



# Teaching History through Archives



*Lesson Plans for Grades 3-5 Using Collections from the  
Albert Gore Research Center  
Middle Tennessee State University*

Our mission at the Albert Gore Research Center is to educate the MTSU community and the public about the histories of MTSU, of American democracy, of equine studies, and of life in Middle Tennessee, and to lead the preservation of materials vital to those histories. With this in mind, our purpose for this curriculum packet is to provide area schoolteachers as well as homeschool teachers with available materials and lessons for their disposal.

Within each lesson, there are activities to help introduce the students to the material and to prepare them for the following activities. Also included are instructions and brief pre-lesson synopses to assist the teacher. As a small organization within the larger university, we understand it may be difficult for some students to physically visit the center. Therefore, some of our lessons can be done entirely in the classroom. There are also pre and post-visit activities that correspond to lessons performed on site.

Through the use of our collections, students will engage with primary and secondary historical sources. The lessons adhere to Tennessee State Standards in areas such as Language Arts, Social Studies, and Geography. Please adjust the lessons and activities to fit your individual classroom's needs.

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# Veterans Oral History Collection

**Overview:** Teachers will use the following activity to introduce their students to oral history. Students will comprehend the different approaches to history and recognize the importance of recording history. This activity also introduces primary and secondary sources.

**Objective:** Introduce students to oral histories. Students will be able to identify and understand the difference between written and oral history. Students will understand the methods and uses behind oral histories.



[Frances Theresa Densmore with Blackfoot Chief, Mountain Chief \(1916\)](#)

## Tennessee Curriculum Standards:

### Social Studies

- 3.9 Analyze primary and secondary sources, maps, photographs, texts, and artifacts for contradictions, supporting evidence, and historical details.
- 3.15 Use information gained from timelines, primary sources, media, and informational text to identify major historical events and patterns in North America.
- 3.17 Compare and contrast a primary and secondary source of the same event or topic.
- 5.14 Use concrete words, phrases, and sensory details to describe the experience of war on the battlefield and home front
- 5.53 Compare and Contrast different stories from the media, and informational text regarding the bombing of Pearl Harbor and its impact on the United States.

### English Language Arts

- 3.5 Refer to parts of stories, dramas, and poems when writing or speaking about a text
- 3.6 Distinguish their own point of view from that of the narrator.
- 4.6 Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text
- 4.7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words
- 5.9 Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

**Investigative Question:** How do oral histories help our understanding of historical events?

# Activity One: Introduction to Oral Histories

## Materials:

- ☒ Whiteboard
- ☒ Provided Photos

**Prep:** 10 minutes to cut photos

**Time Required:** One 30-minute class period

***Teacher's Note:** This activity will have students brainstorming different ideas about recording history. Oral history is the recording of historical events through oral testimony, which also makes them a primary source. Historians use oral histories to gain a fuller understanding of particular events or people and libraries, archives, and museums typically preserve and collect these recordings. The first activity also correlates to the assessment activity. Please adjust the activity accordingly.*

