

# How to do a History Mystery

## Introduction

History Mystery is designed to challenge children to use their skills of deduction and critical thinking to identify the multiple artifacts included in this activity. All objects are from the State Historical Museum of Iowa's collection, providing children with a unique opportunity to tour museum artifacts from their own classrooms.

### By participating in History Mystery, Goldie detectives will:

- Use problem-solving and critical thinking skills
- Analyze clues to deduce the name and use of objects
- Explore and use background information provided for each object to determine historical significance
- Make real-world connections between the use of the objects and Iowa History

## What's Included

### This History Mystery Activity Features

- Photographs of Objects
- Videos of Select Objects
- Background Information for Each Object
- History Mystery Worksheet
- Guided Questions and Object Instructions for Adults

## Objects

Each object has photos specifically taken for children to analyze. Most objects include multiple photos at different angles, close-ups, etc. to provide different perspectives to help in their detective work. Objects photos and videos are available to view on the [Goldie's At Home webpage](#).

### Object Instructions for Adults & History Mystery Worksheet

Each individual object has an instructions page that provides background information about the object, its historical significance and questions to encourage children as they attempt this activity. This worksheet and questions help children identify the object and its significance in history. The worksheet can also be applied to any activity similar to History Mystery, such as having children use family artifacts around the home.

## History Mystery Set Up

1. History Mystery can be done in small groups or independently. Either print or display the object photos and videos for children to use. Print off the worksheet to guide them in their detective work.
2. To provide more context about the objects before starting, it is encouraged to read aloud the background essay. Sometimes, it can be extra fun to cover each object photo before revealing it to the child to explore.
3. History Mystery detectives will go from object to object, filling out their worksheet and discovering what the object is and how it would be used. Spend about five minutes on each object.
4. If IDing the artifact is difficult, use the adult instructions for the object to help guide the child to answers.
5. After working through all of the objects, go through the answers with your detective(s). Use the object instructions to help them understand the historical significance of the artifact.

# Background Information about School Desegregation

**Utilize this background essay to provide further historical context about school desegregation.**

The right to an education has long been a bedrock American assumption. However, while laws guarantee equal access to public schools in practice, the nation has not always achieved the ideal. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787, which was created to provide for the future of the nation's western territories, set aside one square mile in each township (36 square miles in total) to support public schools. Very early in its frontier days, Iowa pioneers set up schools to educate their children.

Early Iowa laws tried to discourage African Americans from moving into the state and imposed penalties and restrictions on them. Because there were very few African-American families in the early population, racial integration in public schools was not a big issue and was handled on a local basis. As the slavery question became more contentious and the nation drifted toward the Civil War, free African Americans and runaway slaves began appearing more often. Race relations in Iowa became more important. In Ringgold County along the Missouri border, African-American children whose family had fled slavery attended a one-room school. In Grinnell, however, a mob protested when the local school was opened to African-American children, and a race riot followed.

Alexander Clark was a prominent African American in Muscatine. He was initially denied entry into the university law school because of his race, but he was determined to open opportunities for his children. In 1867, he filed a lawsuit when his daughter was not allowed to attend public school in Muscatine where a separate school had been set aside for African-American children. The Iowa Supreme Court ruled in his and his daughter's favor, declaring that schools could not bar children because of their race.

About 30 years later, however, in 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Plessy v. Ferguson* that states could allow racial segregation as long as the facilities were "separate but equal." In practice, however, facilities for African-American children were almost never equal but almost always inferior. In southern states, segregation was nearly universal and embedded in the law. In the north, including Iowa, local customs varied but, African Americans were often barred from hotels and restaurants and often forced into separate facilities on trains, buses and sometimes schools. The few African Americans who attended public universities in Iowa were prohibited from living in school dormitories and were forced to find their own housing.

In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court reversed its "separate but equal" position and declared in *Brown v. the Board of Education* that segregation in public schools was unconstitutional and must end. This caused huge protests across the south. President Dwight Eisenhower had to call on federal troops to enforce school integration.

Legal segregation had ended, but true equality had not been achieved. Because African Americans and white people often lived in separate neighborhoods, their local schools continued to reflect the racial divide. In Massachusetts, the legislature required schools to achieve a racial balance in each school district by busing children to achieve proportionate numbers. In Boston through the 1970s and 80s, angry protests erupted from white parents who feared for the safety and educational quality of their children. Even today, because the races in many communities tend to separate themselves into different neighborhoods based on race, schools are often heavily dominated by one racial group or another.

Taking steps to overcome past discrimination is called affirmative action. Many attempts to provide African Americans, other minorities, women, the physically and mentally impaired and those with different sexual or gender orientations reflect the American commitment to equality of opportunity. The goal remains a continuing challenge.

# Portrait of Iowa Supreme Court Justice Chester Cole



## David John Gue

Artist

### Description

This portrait is entitled “Chester Cicero Cole” and is an image of Iowa Supreme Court Justice Chester Cole, a prominent legal figure in Iowa history. Cole graduated from Harvard Law School and, upon moving to Iowa in 1857, played an important role in the establishment of the law schools at the University of Iowa and Drake University. He retired from teaching at the age of 83 and continued to practice law until he was 87 years old. This portrait was painted sometime during Cole’s lifetime (1824-1913) by Gue, who was well known for his portraits, landscapes and coastal marine paintings.

