve in the House of Representatives?
4. Which district and/or state did he or she represent?

5. On which committees did the Member serve?

6. List some of the issues he or she advocated for during his or her congressional career.