

PERSHING MURAL PROJECT CURRICULUM

Learning From the Past, Understanding the Present, and Discovering the Future



THE PERSHING MURAL - A NEBRASKA CULTURAL LANDMARK

Time Capsules

In the lesson, students will learn about time capsules and how the past can send a message to the future. The students will be invited to create and fill their own time capsules and will also write a personal time capsule to be mailed to them in the future.

Included in this Lesson:

- Lesson Plan: Time Capsules
- Power Point: Time Capsules
- Power Point: Writing a Personal Time Capsule
- PDF: Worksheet for Time Capsules

Nebraska Standards Addressed:

Present: SS 1.4.1.a List and describe life events over time.

Connect: SS 1.4.1.b Compare and contrast family life from earlier times and today.

Respond: SS 1.4.3.c Describe how oral traditions, books, letters, and other artifacts help us to understand the past.

Present: SS 1.4.4.c Gather and communicate historical information about families.

Create: EP2. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience

Create: L.A.5.W.1 Create grammatically correct multi-paragraph compositions with varied sentence structures.

Respond: L.A.5.W.2 Use a recursive writing process to develop, strengthen, and produce writing appropriate to the audience

Create: EP6. Use English structures to communicate context-specific messages.

Create: EP2. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience

Objectives:

- The students will be able to describe and give examples of time capsules and their contents.
- The students will explain why time capsules are helpful for historians, archaeologists, and anthropologists in studying past ways of life.
- The students will create and fill their own time capsules.
- The students will write letters explaining the contents of their time capsules.
- By creating a Personal Time Capsule, the students will provide a record of their lives and who they are now.
- By creating a Personal Time Capsule, the students will express their current views, attitudes, philosophy, and outlook.
- By creating a Personal Time Capsule, the students will analyze their personal characteristics, set goals for themselves, and describe how they view the future.
- The students will use correct sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, and spelling in writing their letters.

Grade Level:

Written at 6th Grade Level (educators are encouraged to adjust the lesson to meet needs of Pre-K to 12th Grade)

Time Requirement:

3-4 (50-minute) class sessions

Materials Needed:

Temporary Containers for Time Capsules (shoe boxes, oatmeal containers with lids, Pringles cans with lids, or more durable structures), paper, pens/pencils, print-out form for selecting items, photo of the student creating the time capsule, Items to include in the time capsule, stickers, markers, etc. to decorate time capsule

Vocabulary:

Time Capsule: A container holding historical records or objects that are preserved for someone in the future to discover

Historian: An expert in history

Archaeologist: A scientist who recovers, preserves, and studies human activity from past cultures.

Anthropologist: A scientist who studies everything about being human—culture, experiences, history, and diversity

Artifacts: Objects such as tools, ornaments or weapon made by humans that are historically or culturally interesting

Memorabilia: Things that people collect because they once belonged to a famous person or because they have a special connection with an interesting place, event, or activity

Mementos: an object kept as a reminder or souvenir of a person or event

Direct Instruction:

In 1955, construction of the Pershing Auditorium began and the building was completed in March, 1957. On May 4, 1959, a 190-pound steel tube was filled and buried in the sidewalk by the Auditorium. The goal was for the time capsule to remain encased until 2059 when it would be opened 100 years later to celebrate Lincoln's Bi-centennial.

In 2023 when Pershing Auditorium was slated for demolition, the time capsule was removed 36 years ahead of schedule and opened. Inside was a letter from Bennet Martin (Mayor of Lincoln from 1956-1959) who wrote directly to those in the future who would open the capsule. Among the contents of the capsule were documents such as a centennial newspaper, Gooch's Best scrapbook, promotional items from local businesses, photos, and a drawing of the city. The contents are now being curated and will be on display at History Nebraska.