## Steps:

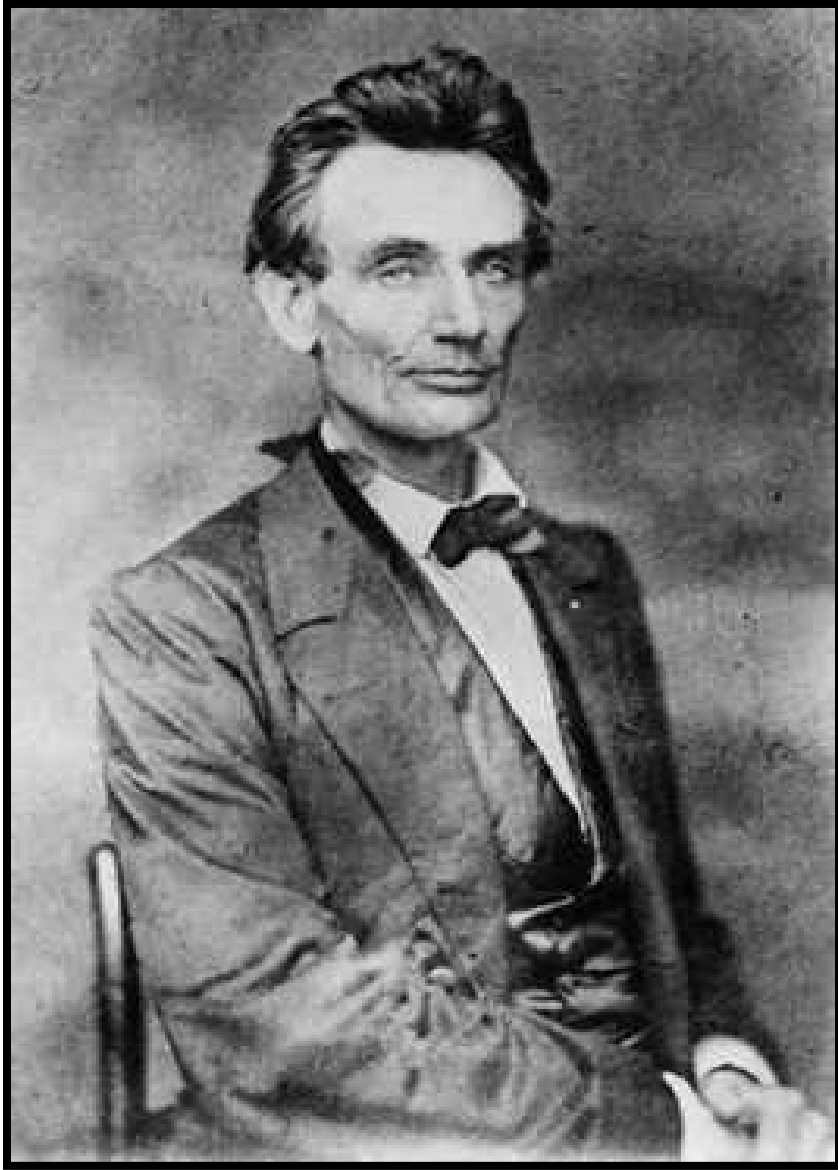
1. Draw a Venn diagram on the whiteboard.
2. Label one circle "History" and the other circle "Storytelling"
3. Ask the students to offer answers to fill in the different circles, using the middle circle to discuss similarities.
  - What is history? How do we record it?
  - What is storytelling? How do we hear stories?
4. Pass around the selected photos.
5. Ask the students (this should get them thinking about events that occurred in the past and encourage them to think about hearing stories from their older relatives).
  - What do you know about these photos?
  - How did you learn about these people?
6. Explain how stories from elders teach us about history and the past, even if the events occurred before the students' lives.
7. Lastly, divide the students into pairs.
8. Have the pairs share one story about their life with their partners. Tell the students they will need to remember this story for a later date.



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MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

## Photos for Activity One

1.



[Abraham Lincoln, 16<sup>th</sup> President of U.S](#)

2.



[Buzz Aldrin, Moon Landing, 1969](#)

3.



[World Trade Center on September 11, 2001](#)

4.



[Martin Luther King, Jr. 1965 Selma March](#)

# Activity Two: Using Oral Histories

## Materials:

- ☑ Access to the Albert Gore Research Center's Veteran's Oral History Collection (Website: <https://mtsu.edu/gorecenter/oral-history-collections.php>)
- ☑ Provided Worksheets
- ☑ Provided Photos
- ☑ Veteran's History Exhibit Map

**Prep:** 15 minutes to set up technology, print out worksheets, and divide groups (if desired). More prep time if teachers desire to listen to the oral histories prior to the class.

