

Object Lessons Research Paper

Object lessons is a book and magazine article series that encourages readers to take a closer look at the history and cultural significance of the everyday objects around us. For this assignment, you will choose an ordinary object and conduct research to document its history and determine how it has influenced American culture. The model for this project is the object lessons essays published in *The Atlantic*

(<http://objectsofobjects.com/>). Some particularly good examples are available in Blackboard in the reading assignments for Week 5.



Assignment Overview

- The purpose of this assignment is to practice the academic research and informational writing skills used in the social sciences. You will also be participating in peer review, giving and receiving feedback on your ideas with your classmates. Peer review is an important part of the publishing process in the social sciences.
- This assignment has 3 parts with separate requirements and deadlines: 1) a draft of your paper with an annotated bibliography; 2) peer review, and 3) the final paper.

Instructions for the Draft and Annotated Bibliography (10 points)

- Brainstorm to identify some objects that could work for this assignment. The best objects will be common enough to have a well-documented history.
- Conduct preliminary research using the CCBC library databases, to determine which of your topics can be successfully researched. In making your final choice, be sure you will have access to the research material you need to write the paper. When searching try including terms like “history” (history of bread) and “culture” (bread and culture) to narrow your search results.
- The best CCBC library databases for this project are **Proquest Central, Academic Search Premier and History in Context**. Remember to also check for books and ebooks in the library catalog. Information sources from outside the CCBC library databases (found through Googling or other standard Internet searches) should not be used for this assignment.

- Write a draft of the paper that is at least 1,000 words long (not including the bibliography). The final version of your paper will need to be 1,500-2,000 words long.
 - Thoroughly describe the history of the object: how and when it originated and how it became part of everyday life. If your object has a very long history (like bread) you will need to be selective about identifying the most important developments in its history.
 - Explain how the object has influenced American culture. Think about answers to these questions as a starting point: How is the object important in homes, or in workplaces? What kinds of social relationships or activities does the object support? How is American culture affected by the fact that this object exists? You are not likely to find complete answers to these kinds of questions in your research materials. I am looking for your own analysis and opinion based on critical thinking.
 - Use in-text citations in your paper in every place where you include information from one of your research sources. For instance, “Sliced bread made sandwiches possible (Smith 2010).”
 - Your draft will be shared with your classmates during a peer review. You should develop the draft to the point that it clearly communicates your main ideas, including what you have discovered from your research.

- Prepare an annotated bibliography with a minimum of **3 high-quality research resources**. High-quality research resources must come from the CCBC library databases or book collection. Each of the 3 resources should be listed in an **MLA format bibliography**. An annotation is a brief summary of the resource and an explanation of why it will be useful for your final paper.

Example of an Annotated Bibliography Entry:

Adams, Samuel, John Adams and Paul Revere and edited by G. I. History “The Importance of Beer and Taverns in the American Revolution.” *American Journal of Social History*. 97.3 (2008), 354-382. *Social History Full Text*.

This article discusses the importance of beer and taverns in bringing together discussion of the American Rebellion. It draws on the firsthand experience of three Revolutionaries and their experiences in the pub. This article is useful for my research project because it is the only article I have discovered that contains firsthand information from people alive during this time period.

Instructions for Peer Review (5 points)

- **Bring 2 printed copies** of your abstract and annotated bibliography to class on peer review day. You will be sharing it with your classmates for feedback. You should be prepared to explain your nomination to your classmates and to explain how your research materials will give you the information you need to write the final paper.
- In class, you will provide feedback for your classmates on their own work and you will complete a self-evaluation of your own paper. Instructions will be provided.
- You will have the opportunity to revise your paper and bibliography before submitting the final paper.

Instructions for the Final Paper (10 points)

- Prepare a 1,500-2,000 word paper with an MLA format bibliography.
- Remove the annotations from the bibliography.
- Make sure that your final paper responds to the suggestions made by your peers and the instructor.
- The final version of your paper should demonstrate your strongest writing. Be sure to pay careful attention to spelling and grammar.