

Young Writers Workshop
Every Object Tells a Story

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**STATE HISTORICAL
MUSEUM OF IOWA**

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

Table of Contents

Introduction by Stephanie Hemphill	2
Angela Bambo	3
Dashiell Coyier	6
Ellis Coyier	9
Carolina DePaula	12
Max Fahrenkrug	16
Grace Keyte	19
Bethany Oelke	22
June Piepel	26
Yatharth Sirohi	28
Abbie Welbes	31
Emma Zheng	34

*Each student's object of inspiration precedes their historical fiction story.
An introduction for each object is provided by the student.*

“It is only in the world of objects that we have time and space and selves.” –T.S. Eliot

This year in the Writer’s Workshop the young authors selected an object from the exhibit *Visible Vault*. Every object on display in the history museum tells a story relating to Iowa or about an Iowan. Many of these stories we were fortunate to discover on our tours of the exhibit and the museum’s vault. For as Eliot eloquently explains through objects we have time and space and selves—we learn about our collective past and how that past informs who we are today.

Throughout our week together the students researched the real stories behind their objects as would historians. They also examined their objects with the eyes of writers, knowing it would be their challenge to make whatever object they chose an integral part of a fictional story. In a very small amount of words they wrote poetry or short-short fiction, pieces that speak in some way about the past, and also, about the world we inhabit now.

After myriad writing exercises and discussions about story construction, character building and elements of good writing, these authors wrote pieces that are clever and lyrical and uniquely their own.

Every object tells a story. And each writer in this workshop has their own story to tell. The marriage between the two produced some truly marvelous work. As evidenced by the stories in this anthology, these young authors possess powerful voices and points of view, and we are so proud to share them.

~Stephanie Hemphill

Angela Bambo



Object Introduction

Stone arrowheads were common weapons cavemen used in 800-1800 B.C. There were multiple theories about how these stone tools were carved and sharpened without the modern resources we have today. Historians finally agreed that a prehistoric man used three processes: flaking using a stone hammer, shaping with free-hand pressure and breaking out the notches.

American Indian tribes like the Shoshina Tribe in the Minta Mountains were still found manufacturing stone arrowheads in 1869. It has been found that these tribes have used arrowheads for protection against other tribes or sometimes used them to hunt smaller animals.

The Wall of Sand
Angela Bambo

This trail was supposed to be safe. No chance of landslides, no dangerous cliff sides, and no wild animals. Yet here I was paralyzed as I watched my brother lying on the rocky mountainside, the hot Arizona sun beating at my skin. The creature that attacked us was too quick. It came and went in a blur. Somehow, I was the one left standing. I tried to reach for him, tried to stop the pool of blood, that was desperate to see the light of day, from pouring out of his chest where the creature had impaled him. But I never made it. The heat and the sight of my brother, as if joining forces, knocked me down as darkness took over.

Now I remembered: we were young, we were foolish, and we acted before we thought. That was our defense.

When I started to regain consciousness, I was surrounded by unfamiliar faces. Doctors tending to my needs, a police officer who had a watchful eye. A scene that was the complete contrast of the trance I had been caught in seconds ago.

I asked them to take me to him. To my surprise, they complied.

My brother was unrecognizable. Not because of the attack. He looked the same, but that man was not my brother. He was someone else entirely. I did not recognize his short, dirty hair, glass eyes, nor his character. For the past weeks, my family believed that a coyote came and planted wild, dangerous ideas in my brother's head. They believed that the trickster had my brother under a spell.

I believed them since coyotes signify bad omens. Maybe that was why he was attacked. Karma finally caught up to the god of tricks.

We were young, we were foolish, and we acted before we thought, I repeated.

My brother was young; looking down at him now, I remember my brother marveling about the ideas of moving to a land far away. A land that did not belong to our tribe. He promised that once he got a hold of his new life, he would come back and take me and my siblings with him. He said that the world had more to give than just our tight circle here out in the desert. I believed him too.

My brother was foolish; I also remember Father's reaction when my brother took his first step toward his new life days ago. I agreed with Father. My brother did look silly with short hair. Everywhere we went, heads turned, shooting disapproving glances towards his direction. That didn't seem to bother him. My brother claimed that power can be obtained in different methods other than growing out his hair. I admired his bravery to go against our culture. However, my admiration didn't go unnoticed.

Father lectured me on how important our culture was to our ancestors, therefore we needed to do anything to protect it. That I believed in also. To assert his point, he led me to our attic, where we stored our ancestors' prized possessions. This act was contrary to his character since he had never shared this sight with anyone in the family.

