

FACES OF AMERICA

with Henry Louis Gates Jr.

**LESSON TITLE**

Exploring the Past

GRADE LEVEL

Grades 2-4

TIME ALLOTMENT

Two 45-minute class periods

OVERVIEW

In the 2010 series *FACES OF AMERICA*, Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. provides celebrity guests with information about their ancestry, based on documents, photographs and other materials from the past.

This hands-on, media-enhanced lesson will challenge students to gather clues about the past through photographs, drawings and other primary source materials. In the Introductory Activity, students will work together to gather information from photographs. In the Learning Activities, students will explore video segments from *FACES OF AMERICA* and discuss how celebrity guests gained new insights into their family history through the help of primary sources. In an optional activity, students can learn about the Chinese tradition of preserving family histories and can also create a project to record important events in their own lives. Students will also examine American Indian Winter Counts and compare how individuals used images to record important events. For the Culminating Activity, students will chronicle important events in their week through the use of drawings.

SUBJECT MATTER

Social Studies; American History

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Explain what type of information we can learn from photographs;
- Draw conclusions about people and places from the past, through exploration of photos;
- Explain how people can learn more about their family history through the use of historical records;
- Describe how American Indians used drawings to describe important events;
- Explain the meaning of at least three Lakota Winter Count drawings;
- Describe what a Winter Count is and explain how American Indians used images to describe and record important events;
- Chronicle important events in their week through drawings;

- Create a journal, scrapbook, photo album, website or other project to preserve important events in their own lives. (Optional)

STANDARDS

History Standards for Grades K-4

Standards available online at http://nchs.ucla.edu/standards/k-4_thinking_toc.html

Historical Thinking

Standard 1/ Chronological Thinking: The student thinks chronologically; therefore, the student is able to interpret data presented in timelines.

Standard 2/ Historical Comprehension: The student comprehends a variety of historical sources; therefore, the student is able to draw upon the visual data presented in photographs, paintings, cartoons, and architectural drawings in order to clarify, illustrate, or elaborate upon information presented in the historical narrative.

Standard 4/ Historical Research Capabilities: The student conducts historical research; therefore, the student is able to obtain historical data from a variety of sources, including: library and museum collections, historic sites, historical photos, journals, diaries, eyewitness accounts, newspapers, and the like; documentary films; and so on.

Content Standards

Topic One: Living and Working Together in Families and Communities, Now

and Long Ago/ Standard 1B: The student understands the different ways people of diverse racial, religious, and ethnic groups, and of various national origins have transmitted their beliefs and values; therefore the student is able to explain the ways that families long ago expressed and transmitted their beliefs and values through oral traditions, literature, songs, art, religion, community celebrations, mementos, food, and language. [*Obtain historical data*]

Topic Three: The History of the United States: Democratic Principles and Values and the People from Many Cultures Who Contributed to Its Cultural, Economic, and Political Heritage /Standard 5A:

Demonstrate understanding of the movements of large groups of people into his or her own and other states in the United States now and long ago. Therefore, the student is able to draw upon data from charts, historical maps, nonfiction and fiction accounts, and interviews in order to describe "through their eyes" the experience of immigrant groups. Include information such as where they came from and why they left, travel experiences, ports of entry and immigration screening, and the opportunities and obstacles they encountered when they arrived in America. [*Appreciate historical perspectives*]

MEDIA COMPONENTS

FACES OF AMERICA, selected segments

Websites:

For Learning Activity 1:

Lakota Winter Counts: An Online Exhibit

<http://wintercounts.si.edu/index.html>

This online interactive exhibit, on the National Museum of Natural History's website, enables users to explore traditional Lakota Winter Counts.

MATERIALS

For the class:

- Computers with internet access for the Winter Count Activity in Learning Activity 2 (Note: This activity can either be conducted with one computer or by dividing students into small groups and using multiple computers.)
- Computer, Projection screen, and speakers (for class viewing of online/downloaded video clips)
- “The Past through Pictures” Game (download [here](#)) (See “Prep for Teachers” section for details.)

For each student:

- “My Week in Drawings” Organizer (download [here](#))

PREP FOR TEACHERS

Prior to teaching this lesson, you will need to:

Preview all of the video segments used in the lesson. Download the video clips used in the lesson to your classroom computer, or prepare to watch them using your classroom’s Internet connection.

