THE GREAT PONTCHARTRAIN PURSUIT
Capturing History in a Box

This activity is divided into five sections:

I. Learning about cultures in the Lake Pontchartrain Basin
II. Collecting and cataloging artifacts
III. Preparing a documentary-style report
IV. Designing a History Box
V. Making a presentation, in documentary form, using collected information and artifacts

GOAL
The purpose of this activity is to instill an awareness in students of the important role the Lake Pontchartrain Basin has played in the history of our culture.

Vocabulary

- **artifact**: something produced by human work
- **oral history**: historical data consisting of personal recollections
- **primary source**: a source of information written directly by the person whose experience is recorded (e.g., journals and diaries)
- **secondary source**: a source of information that is indirect, information written after the fact about historical events (e.g., history books)
- **anthropologist**: a person who studies the customs and cultures of the human race
- **archaeologist**: a person who studies the human cultures of the past
- **documentary**: a film or report in which evidence and information are used to tell a true story about a topic
SECTION I:
LEARNING ABOUT CULTURES AROUND THE LAKE PONTCHARTRAIN BASIN

Objectives:

- Share oral history anecdotes about the Lake.
- Use artifacts and other forms of evidence to illustrate the cultural history of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin.
- Distinguish between primary and secondary sources of information.

Materials:

- Artifacts associated with the Lake Pontchartrain Basin culture, such as a crab trap.

Getting Ready:

1. Contact local public and university libraries to determine the availability of materials on the history and culture of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin.
2. Contact local organizations such as the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation to obtain materials, arrange field trips and/or locate a guest speaker for your class.

Process:

1. Tell students the purpose of the activity. Explain that they are to first gather stories about the Lake Pontchartrain Basin from older people in their families and communities. Tell them to come to class on a designated date ready to share stories they have been told. They may choose to record the stories on audio- or videotape.

2. Ask students to share their anecdotes.

3. Define oral history and point out that their stories are a form of oral history. Discuss the values of oral history.

4. Discuss the difference between primary and secondary sources of information. Make lists of examples on the board under the two headings, “primary sources” and “secondary sources.”

5. Introduce the term “artifact” by passing around the artifact you have chosen to use to illustrate the point. Ask the students to pretend they are anthropologists or archaeologists. What clue would the artifact provide about the people who made and used it? (“What is it used for?” “Does it tell us anything about their diet?”)
SECTION II:
COLLECTING AND CATALOGING EVIDENCE AND ARTIFACTS

Objectives:
- Participate in a scavenger hunt to find and collect artifacts and information (primary and secondary sources) about the history and culture of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin.
- Catalog and organize the artifacts and information in a meaningful way.

Materials:
- Handout: The Great Pontchartrain Pursuit Scavenger Hunt (next page)
- Handout: Group Assignments (Page 275)
- Handout: Artifact and Information Record Sheet (Pages 276 and 277)
- Books on local history

Getting Ready:
1. Divide the class into cooperative learning teams, assigning each group a number. Assign roles of writers/editors, investigators, interviewers, and graphic designers.
2. Arrange a trip to a local library for research time in the Louisiana Room. Many of the books will be reference only. Prepare the students in advance for note-taking and making copies.

Process:
1. Explain to the students that they are about to begin a scavenger hunt for artifacts and information about the history of the culture in the Lake Pontchartrain Basin. Explain that their final goal is to prepare a documentary which will be presented along with the artifacts and other evidence and information to the class in the form of an oral presentation.
2. In their groups, the students make a plan for completing the assignments on the handout: The Great Pontchartrain Pursuit Scavenger Hunt. Each student may participate in two or more of the job groups. They use the handout: Group Assignments to divide up the tasks.
3. During homework time and on organized trips to the school or public library, the students begin to amass information and find artifacts.
4. During class time, the students work in their cooperative groups to catalog the artifacts, using the handout: Artifact Information Record Sheet. They need to organize the information in a meaningful, logical way; they must support their decisions.
HANDOUT:
The Great Pontchartrain Pursuit Scavenger Hunt

1. Find three written primary sources (e.g., journals, diaries, autobiographies) and three secondary sources (accounts written later about historical events) about life in the Lake Pontchartrain Basin in the 1600s, 1700s, 1800s or 1900s. Include stories or vignettes from each source, depicting an event that you find interesting.

2. Interview three people who depend on the Lake for a living, e.g., a fisher who depends directly on the Lake; a bait shop owner who provides a service to those using the Lake; a person working at a seafood restaurant whose business depends on a supply of seafood from the Lake. Tape the interview and transcribe the segment you find most interesting.

3. Find or make replicas of two artifacts used by people living in the Lake Pontchartrain Basin for three of the following centuries: 1600s, 1700s, 1800s, or 1900s.