Time capsules are meant to preserve objects to commemorate an event or to capture a moment in time for future generations to see. They are an historic collection of articles, artifacts, information, mementos, and memorabilia that are meant to communicate with future people. They are helpful for archaeologists, anthropologists, and historians to understand how lives were lived in the past.

These capsules may be buried, placed in vaults or safety deposit boxes, or enclosed in a specially-designed cavity in a building. To endure the elements and keep the contents safe and intact, a time capsule needs to be constructed from strong, water-proof materials that can be sealed, especially if it is to be buried or enclosed a building. Finding just the right way to construct, enclose and seal the time capsule is very important to protect what it contains.

One of the oldest time capsules uncovered in the United States was opened in Boston in 2014. More than two centuries earlier, in the year 1795, Samuel Adams and Paul Revere placed items in a cowhide-covered time capsule which was encased in a corner stone of the Boston State House while it was under construction. In 1855 when repairs were made to the State House building, the original Revere and Adams time capsule was removed from the cornerstone and opened; additional items were added to the capsule. To better preserve its contents, it was resealed in a copper

container no bigger than a cigar box and was re-encased until it was recovered and opened in 2014.

What was inside the time capsule? After meticulous examination, the box was carefully opened to reveal silver and copper coins dating from 1652 to 1855. Also in the box were newspapers, a medal depicting George Washington and a silver plaque believed to be engraved by Paul Revere. What a wonderful gift from the 18th century to the 21st century! After being on display at the Boston's Museum of Fine Arts for some time, the two-hundred-plus year-old capsule was reburied with some modern currency added for a future generation to discover and explore.

Time Capsules are not only buried or tucked away in cornerstones here on earth. A very special time capsule was launched into space by NASA to be carried on Voyager 1 and 2. The message in the capsule used a 12-inch gold-plated copper disk containing sounds and images to showcase the diversity of life and culture on Earth.

Carl Sagan (American astronomer and science writer), who played an integral part in the project noted, "The spacecraft will be encountered and the record played only if there are advanced spacefaring civilizations in interstellar space. But the launching of this bottle into the cosmic ocean says something very hopeful about life on this planet."

Back on Earth, the largest time capsule in the world on record in the 1977 Guinness Book of World Records can be found buried in Seward, Nebraska! With his grandkids in mind, store owner Harold Davisson had a 45-ton vault buried under a mound of dirt in front of his furniture store. He wanted his grandchildren to know what his life was like in 1975. Harold entombed some 5,000 items, including two cars, telephone books, packages and gifts from local citizens, statuary, clothing, and trinkets from the disco era to be opened in 2025.

So, for centuries, people have been using time capsules to send messages to future generations. Those who open these "treasures" find everything under the sun...newspapers, clippings, letters, postcards, recipes, keepsakes, toys, packaging from a favorite snack, videos, documents, coins, artifacts, family photos, advertisements, autographs, blueprints, receipts, brochures, team jerseys, ticket stubs, postage stamps, movie

reviews, essays, diaries, family trees....all useful in giving us a unique view into the past.

Class Discussion:

- How would you describe a time capsule to someone without knowledge?
- What do you think time capsules can tell us about history and culture?
- Why do the containers for time capsules need to be carefully constructed?
- What would you include in a family or community time capsule?
- Would you want to open your time capsule yourself or have someone else open it?
- Would you include an element of surprise or curiosity in your capsule?
- Your Time Capsule can contain clues about who you are. What kinds of writing or items would you include to give clues about your habits, interests, and special events in your life?

Guided and Independent Practice:

Activity One: Create a Time Capsule

Guided and Independent Practice:

The students will be given the assignment to create, decorate, and fill their own personal time capsules. Each time capsule will remain unsealed until it and its contents can be shared with the class and evaluated.