Explore the *Lakota Winter Counts: An Online Exhibit* website to familiarize yourself with its functionality and content. Bookmark the website on each computer in your classroom. Using a social bookmarking tool such as [del.icio.us](#) or [diigo](#) (or an online bookmarking utility such as [portaportal](#)) will allow you to organize all the links in a central location. (Note: You may conduct the Winter Count activity on one central computer in your classroom or on multiple computers, where students can work together in small groups. Bookmark the website on each computer you plan to use for this activity.)

Print out “The Past in Pictures” Game, making enough copies so that each pair of students has one of the cards. Note: There are 12 cards per game. Therefore, if you have 24 students or less, you will need one set of game cards. If you have more than 24 students, you will need enough cards so that each group gets one. Feel free to omit some of the cards, as desired. However, if you use one photo in a category (such as “weddings”) make sure to distribute the other photo in that category so that students may compare and contrast the two photos.

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

- 1) Ask students to brainstorm ways that we could find out about people, places and events that took place a long time ago. Write down their responses on a large sheet of paper, whiteboard or chalkboard. Discuss the responses with the students. During the discussion, explain that we can learn about the past through a variety of ways—by reading history books, letters, diaries, newspaper articles, etc., as well as by visiting places where people lived and worked and/or where important events took place. Explain that we can also learn a lot by looking at photographs and drawings from the past.
- 2) Explain that we are now going to play a game with photographs. Ask students to work in pairs and distribute one photo from “The Past through Pictures” Game to each pair. (Note: The same photo can be given to multiple groups.)
- 3) Ask students to look closely at their photos and think about the following:
 - What does this photo show? (What type of an event is this? What is happening?)
 - Who is in the photo? (Children? Adults?)
 - What are they wearing?
 - When did this take place? (If there is no date, ask students when they think it took place?)
 - Where is this? (In a school? Outside?)
 - What other information can you gather from this photo?
 - What other questions would you like to ask about this photo?

Tip: Write these questions on a large sheet of paper, whiteboard or chalkboard for students to think about as they look at the photos.

- 4) Once students have had a chance to closely observe their photos, ask each group to find another group that has a different photo which shows a similar type of event. (For example, if their photo is of a birthday party, they should find another group with a different photo of a birthday party.)
- 5) Ask the groups to compare their photos. Ask them to find at least two things that are similar in the two photos and at least two things that are different. (Compare the settings, the clothing, etc.)
- 6) After students have had a chance to compare their photos, ask for volunteers to share their findings with the class.
- 7) Ask students to describe the type of information that they were able to discover from looking at the photographs. (What people looked like, what people wore, etc.) Ask students to share some of the questions that they thought about when observing and comparing the photographs.

LEARNING ACTIVITY 1

- 1) Explain to students that they are now going to watch a video segment from a television show called *FACES OF AMERICA*. In this segment, Olympic skating champion Kristi Yamaguchi finds out information about her family by looking at photographs. Explain to your students that Kristi never met her father's parents. Provide your students with a FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION by asking them to watch the clip and find out three things that Kristi learns by looking at photographs of her grandparents.
- 2) Play Video Segment #1: "Yamaguchi Photos." At the end of the segment, pause the video so that the last image (the image of Kristi's grandmother and three children) is visible on the screen. Ask your students what information Kristi gathered about her grandparents from the photographs. (*Kristi saw that her grandfather was handsome and that he wore a suit; Kristi saw what her grandfather's farm looked like and also saw her father as a young boy with his siblings and mother. She could see that there weren't any tall buildings around.*) Ask students to discuss other things they see in the photo. Ask the students why Kristi might have wanted to see these pictures. (*She had never met her grandparents and the photos were one way for her to learn about them.*)
- 3) Explain to students that we can learn valuable information about people from long ago by closely observing photographs. Ask students to think about how people could have shown what places and events looked like before cameras were invented. Explain that before cameras were invented, people often made drawings and paintings to show what things looked like and to tell about important events. American Indians created drawings to describe important events that happened. They created "Winter Counts" which included one drawing each year, describing an important event that took place that year.
- 4) Explain that now you are going to look at some Winter Counts that were created by Lakota people a long time ago. Go to <http://wintercounts.si.edu/index.html> to view *Lakota Winter Counts: An Online Exhibit* on the National Museum of Natural History's website. Select "view this exhibit." Skip the introduction and then click on "view winter counts." Make sure that "Overview" is selected on the top left of the screen (above the dates).
- 5) Show the students that along the left hand side there are names of different Winter Counts and explain that each Winter Count has one drawing per year. Point out that the

years are listed above the images. Tell the students that you are now going to look at some of these drawings to see what they can teach us about important things that happened long ago.