**Time Required:** One 45-60-minute class period

***Teacher's Note:** This activity will have students listening and working with oral histories. Using the materials provided, the students will also be using additional primary sources to supplement the recordings. The students will gain a broader understanding of World War II by listening to these recollections. Please adjust the worksheets accordingly.*

## Steps:

1. Explain to the students that the oral histories are from military veterans that were active in World War II.
2. Give a brief synopsis of World War II if needed. Explain to the students that both men and women served at this time.
3. Decide whether to listen to the oral histories as a class or divide into groups of 3.
4. Pass out the provided labeled pictures for each of the oral histories.
5. Listen to the following oral histories. All of the veterans were originally from Tennessee. Adjust the time according to your needs. Provided are the minutes that directly relate to the Veteran's History exhibit at the Albert Gore Research Center.
  - [Mary Margaret Salm \(56:00\) Location: London, UK](#)
  - [Rose Witherspoon \(45:40\) Location: Arizona, US](#)
  - [William Pickron \(2:00:00\) Location: Nagasaki, Japan](#)
  - [James Walls \(15:00\) Location: Hawaii](#)
6. Listen to each oral history for 10 minutes or as much as time allows.
7. After each oral history, locate each oral history interviewee's location on the map (either provided or a teacher-approved map). This can be done by having a student select it on the map or doing this as a class/group.
7. After each recording, stop the recording and allow the students time to fill out the worksheet.
8. After the final recording, fill out the rest of the worksheet.
9. Ask the class to share their answers.

# Photos of Veterans or their Historical Event

Mary Margaret Salm



Rose Witherspoon



**William Pickron**



**James Walls (Pearl Harbor)**



# Geography Activity Map



# Veteran's Oral Histories Worksheet

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*Listen to the four oral histories from World War II veterans. Then answer the following questions.*

## Veterans

Mary Margaret Salm

Rose Witherspoon

William Pickron

James Walls

1. Name two similarities between the oral histories.

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2. Name two differences between the oral histories

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3. Were men and women's experiences different? How were they different?

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4. How do oral histories help us learn about history?

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5. What question would you ask a veteran if you were doing an oral history?

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6. How does a historical event change when you hear about it from someone who was there?

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7. What is something new you learned from listening to the oral histories?

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8. What might we infer about the lives of these veterans from their interviews?

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9. How might these oral histories change if done today?

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## **Suggested answers:**

1. All were Americans, all were US Veterans, all did oral histories, all were in World War II, all were Tennesseans, all wore uniforms
2. Veterans were in different places, some were women, some were in combat, different races, some were in major events
3. Women stayed in allied zones, women were not in combat, women had office jobs, men were stationed in areas that were more dangerous
4. Gives us a bigger (broader) context, hear it from someone's perspective, etc.
5. Varies based on opinion, try to encourage them to think of historically relevant questions that require more than a "yes" or "no" answer.
6. Varies based on opinion
7. Varies based on information
8. Varies based on information
9. Different answers, women in combat, different questions because of technology, etc.

## **Evaluation purposes:**

This assignment could be graded on a 10-point scale, 1 point for every correct answer (9) and 1 point for a completed worksheet (1)

# Activity Three: Assessing Oral Histories

## Materials:

- ☒ Paper
- ☒ markers, colored pencils

**Prep:** 5 minutes to get materials

**Time Required:** One 20-30 minute class period

***Teacher's Note:** This activity will help students comprehend the previous two activities. They will connect their stories from the first lesson and combine it with the skills they discovered in the second lesson. This will also allow the teacher to assess the effectiveness of the lesson. Please adjust accordingly.*

## Steps:

1. Have the students divide back into their original pairs from the first activity.
2. Give the students the paper and writing utensils.
3. Ask the students to draw a comic or picture detailing the story they heard from their partner in the first activity. Explain to them that they have to do this from memory and cannot ask their partner for help.
4. After drawing is complete, have the students share the drawings/interpretations with the class.
5. Have the partners compare/validate the stories presented.
6. Ask the students for their opinions about oral history. Some possible reflection questions are:
  - How different were the two stories (between the partners)?
  - How can we use oral history techniques to keep the stories accurate when we retell them to others?
  - How does oral history help us remember events and stories?
  - What kinds of questions are important for the interviewer to ask? (Make sure the students understand to ask questions that require more than a "yes" or "no" answer.
  - How do oral histories add to other ways of learning about history? (Photos, textbooks, diaries, etc.).
  - How does who tells the story change our view?

