

LESSON: History Collector

TIME: Estimated 4-5 to complete assignment (50-minute periods)

CLASS LEVEL: 7th grade

TEKS LANGUAGE SOCIAL STUDIES GOAL: In this lesson, students seek out evidence (online and through artifacts at the O. Henry Museum) to learn more about Austin/Texas history through the life of one of its most famous writers, William Sydney Porter (O. Henry).

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS: Why is it important to know about the past? Why is the preservation of historic buildings/items important?

STUDENTS:

- Learn more about Austin and William Sydney Porter’s life between 1893-1895, using primary and secondary sources
- Discuss the “old Austin” of that that period as compared to the “new Austin”
- Draw renderings of the “old Austin” landmarks/buildings, city streets, and other things you might have seen then

TEKS: 7th grade Social Studies: 7(2a), 7(9b-c), 7(22a-d), 7.23(a-b)

VOCABULARY:

Primary Source - original works such as photographs, drawings, letters, diaries, documents, books, play scripts, speeches, songs, sheet music, and first-person accounts that are recorded at the time of an event.

Secondary Source - source created by someone either not present when the event took place or removed by time from the event. Examples of secondary sources include textbooks, journal articles, and encyclopedias.

Step 1

Go online to [read more about Austin and William Sydney Porter’s life](#) between 1893-1895. Take a look at some of the [actual items owned/used](#) by Porter and his wife Athol.

Step 2

Discuss what it was like to live, work, raise a family, get around (transportation), and/or communicate in [Austin during that time](#). Hold a conversation with students about how Austin is different now in these areas? Where were some of the [places O. Henry/Porter went](#) or was connected to in Austin?

Step 3

[Create a drawing](#) of Austin then and now. Pick a section of town—downtown, near the Capitol, for example—and draw the streets, buildings, transportation, people on the streets in costume, etc.

Step 4

Extend research to include student's ancestors who might have lived in the area at that time. Ask your parents/grandparents for photos, letters, or other memorabilia in their family history to share with class. Create posters, booklets, or other print/digital representations of their family history.

EXTENSION:

For Museum Tours: Offered at three sites within Brush Square—the Susanna Dickinson Museum, the O. Henry Museum, and the Austin Fire Museum. Wednesday through Friday, noon – 5 p.m. The museums are small historic spaces and can only accommodate a maximum of 15 students at a time. Large groups will be broken into sub-groups that will rotate through each of the museums.

All tours require two weeks advance notification. To make a tour reservation or for more information, please [contact Bao Nguyen](#).