

LESSON: Keepsake Box Assignment

TIME: Estimated 4 class periods to complete project (50-minute periods)

CLASS LEVEL: 7th and 8th grade Language Arts

TEKS LANGUAGE ARTS GOAL: In this lesson, students read a short story, make inferences about museum artifacts, create a memory box of personal keepsakes, compose an expository essay, and share a presentation with their peers.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION: How do the ordinary objects we collect in our daily lives reflect who we are as people?

STUDENTS:

- *Read “The Gift of the Magi” by O. Henry.
- *Discuss the plot development, characters, and irony of O. Henry’s story.
- *Examine O. Henry museum artifacts and make inferences about the purpose and value of the objects.
- *Create a memory box of personal keepsakes that elicit important memories.
- *Compose an expository essay that explains each keepsake and its importance.
- *Share their memory box and expository essay with their peers.

TEKS:

7th and 8th grade Language Arts: Reading/Fluency, Reading/Vocabulary Development, and Writing/Expository Texts

Reading: (1) (2) (3) (6A) (6B) (6C) Writing: (14A) (14B) (14C) (14D) (14E) (17A)

Vocabulary:

- Irony: when a situation turns out differently from what one would normally expect
- Artifact: an object produced or shaped by human workmanship
- Keepsake: something given or kept as a reminder; memento

Step 1

Students read aloud “The Gift of the Magi” by O. Henry. Discuss with students the writer’s use of irony in the story as well as the characters’ motivations for choosing the specific objects they wish to give to each other.

Step 2

Have students go online to examine [several artifacts](#) housed at the O. Henry Museum in Austin, Texas. Ask students to make inferences about what the objects are, their original purpose, and why they might have been included in the collection at the museum.

Step 3

Have students brainstorm about the ordinary objects from their own lives that they consider valuable. Explain that they will collect [5 personal keepsakes](#) in a memory box that will be shared with classmates.

Step 4

After students have collected the keepsakes for their memory box, explain that they will compose an [expository essay](#) that explains each item in the box, the item's history or how it was obtained, and how the item has special meaning or memories for the student.

Step 5

On the scheduled presentation day, students will share their Keepsake Box and expository essay in small groups with their classmates, showing each item and explaining its importance and memories associated with the object.

EXTENSION:

Schedule a field trip to the O. Henry and Susanna Dickinson Museums at Brush Square to discover and learn more about the unique artifacts that each museum holds. For more information or to make a tour reservation, please contact: [Bao.Nguyen](#).