# Marion Coleman Peck Exhibit and Collections

**Overview:** Students will learn how to use photographs, documents, and objects to infer about people and history. They will use analytical skills to show comparison and contrast. The students will also learn the critical thinking and writing skills when dealing with historical objects.

**Objectives:** To introduce students to primary sources to show how we can use sources to infer and learn about people and history.



Warriors with Words and Faith exhibit case,  
Albert Gore Research Center

## Curriculum Standards:

### Social Studies:

- 3.9 Analyze primary and secondary sources, maps, photographs, texts, and artifacts for contradictions, supporting evidence, and historical details.
- 3.15 Use information gained from timelines, primary sources, media, and informational text to identify major historical events and patterns in North America.
- 3.17 Compare and contrast a primary and secondary source of the same event or topic.
- 3.57 Interpret different texts and primary sources to describe the major components of history and culture.
- 3.58 Tell a historic story with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details while speaking in coherent sentences. Use information gained from timelines, primary sources, and informational text.

### English Language Arts

- 3.2, 4.2, 5.2 Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
- 3.3, 4.3, 5.3 Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.
- 3.5, 4.5, 5.5 Refer to parts of stories, dramas, and poems when writing or speaking about a text.
- 3.10, 4.10, 5.10 Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.
- 3.6, 4.6, 5.6 Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text
- 3.7, 4.7, 5.7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

**Investigative Question:** How do objects and documents shape our ideas about people and history?

# Activity One: Analyzing Photographs

## Materials:

- ☒ Provided Photographs
- ☒ Whiteboard/Word Document

Prep: 10 minutes to cut photographs and set up technology

Time Required: One 20-minute class period

**Teacher's Note:** *This activity will introduce students to Marion Coleman Peck. Marion Coleman Peck was a newspaper reporter from Tennessee who challenged gender stereotypes by covering stories that involved World War II. Her knack for writing eventually earned her a spot at the front lines of the Louisiana and Tennessee Army Maneuvers in 1941 and 1943. She was the first woman to gain such a role. The articles Peck wrote during the maneuvers garnered national attention due to her ability to report the news with feeling and emotion. Rather than reporting "straight news" of troop movements and political decisions, Peck sought out stories that allowed readers to "reach inside their hearts." Peck's writing talents got her recognized in a field previously dominated by men. After the war, she returned home to her daughter, Laurel. Additionally, she also owned a fire station and wrote social justice pieces.*

## Steps:

1. Explain to the students that they are going to learn about a woman named Marion Peck. Do not share the biographical information yet beyond what year she was born and where she lived.
2. Show the students the picture labeled "1".
3. Ask the students to examine the photo and report their findings.
4. Ask questions about the woman in the photograph. Some questions could be:
  - What is this woman doing?
  - What do you think her job is?
  - Where do you think she is?
  - When do you think this picture occurred?
5. Show the students the picture labeled "2".
6. Ask the students about this photo. Ask similar questions as before.
7. Show the students the picture labeled "3".
8. Ask the students about this photo. Ask similar questions as before.
9. After viewing the three photos, write the board or type in a word document what the students noticed. Ask them what we can infer about Marion Peck from the photographs.

# Marion Peck Photos Activity One

1.



(This is a photo of Marion Peck during a military training in Tennessee. She was participating in a night raid for a news article, circa 1943.)

2.



(This is a photo of Marion Peck and the members of her fire department, circa 1960s)

3.



(This is a photo of Marion in her later years with her typewriter. Her real passion in life was writing, circa 1960s.)