- 1) The students will decide when they want their time capsules to be opened (in a year, 10 years, 50 years?). This will help them decide upon the container to use and contents to select.
- 2) Students will select 5 to 7 things to be included in the time capsule. **One of these items must be a picture of the student.** When deciding on items to include, the students should consider:

- a) Items that represent themselves, their families, school and/or community
 - b) Favorite hobbies, holidays, pets, games, sports, activities, etc. Some examples of items that could be included in a personal time capsule include: photos (family, friends, pets), a lock of hair, movie stubs, concert tickets, receipts from a special occasion, advertisements, an old tee shirt, postcards, a map of favorite places, artwork, a copy of a favorite book, copy of report card, lyrics to a favorite song, a favorite recipe, a newspaper from a special day (birthday), a list of favorite games, a favorite toy, a family tree, a keepsake, photos or mementos from a favorite vacation, empty wrapper from a favorite candy or treat, etc.
 - c) Those items that will stand the test of time. Perishable goods like food or plants are a “no-no.” Newspapers will fade and degrade but photo copies will not.
- 3) Students will complete the form below to describe the items selected and why they were chosen for the capsule:

Item 1: Picture of the Student
Item 2:
Item 3:
Item 4:
Item 5:
Item 6:
Item 7:

- 4) The students will select a container that is large enough to hold the items selected. Students should consider:
 - a) Will the time capsule be buried outside or stored/hidden indoors?
 - b) What is the ideal container for the length of time the time capsule is to remain unopened?
 - c) How long will the time capsule remain sealed?
- 5) The students may decorate their containers (using markers, stickers, etc.). For purposes of this assignment, temporary containers like a shoe box, etc. may be used until the students decide to transfer the contents to a capsule that is strong, watertight, and able to withstand the elements if buried.
- 6) The students will write letters to be included in their time capsules. Just like the mayor of Lincoln included a letter in the time capsule at Pershing Auditorium, the students will include an explanatory letter.
 - a) The message the students include with their time capsules should give context or explain more about the items selected to be enclosed.
 - b) The letter can talk about their personalities, traditions, things that are important to them and characteristics of their family or community.
 - c) The letter may be neatly handwritten or printed.
 - d) The letter will use correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
 - e) Each paragraph will consist of four or more sentences.
 - f) The letter will be dated and signed by the student. These are the parts of the letters the students will write:
 1. Line One: The current date
 2. Paragraph One: This paragraph tells the name, age, and interests of the student. It is a way for the students to introduce themselves.
 3. Paragraph Two: This paragraph talks more about the contents of the time capsule. It can add important information about dates, traditions, and events. The students could explain more about each of the items in the capsule—why they were included—what was their function. They can also express their feelings, such as why these items were important to them.
 4. Paragraph Three: This is the concluding part of the letter which can motivate future generations to keep up the tradition of time capsules and explain why creating the time capsule was important to the writer as it offers an encouragement for those in the future.

5. The signature of the student.

Note: Students may compose a letter that has more than three paragraphs; however, three paragraphs are the minimum allowed.

- 7) After revising and editing their letters and receiving peer feedback, the students will load their decorated time capsules with their letters, photos, and selected items, keeping their containers unsealed.
- 8) The students will share their time capsules with the class for discussion and evaluation. Once discussion and evaluation are complete, the students are free to take their time capsules home with them to hide away for the future.

Discussion Questions:

- What did you learn about yourself and what is important to you by creating your own time capsule?
- If you had not written your letter, do you think those who open your time capsule in the future would understand what you included and why?
- What do you hope someone in the future will learn about you from your time capsule?

Assessment:

The student will be assessed by the following:

- 1) Was the worksheet for time capsule item selection completed?
- 2) Did the student select 5-7 items that were loaded into a time capsule structure (one of which was a photo of themselves)
- 3) Did the student write a letter in the prescribed format that was correct in grammar, punctuation, and spelling?

Closure:

Time capsules give us a unique way to learn about history, events, and cultures. They give us a view into peoples' habits, traditions, and way of life. They pique our curiosity about how those in the past saw the world and give us a very personal way of experiencing history.