## Object Significance

This portrait is not nearly as significant to school desegregation as the person featured in it. In February 1864, Cole was appointed to serve as a justice on the Iowa Supreme Court. He was the author of the landmark *Clark v. Board of School Directors* opinion in 1868, which determined that racial segregation of public schools was unconstitutional under the Iowa Constitution. This decision desegregated Iowa schools 86 years before the U.S. Supreme Court case, *Brown v. Board of Education*, which found under the U.S. Constitution that racial segregation of children in public schools was unconstitutional. Cole wrote several other civil rights cases during his 12-year career as a justice in the Iowa Supreme Court and established a firm legacy in favor of defending all Americans’ civil rights.

## Questions about History Mystery Object

- 1 What do you see when you look at this object? What else do you notice? Is there meaning behind this object?
- 2 Think about Justice Cole’s role in school desegregation in Iowa. Why would a portrait of Cole be painted? What does having a portrait painted of a person imply?
- 3 Notice Justice Cole’s clothing: What is he wearing? What does that tell you about him?
- 4 Notice his facial hair. What does that tell you about the time period in which this portrait was created? What does this tell you about his personality?
- 5 Why do you think Justice Cole sits alone in this portrait, rather than having other items included? What would you include in this portrait to help tell his story? What objects or clothing would your own portrait include?

# Plaque Honoring U.S. Congressman Thomas E. Martin



**July 1975**

Presentation of Plaque

**"Hon. Thomas E. Martin**

**In grateful appreciation for many years of distinguished and dedicated services to Iowa and our nation while serving as United States Congressman and United States Senator**

**Republican State Central Committee of Iowa**

**Bess Cowden, State Vice Chairman  
Verne R. Martin, State Chairman"**

Transcription of Plaque

## Description

This plaque was given to Thomas E. Martin, a U.S. representative and senator from Iowa. It was created by the Republican State Central Committee of Iowa and honored Martin's "distinguished and dedicated service" during his many years (22 spent in Congress) as an elected official.

## Object Significance

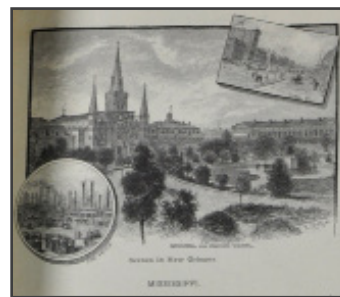
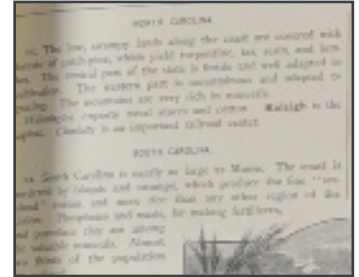
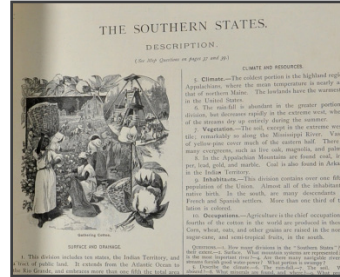
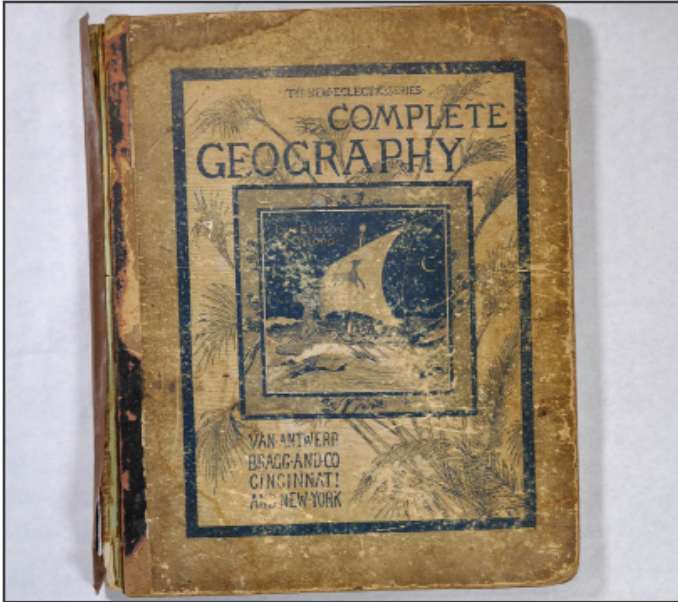
Martin served in the U.S. Congress from 1939 to 1961, a time when the civil rights movement was in full swing. In a speech by then-retired Martin in 1965 (available in *Read Iowa History*, pg. 28), he explained the work that was being done to desegregate schools and ensure equal rights for all races. He said that racial segregation was "one of the toughest" domestic problems facing the country. He also spoke about "deep South" states flouting the authority of the federal government and blatantly ignoring landmark civil rights cases like *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954).