4. Find five to ten photographs depicting life around the Lake Pontchartrain Basin. Include photographs from as many different time periods as possible, including recent days. Include various aspects of life: leisure, recreation, business, home life, etc. Look in pictorial history books of the regions within the Lake Pontchartrain Basin. Check out the local historical societies. Ask neighbors and family members.

5. People from many different cultures have made the Lake Pontchartrain Basin their home over the years. Construct a map depicting the location of two groups of people. Use the library to find sources of information on the culture. If possible, interview members of the cultures.

6. Collect three to five recipes which use ingredients obtained from Lake Pontchartrain. Try to find a wide assortment of foods. Include contemporary recipes as well as those from other time periods.

7. Collect photographs showing the changes of fashion through the ages, including swim wear, formal wear, work clothes, Mardi Gras costumes, etc.
HANDOUT:
Group Assignments

Designer/ Graphic Artists:
Designers and graphic artists will create the designs on the outside of the History Box, once the artifacts are collected. They will also construct the map depicting the cultures that live around Lake Pontchartrain.

Investigators:
Investigators will conduct research on the various topics. They will locate information in the libraries and from other outside sources.

Interviewers:
Interviewers will locate members of the community to interview. They will write the questions, interview the subjects, and transcribe portions of the tapes.

Writers/ Editors:
Writers and editors will write, edit, revise, type, and proof the text for the History Box Documentary presentation.

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LPBF/UNO 275
GROUP #: ____________________________
GROUP MEMBERS: ____________________________

Directions:

ARTIFACT/ INFORMATION (circle one)

If the item is an artifact, circle the word “artifact.” If the item is a piece of written information, circle the word “information.”

NUMBER:

Catalog each item by assigning your group number first, then the number of the item. For example, a fishing net would be considered an artifact. If it were the first artifact collected, Group 1 would catalog it as 001-001A. Artifacts will end with an “A.” Information items will end with an “I.” (Be sure to place a tag on each item with the appropriate number as well.)

DESCRIPTION:

Briefly describe each artifact and printed material.

SOURCE: PRIMARY/ SECONDARY

Indicate whether your source of information was written directly by the person who experienced, recorded, or described events, activities, thoughts, beliefs, ideas (primary source) or indirectly by someone who researched the events or paraphrased the descriptions, thoughts, beliefs, or ideas (secondary source). Briefly describe your source.
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SECTION III:
PREPARING A DOCUMENTARY-STYLE REPORT

**Objective:**
Work in cooperative groups to prepare a documentary report, focusing on an aspect of the cultural history of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin.

**Materials:**
- Paper and pencils/pens
- Word processors/computers as available
- Props (hats, backdrops, etc.)

**Getting Ready:**
Schedule computer time. Students will need access to word processing programs.

**Process:**

1. Students work in their groups to complete writing descriptions and stories about their selected artifacts, demonstrating how these artifacts are significant to the cultural history of the area.

2. Students write short accounts or stories about the other information they have gathered (e.g., a section of a diary or a fascinating story about a notable person in the history of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin).

3. Students arrange their information chronologically.

4. In cooperative groups, students prepare a presentation of their work, developing a script for their presentation. Encourage creativity; students may choose to illustrate a point with a short skit or a song.
SECTION IV:
DESIGNING A HISTORY BOX

**Objectives:**

- Decorate a box with illustrations of selected historical events of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin.
- Make a list of the artifacts to be included in the History Box.
- Place the artifacts in the History Box in an order determined by the group.

**Materials:**

- Large, sturdy cardboard boxes (preferably with lids)
- Paint/markers, etc. for illustrations
- Paper, pens/pencils

**Getting Ready:**

1. Arrange the classroom, providing working space for each group.
2. Obtain a plastic cover or drop cloth for art areas.

**Process:**

1. Students assigned to the “designer/graphic artists” roles (See Group Assignments handout) choose and depict a scene about a significant event in the history of the Lake/Basin.
2. Students make a list of the artifacts and information to be included in the History Box.
3. Students arrange all the artifacts, etc. in the History Box.
SECTION V:
PRESENTING THE DOCUMENTARIES

Objective:

Make a presentation to the class of the work completed in Sections II, III, and IV.

Getting Ready:

Prepare the classroom for the presentations. Think about audio-visual equipment, furniture arrangement, extra tables, and traffic flow.

Process:

1. In cooperative groups, the students make presentations of their documentary, featuring the artifacts, primary and secondary information, and the History Boxes.

2. Display the History Boxes.

3. “Debrief” the presentation. “What were the most significant facts you learned?” “What was the most surprising fact or artifact?” “What were the strengths of each presentation?” “What would you change if you were to repeat the presentation?” “What suggestions would you give to future researchers?”