Activity Two: Personal Time Capsules

Personal Time Capsule: A letter you write to your future self where you talk about the facts of your life, thoughts and dreams about the present, and your hopes for the future.

Materials Needed:

Paper, pens/pencils, envelopes, decorative elements and embellishments as desired

Guided and Independent Practice:

Personal Time Capsules are letters the students will write to themselves to be opened in the future. Writing a letter to their future self is like creating a time capsule of their thoughts, dreams, and life journey. They can fill it with facts, where their life is now and all the hopes they have for the future. These letters will be shown to the teacher for evaluation and will then be sealed in self-addressed envelopes and kept for one year before being mailed to the students. Privacy is very important.

The letters the students will write to their future selves **should be dated** and will address four topics. Each topic section should be in paragraph form and be at least five sentences long. Students may include more than one paragraph per section,

- 1) Topic One: Who am I? How would I describe myself? What/who are my:
 - Hobbies
 - Likes and dislikes (movies, music, books, activities)
 - Joys and frustrations
 - Extracurricular activities
 - Hopes and dreams
 - Best friends
 - Pets
 - Crushes
- 2) Topic Two: What is life like right now where I live (the world as well as my community and school)?
 - Major current events (weather catastrophes, wars, etc.)

- Current trends in media, technology, clothing, and style
 - Current pop icons, athletic stars, trendsetters, leaders, influencers
 - Descriptions of my community, school, and neighborhood
 - Favorite things to do with friends or places to hang out
- 3) Topic Three: What have I learned in the past year? The lessons may have come from school, family, friends, and experiences.
- What is the best thing that happened to me in the past year?
 - Is there something funny, embarrassing, or exciting I want to remember to laugh about in the future?
 - Have I learned any important lessons I do not want to forget?
 - What do I wish I could redo?
 - Do I have anything I am working on (fears, challenges, goals, mastering a skill)?
 - What are my milestones or accomplishments this year? What am I still working on?
- 4) Topic Four: What do I hope and wish for in the future? What are:
- Goals for the future
 - Pieces of advice for myself in the future?
 - New habits I want to start
 - Things I want to exclude or add in my life
 - Predictions for the future
 - Things I am dreading; things I am I looking forward to
- 5) Address an envelope to yourself so that your personal time capsule letter can be mailed back to you in one year.

Additional Elements: Since this is a very personal assignment for the students, encourage them to include visuals, drawing, photos, clip art, etc. to enhance their work. Remind them this is their message to themselves.

Note: The most important thing is for the students to feel free to write about what is important to them. It should be an honest reflection of who they are and what they want to be. The more honest they are with themselves, the more they will appreciate the Personal Time Capsule they read in a year.

Discussion Questions:

Although the content of each personal time capsule will be kept private (except for teacher evaluation) and not shared with the class, the students can still offer their insights into the experience.

- Did you learn anything about yourself from this assignment?
- How do you think you will feel when you open this letter in a year?
- How much do you think your life will change in a year's time?
- Is this something you would like to do again?

Evaluation:

The students will be evaluated on:

- 1) Spelling, Grammar, and punctuation
- 2) Completing all four topics
- 3) Preparing a self-addressed envelope
- 4) Completing writing required
- 5) Creativity

Closure:

Personal time capsules are a special way to preserve memories and feelings. They are a tool to use our joys, fears, triumphs, and failures from the past to put our present into perspective. They help remind us that the future is as bright as we choose to make it.

Resources:

Lincoln Journal Star: "64-Year-Old Time Capsule Extracted from Lincoln's Shuttered Pershing Center." https://journalstar.com/news/local/64-year-old-time-capsule-extracted-from-lincolns-shuttered-pershing-center/article_d2776f28-dd6f-11ed-9e67-379a857985fe.html (Archival)

Samuel Adams and Paul Revere time capsule, Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Adams_and_Paul_Revere_time_capsule