- 6) Explain that you are now going to look at some Winter Count images from 1821-1822. Move your cursor over to the “1821-1822” column and then move the cursor down the column to the image from the *Lone Dog* Winter Count. Click on that image. Read the information listed by “Name of the Year” in the top right corner, as well as the “Collector’s Note.” Then click on “Overview” again and now click on the image for *Flame* for the same year and read the “Name of Year” and “Collector’s Note” information for that image. Click on “Overview” again and then click on the image for *Swan* for the same year and read the corresponding information. Ask your students to discuss and compare the three Winter Count images. Repeat the same process of observing and comparing the *Flame*, *Lone Dog* and *Swan* Winter Count images for the following years:
 - 1833-34
 - 1840-41
 - 1851-52
 - 1853-54
 - 1861-62
 - 1869-70

Note: If your students have access to multiple computers, you can divide students into small groups and ask each group to explore one of the following Winter Counts: *Flame*, *Lone Dog* and *Swan*. Ask each group to explore the Winter Count image for each of the years listed above.

- 7) Feel free to explore some of the other Winter Count images with your students.
Note: Many Winter Count images feature scenes that depict death and tragic incidents. Please explore the images before presenting them to the class to make sure that they are images which you feel comfortable sharing with your students.
- 8) After you and your students have finished exploring the Winter Counts, ask your students to discuss some of the things they noticed about the Winter Count images. (*Possible points to discuss: Many of the important events related in some way to the natural environment—stars, the sun, buffalo, etc. In the three Winter Counts that we looked at, the images for a specific year were often very similar.*)

LEARNING ACTIVITY 2

- 1) Remind your students that so far in this lesson they have explored the past through pictures and drawings. Ask them to list some other ways that we can find out about people from the past. (*Books, old objects, documents, word of mouth, video clips, etc.*)
- 2) Explain that sometimes, the only way we might learn about our ancestors is from the stories that we hear from our family. If we are lucky we can also, sometimes, find photographs, articles or other written information that provides us with more information about the lives of our ancestors. Poet Elizabeth Alexander’s grandfather came over to the United States from Jamaica. The only thing that her grandfather had told Elizabeth about his journey to America was that he had come on a “banana boat,” but he didn’t tell her much more than that. Explain that you are now going to show a video segment where Elizabeth learns out more about how her grandfather came to the U.S. Provide a FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION by asking students to find out what she learned.
- 3) Play Video Segment #2, “Journey from Jamaica.” After showing the segment, ask students what Elizabeth learned. (*She learned that her grandfather traveled first class,*

paid for the fare himself and traveled on the ship the Turrialba, which was built by the United Fruit Company.)

- 4) Ask students how Elizabeth reacted to hearing that news. (*She was very interested in hearing how her grandfather came to the U.S., but also wished she could ask him some more questions about his journey from Jamaica.*)
- 5) Explain that, although the information that Dr. Henry Louis Gates found for Elizabeth at Ellis Island helped answer some questions about Elizabeth's grandfather, it also made her think of new questions she wanted to ask him.

LEARNING ACTIVITY 3 (OPTIONAL)