# Activity Two: Analyzing Documents/Objects

## Materials:

- ☒ Provided photographs and scans
- ☒ Provided worksheets
- ☒ Additional paper

**Prep:** 15 minutes to print out and cut photos and scans

**Time Required:** One 40-minute class period

***Teacher's Note:** This activity will use pictures of objects and scanned documents from the collection to illustrate how these items tell historians more about the people of the past. Students will use inference skills to draw conclusions about the woman from activity one. These objects and documents will complement their findings. Please adjust accordingly.*

## Steps:

1. Divide the students into groups of 3.
2. Give each group a worksheet.
3. Explain that all the objects and documents belonged to Marion Peck
4. Explain to students that they must write down their answers for each object/document.
5. Show the students the picture labeled "1".
6. Have the students answer the questions on the object.
7. Repeat for the other five objects in order. Documents can be enlarged if necessary.
8. When the students are finished, put one of the pictures from the first activity on a projector/computer screen for the class to see.
9. Ask the students some of the questions from activity one
  - Who is this person?
  - What is her job?
  - Where is she?
10. Give the students some of the background on Marion Peck (her career as a news reporter, her daughter Laurel, her social activism, and her ownership of a fire station).
11. On the notebook paper, have the students compare and contrast their earlier conclusions with the conclusions from the objects.
12. Ask the students to share their responses and ask how objects help us to understand someone's life.

# Object and Document Analysis Worksheet

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Object Number One



What might Marion have used this object for?

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What types of materials made this object?

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## Object Number Two



What does this object say about Marion?

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Why would Marion need this?

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## Object Number 3



What is this object?

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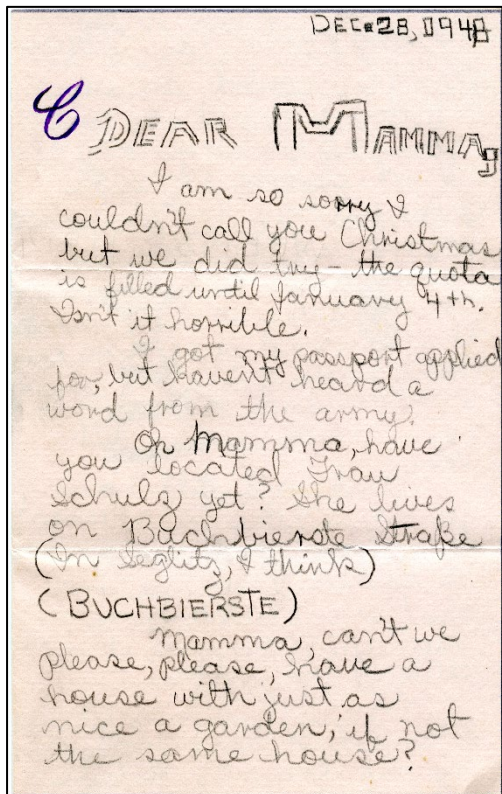
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What do you think the different pins symbolize?

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## Document Number 1



Who wrote this and why?

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What can we infer about Marion through this letter?

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[illegible]

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[illegible]

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## **Suggested Answers:**

This exercise is great for encouraging students to arrive at their own conclusions without fearing the penalty of being wrong. Many of the answers are open-ended, but will help students use context clues and inference skills. The answers given below are a guide for teachers to use to their own discretion when sharing with the class.

### **Object One:**

Question 1: This is a keffiyeh. Marion received it during her travels to Syria. A traditional Arab headdress, which is fashioned from a square scarf. People in Arabia, Jordan, and Iraq have worn them for over a century.

Question 2: Cloth, Leather, and Rope

### **Object Two:**

Question 1: Marion worked at a fire station, she wore a badge, and she was in a town called Hixson Pike.

Question 2: To show her authority, for safety purposes, for identification

### **Object Three:**

Question 1: This object is Marion's civilian armband that she wore during her years as a news correspondent for the United States military. The "C" on the band indicates she was a civilian.

Question 2: The explanation for the pins is on the additional information page (TO BE ADDED 3/24).

#### Document One:

Question 1: This is a letter from her daughter Laurel. Marion and Laurel relied on letters and postcards to communicate while Marion was overseas.

Question 2: She is a mother. We know the date, so we can hypothesize where Marion is located. We can guess that the letter is to Marion from her child.

