

RESOURCE LIBRARY  
ACTIVITY : 20 MINS

## Time Period Clues

Students look at pictures of everyday items from different American time periods and place them on a timeline.

### GRADES

K, 1, 2

### SUBJECTS

*Geography, Human Geography*

### CONTENTS

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## OVERVIEW

Students look at pictures of everyday items from different American time periods and place them on a timeline.

For the complete activity with media resources, visit:

<http://www.nationalgeographic.org/activity/time-period-clues/>

## DIRECTIONS

### 1. Introduce the concept of a timeline.

Ask: *Which is older: a car or a horse and buggy?* Students should know that the horse and buggy is a much older method of transportation than a car. Draw a simple timeline on the board with a mark on the far left and a mark on the far right. Write the label “older” on the left side. Write the label “newer” on the right side. Explain to students that the drawing is called a *timeline*. A timeline is a line that includes marks showing where things and events fit into a span of years. Timelines are a good way to compare and contrast life in different periods, or see how they are the same and different. Ask: *Where on the timeline does the car*

*belong? Where on the timeline does the horse and buggy belong? Check to make sure students understand that the horse and buggy should go on the left; the car should go on the right.*

## **2. Introduce two historical time periods.**

Explain that students are going to look at pictures of things from two different time periods in American history: past (colonial, 1600-1799) and present day (1968-today). Check students' familiarity with these time periods. Ask:

- *Can you name one thing that happened during the colonial time period?*
- *Can you name one present-day technology or invention?*

If needed, prompt students to name things such as European settlers or the Revolutionary War during the colonial time period. Prompt them to think about the technology they use or see family members use today, such as the computer and Internet.

## **3. Add information to the timeline.**

Tell students you are going to make the class timeline more specific than "older" and "newer." Incorporate math into the activity by including increments of 50 years across the top of the timeline: 1600, 1650, 1700, 1750, 1800, 1850, 1900, 1950, and 2000. This will also allow students to recognize that there is a time period between colonial and present day. Invite students to count with you. Add marks and label the Colonial and Present Day time periods below the timeline. Add these numbers and descriptions to the original labels:

- Older: 1 - Colonial (1600-1799)
- Newer: 2 - Present Day (1968-today)

## **4. Distribute the worksheet and have students complete it.**

Give each student a copy of the worksheet Pictures in Time. Explain to students that the pictures are examples of everyday things from the colonial time period and present day. Have students look at the pictures in each row. Discuss as a class what each item is and what it is or was used for. Then read aloud the directions and answer any questions students may have. Tell students that they can also use the letter B for "both" if they feel that an item was present in the colonial period and today; for example, cotton. Then have students work independently to write the correct number or letter in each box.

## **5. Discuss the worksheet answers as a class.**

When students have completed the worksheet, discuss the correct answers as a class. Cut apart one set of images. Then have students look at the pictures as a class and tape them on the timeline where they think they should go. Guide students in comparing and contrasting similar items from the two different time periods, such as the telegraph and the mobile phone. During this discussion, students can find out the dates of particular inventions, such as the telegraph, locomotive train, and light bulb.

#### **6. Brainstorm other things to add to the timeline.**

Check students' understanding and build further knowledge about the two historical periods by leading students in a brainstorm of other items to add to the timeline. Possible additions include:

- Colonial: tri-cornered hats, George Washington, clay pot over a fire
- Present Day: hand-held video game, a car, power lines

## Modification

If students need help with the concept of a timeline, have them reenact a familiar timeline. Have a student act out waking up (7:00am), eating breakfast (7:30am), and going to school (8:00am). Work together to draw this as a timeline.

## Informal Assessment

To review the items in the worksheet and their time periods, divide students into two teams and play charades. For example, a student picks a card with a candle on it and acts out lighting a candle; the groups calls out candle and colonial. Or a student picks a card and acts out airplane; the group calls out airplane and present day.

## Extending the Learning

Extend the timeline to the right and add a new label: "Future." Ask students to imagine what people will eat in the future, what they will wear, how they will communicate, how they will travel, and how they will light their homes. Add their ideas to the timeline.

## OBJECTIVES

## Subjects & Disciplines

## Geography

- Human Geography

# Learning Objectives

Students will:

- explain what a timeline is and how it can be used
- describe two American time periods: colonial and present day
- order historical items on a timeline
- compare and contrast historical items from the colonial and present day time periods

# Teaching Approach

- Learning-for-use

# Teaching Methods

- Brainstorming
- Discussions
- Hands-on learning
- Visual instruction

# Skills Summary

This activity targets the following skills:

- Critical Thinking Skills
  - Analyzing
  - Understanding

# National Standards, Principles, and Practices

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR HISTORY

## • Living and Working Together in Families and Communities, Now and Long Ago (K-4) Standard

1:

Family Life Now and in the Recent Past; Family Life in Various Places Long Ago

### **Preparation**

### **What You'll Need**

#### **MATERIALS YOU PROVIDE**

- Pencils
- Scissors
- Transparent tape

#### **PHYSICAL SPACE**

- Classroom

#### **GROUPING**

- Large-group instruction

## BACKGROUND & VOCABULARY

# Background Information

A timeline is a visual way of learning about different time periods. Examining images of everyday items provides clues about the time periods the images belong to. Comparing images from different time periods can help students understand changes in lifestyle, technology, and culture.

## Prior Knowledge

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## Recommended Prior Activities

- [Crossing the Atlantic: Then and Now](#)
- [Sailing Through History](#)

# Vocabulary

Term	Part of Speech	Definition
Revolutionary War	<i>noun</i>	(1775-1783) conflict between Great Britain and the colonies that became the United States. Also called the American War of Independence.
timeline	<i>noun</i>	text and graphics arranged in order along a line to give information about when events or phenomena occurred. Timelines are sometimes used on maps to give a better idea of how time relates to the data or theme represented.
transportation	<i>noun</i>	movement of people or goods from one place to another.

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## For Further Exploration

### Websites

- [Smithsonian National Museum of American History](#)
- [The Library of Congress: America's Story](#)

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