## Questions about History Mystery Object

- 1 What do you see when you look at this object? What else do you notice?
- 2 Why do people receive plaques? What do plaques usually signify?
- 3 Martin wrote, "The problem of ending racial segregation and bringing a full measure of civil rights to ALL Americans in ALL part of the county, has been met head-on and is proving to be one of the toughest of current domestic problems." Discuss how this passage of text relates to the plaque's message of "...many years of distinguished and dedicated services..."
- 4 As a senator from Iowa, Martin was an advocate for civil rights and school desegregation. Why might the Republican State Central Committee of Iowa want to honor Martin's record?



# Complete Geography Book from The New Eclectic Series



## Description

This object is a geography book that was first published in 1867. It was a teacher's manual created by James Monteith and was published by the American Book Company. This edition of the book was printed in 1883. The book includes text, illustrations and maps highlighting the geography of different regions in the United States, as well as around the world.

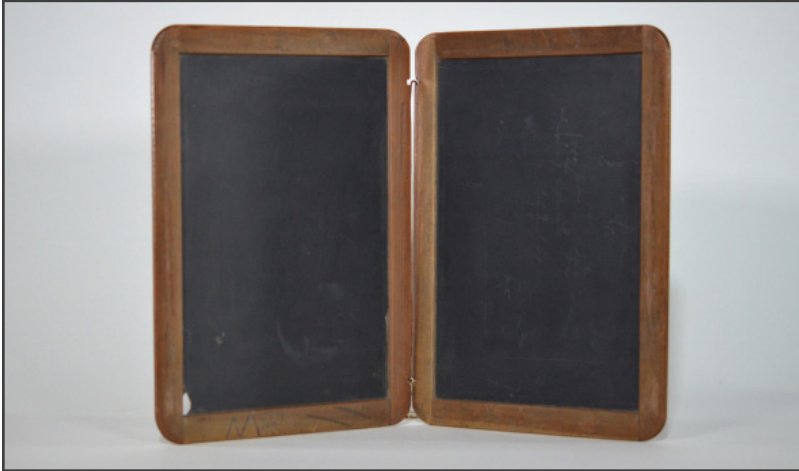
## Object Significance

This geography book helps children explore continuity and change in relation to the American South. The book has examples of different states' terrain, crops, jobs and people but from the perspective of the late 1800s, a time just 20 years after the Civil War. In relation to the topic of school integration, this book can assist children in thinking about what life was like in the South, particularly for African Americans, and why they might have left for the North.

## Questions about History Mystery Object

- 1 What do you see when you look at this object? What else do you notice?
- 2 This book was published in 1883 and is a teacher's manual. Slavery ended 18 years before it was published, and schools across the U.S. would not be desegregated until 1954. Why might this book not mention the different groups or races of people who lived in the southern part of the U.S.?
- 3 Look at the images in the book and describe how African Americans are depicted. What messages would these images send to people living in different areas of the United States?
- 4 This book is over 130 years old. What similarities does it have to your current textbooks? What is different?

## Double Slate of Matthew Tinley



### Description

This object is a double slate board that belonged to student Matthew Tinley. A slate is a thin piece of hard flat material that is used for writing. The date on its frame reads, "November 7, 1883." Tinley carved his initials "M.T." multiple places along the frame of the double slate.

### Object Significance

The writing slate was used by children to practice writing and arithmetic during classes or at home until the 20th century. This object provides children a chance to consider how classrooms and school materials have changed over time. It also provides a connection to school desegregation by raising questions about the impact resources could have on students and what happens when they are denied resources or only have them in limited supplies. Matthew Tinley, the slate's owner, trained as a physician and surgeon and began his military career as a Private in the 3rd Iowa National Guard around 1894. He served in World War I and would eventually be promoted to Major General in charge of the 34th division in 1924.

### Questions about History Mystery Object

- 1 What do you see when you look at this object? What else do you notice?
- 2 A slate is like a white board in many ways (reusable, erasable, chalk = markers) and this slate could travel between the classroom and home. In what other ways is this slate similar to current day classroom materials (hints: paper, laptop, worksheets, etc.)?
- 3 Following the Civil War, the African-American population increased in Iowa. By 1870, 1,194,020 people lived in the state, but only 5,762 African Americans called Iowa home (just half of one percent of the total population). Given this population breakdown, how would school desegregation impact Iowa's children?
- 4 School segregation led to inequity among students, even those who lived in the same city. Imagine half of your class had slates like Tinley's and the other half had a single sheet of paper for the whole school year. How would this impact the learning of your classmates?

# History Mystery - Analyze an Object



1	<b>1) What does it look like?</b> Think about size, shape and color.	<b>4. Do you see any signs of wear?</b> Does it mean anything about how the object was used.
	<b>2) What is the object made from?</b> Is it one or more materials combined?	<b>5. What year or time period do you think it is from?</b> Why do you think it was from that year?
	<b>3) Is there any writing or details?</b> Why do you think it was from that year?	<b>6) Who is the owner?</b> Write a brief description of the owner.
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