- 1) Explain to students that different cultures have different ways of passing down information about their past to their children and grandchildren. In Chinese tradition, families created books with photographs, stories, poems and information about their family members. Many of these books have been destroyed or lost over time. Tell your students that in the final video clip you are going to show them, Dr. Henry Louis Gates travels to China to find out more about the family history of cellist Yo-Yo Ma. Dr. Gates meets with two men (a professor and a distant cousin of Yo-Yo Ma) who show him a book, started in 1723, containing information about Yo-Yo Ma's ancestors. Provide your students with a FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION by asking them how the Ma family book was kept safe over the years.
- 2) Play Video Segment #3, "Ma Family History." After the segment, ask students how the book was kept safe over the years. (*It was buried in the wall.*) Ask students how Yo-Yo Ma reacted when Dr. Gates gave him the book. (*He was very happy and thankful to have all of this information about his family.*) Ask students what Yo-Yo Ma learned that he didn't know before. (*He learned that his 4th great uncle, Gi Sung is the person who named Yo-Yo Ma and the next 30 generations of the family.*)
- 3) Ask students to brainstorm ideas on how they could keep information about their lives for many years to come. (*They could create a scrapbook or a photo album; they could keep important items in a safe place, etc.*)
- 4) Encourage students to make something to help keep pictures, drawing, letters, articles and/or other information about them and their families. Ask students to make one of the following projects to preserve important events in their own lives:
 - a journal
 - a scrapbook or photo album
 - a website

Note: You and your students could create one journal, scrapbook, photo album or website for the entire class. You and your students could work together to chronicle important events that happen throughout the school year.

CULMINATING ACTIVITY

- 1) Remind students about the Lakota Winter Counts that you looked at earlier, which contained drawings to let people of future generations know about important events that happened during the year.
- 2) Let your students know that they will now be able to create their own drawings to keep track of important things that happen during the week.
- 3) Distribute one "My Week in Drawings" Organizer to each student. Encourage students to create one drawing per day, starting with a drawing about something that

happened today. Ask students to think about the events of the day and to pick one which they would like to describe through a drawing.

- 4) After students have created their first drawings, ask for volunteers to describe their works to the group.
- 5) After students have completed one week of drawings, encourage students to discuss their images with the class.
- 6) Feel free to distribute more sheets to encourage students to continue to create one drawing each day, as desired.

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My Week in Drawings

American Indians created Winter Counts to describe events through pictures. Now it is your turn to use drawings to tell about memorable moments in your life. For each day of the week, make a drawing that describes something important that happened.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
Date: _____	Date: _____	Date: _____	Date: _____

Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Date: _____	Date: _____	Date: _____



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The Past through Pictures Game

Note to teachers:

Cut out the images along the dotted lines and give them to your students, making sure each student or group of students has one photo. Ask students to closely observe details of that photo. Then ask students to find a student with a different photo of a similar event. (For example, if they have an image of a birthday party, ask them to find a different image of a birthday party.) Ask the students to identify similarities and differences between the two photos.

The photographs for this game are from the following sources:

Birthday party 1951: <http://otal.umd.edu/~vg/domestic/birthday.html>

Birthday party, 2004: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kids_and_cake_3.jpg

(Author: [D'Arcy Norman](#); Calgary, Canada)

Summer school class 2006:

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Summer_school_painting_class_2006_009.jpg

(Author: Miskeen);

Wedding 1925:

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jensen_Shanahan_wedding_01b.jpg#file

(Image from the collection of Sandra Elaine Shanahan)

Ice Skating 1910: <http://liliannattel.wordpress.com/2008/11/25/how-i-learned-to-ice-skate/>

Ice Skating 2009: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A_day_with_the_family.jpg

(Author: Patrick B.)

Family Picnic c. 1913: http://www.guarlford.org.uk/remember_john_tandy.htm

Family Picnic: <http://www.sanjuanclassof73.com/NEWS.htm>

World Series Game 1955: http://6-4-2.blogspot.com/2007_01_01_archive.html

Spring Training Game 2009:

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Garrett_Olson_winds_up.jpg (Author: kpa sports)

The remaining photographs used in this game are in the public domain.

The Past through Pictures Game

Birthday Parties



Birthday Party (1951)



Birthday Party (October 3, 2004)

The Past Through Pictures Game

Art Classes



Students doing watercolor painting (around 1899)



Summer school painting class (2006)

Weddings



A FASHIONABLE WEDDING IN KAMERUN.

Wedding (Cameroon; West Africa; About. 1912)



Wedding (Chicago, Illinois; 1925)

The Past Through Pictures Game

Ice Skating



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, 1244_10457

#457

Ice Skating (Toronto, Canada; January 10, 1910)



Ice skating (Toronto, Canada; February 16, 2009)

Family Picnics



Family Picnic (England, around 1913)



Family Picnic

Baseball Games



World Series, Game 7 (1955)



Baseball Game (Spring Training-March 21, 2009)