#### Document Two:

Question 1: The students have reviewed multiple sources relating to Marion's fire department activities. This article explains her position as owner. For further lessons, this is useful in understanding gender norms in the 1960s, as Marion was the only woman at that time to own a fire department.

Question 2: Newspaper articles written by other people indicate how they view their subject. This article paints Marion in a positive way, complimenting her on balancing grandchildren with an operational firehouse.

Document Three:

Question 1: This is personal but students' answers should revolve around new perspectives of Marion.

Question 2: We can learn about the Tennessee Maneuvers and we can learn about her experience as a writer.

Evaluation purposes:

As this is an inquiry and inference activity, it is suggested that the grade be based on completion.

## Extra Photos of Marion Peck



Marion Peck in uniform



Marion Peck wearing a keffiyeh



Marion Peck practicing martial arts

## **Additional Information on Objects**

**1. Keffiyeh** – Keffiyehs are Middle Eastern headdresses that are usually fashioned from square scarves. While overseas in 1948, Marion Peck traveled to Damascus, Syria, which is the assumed origin of the keffiyeh shown.

**2. Hixson Pike Fire Badge** – In the 1950s, Marion Peck received full control and ownership of the Hixson Pike Fire Department. This badge identified her position as owner and chief. She was the first woman in the United States to hold such a position, circa 1957.

**3. Civilian Arm Band** – While out in the field, Marion Peck's military identification was her armband that labeled her as a civilian. The seven pins on the armband indicate different military units, circa 1940s.

### **Pins on armband–**

"Fides Et Audax" – 134<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Regiment, Ohio National Guard

"Hit 'Em First" – 181<sup>st</sup> Field Artillery Regiment, Tennessee National Guard

"Catervae Ferreae" – 121<sup>st</sup> Field Artillery Regiment, Wisconsin National Guard

Army Quartermaster

204<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion, Utah National Guard

164<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, North Dakota National Guard

# Activity Three: Assessment

## Materials:

- ☒ Notebook paper
- ☒ Writing utensils

**Prep:** 2 minutes to write prompt on a whiteboard/computer

**Time Required:** One 20-30 minute class period

*Teacher's Note: This activity will help students comprehend the information in the previous activities. It also serves as an assessment for the teacher to gauge what the students have learned and how they can use the information. Please adjust accordingly.*

## Steps:

1. Have students prepare the materials.
2. On a whiteboard or computer projector, write the following prompt (or a similar version):

**Reflect on what you have learned about Marion Peck from studying her photos, objects, and documents. Use this information to write a fictional story about Marion based on her historical sources.**

3. Have the students read their stories to the class.
4. After the students have finished, work as a class to describe Marion. This can be done through a take-home essay, group work, or class discussion.
5. Adjust grading to the needs of your classroom.

**\*\*For an extra activity: Bring the students to the Albert Gore Research Center to view the objects and documents in person for activity two. \*\***

# Additional Notes and Resources

**Photos:** All photos used in the lessons plans are from the Albert Gore Research Center's collections or available on the internet as public domain. Each public domain photo contains a hyperlink with the photo's website. The websites provide additional information for background knowledge if necessary.

## **Additional links for further lessons and information on oral histories:**

[The Library of Congress](#)

[UNC School of Education](#)

[National Park Service](#)

[Oral Histories in the Classroom](#)

[Additional Information on Tennessee and World War II](#)

## **Additional Links for Marion Peck and object-based learning ideas:**

### **Marion Peck:**

[MTSU Graduate Student's blog on Marion Peck](#)

[Marion Peck's biography, written by her daughter, Laurel](#)

[Laurel Steinhice's account of her childhood with her mother](#)

[A book of photographs taken by Marion Peck that document the Holocaust](#)

[Descriptions of the Tennessee Maneuvers compiled through interviews](#)

[Additional Information on Tennessee and World War II](#)

### **Object-based Learning Ideas**

[Tenement Museum Lesson](#)

[Teaching with Museum Collections](#)

[Object Lessons: Communicating Knowledge through Collections](#)