From up in the attic, there was a clear view of the mountains that overlooked the desert that surrounded our town. I heard the wind whistle and the soft clap of thunder as the desert

sand started to dance, accompanying their tune. Father said a storm was coming, that he didn't like the outcome once it passed.

I acted before I thought; I was most shocked when he handed me a bow and arrow with a small but undeniably sharp end. The arrowhead had a touch of black and white, creating an ombré shade. Father took pride as he told me that my great-great-grandfather had to carve the arrowhead using only his bare hands for pressure. Without a doubt, it was something to take pride in.

Just then harsh winds picked up speed and a wall of brown sand started to form in a distance. The wall, so thick, it blocked any possibility of light.

Now that I looked down at my brother lying in the white bed, I held both my wrists towards the officer, like an offering to the gods. He took my hands and led me out of the building.

He was young, he was foolish and I acted before I thought.

I didn't need to ask anyone if my brother was dead. I knew he was and I had made sure of it. After all, my father always praised my good aim.

Dashiell Coyier



Object Introduction

The artifact that I chose was an immigrant trunk with the words M. Ch. Lind inscribed upon the lid. This trunk was owned by Matilda Charlotte Lind and was used to transport her belongings from Sweden to Polk County Iowa.

The Immigrant
Dashiell Coyier

Upon the water you hear stomping, arguing, a whirlpool of voices buzzing collectively and making a chorus of immigrants, all joining together for a better life. You are alone with your gruff trunk of clothes with your name etched upon the lid, Matilda Charlotte Lind. The chest is oak with a metal lock, fraying strands of wood cover the surface. You wear a white blouse with a black jacket and await the upcoming journey.

Your thoughts are hindered as the roar of the boat sounds. The rusted anchor plummets into the sand, making the boat rock and your stomach lurch. A voice bellows making you fall in line, silent like everyone else. The boat latches onto the wooden dock with planks that lead to land.

You walk unified, all nearing a brick building. A sign on the front reads Immigrant Allowification Center. You are first in line, met by an old man that has a neatly trimmed beard. "Do you have your medical papers and birth certificate?" the attendant asks, in fine English.

"Yes," you nervously reply. You hand the documents over.

He scans them and says, "Welcome into the U.S."

Trotting past painted signs, suited businessmen, and the loud purr of cars, you have arrived into a new life. You walk about, consumed in the hectic hum of New York City. You are looking for Hoboken station, so you can reach Polk County, Iowa.

Soon, on the choppy brick street, you encounter the station. You trot over to the stall. A sign above reads Train Tickets in black capital letters. You purchase your ticket and amble toward the mixed train, baggage in the back, seat in the front. You slide open the door, exposing the human frenzy within.

Folks shimmy to and fro, engrossed in their own pursuits. Everyone has their family around them, but you are alone. This makes you feel left out. Do you really belong here? Is this what you wanted, the feeling of being an immigrant?

The train horn blares, obnoxiously waking all passengers. The man next to you practically falls off his seat in fright. You gather your things, your trunk, and a checkered short-brimmed hat.

You knock. How will your new life be? What will you become? Interrupting your thoughts is an ancient woman with kids screaming in the background. "Come in," she says. Complying, you walk in, noticing American style, American clothes, noticing, you don't belong. But what did you expect, Swedish cookies on the table? You question if you really should be here? Did you leave your old self behind? Everything here makes you feel foreign.

The old woman says that you must cook all the meals and clean all day. Only then will you get your pay. She leads you up steps into your room. You set up camp, and see all the strange things around you. Falling onto the lumpy bed, you drift asleep, not letting your thoughts surface.

You hear a slight knock on the door, awaking you from your deep slumber. It is the old woman carrying a gray uniform. She instructs you, saying, "This is your uniform, wear this when working." You nod, and she drops it on your trunk.

The next morning as you awake, you think of your family, thousands of miles away, but still on your mind. You step on the splintering wood floor, and get dressed for the day. While looking in your trunk, you notice some Lingonberry Jam, and decide to make Raggmunk, a Swedish dish with potatoes and topped with the jam.

After walking down the stairs, and into the kitchen, you notice it's old with a wood burning stove and tools hanging from the ceiling. You grab a whisk, old potatoes, and a grater, shredding the potatoes. You combine potatoes, milk, egg, and salt into a bowl. You form the pancakes and coat them in butter, and then fry them, unleashing the luscious smell.

You hear footsteps. The family sits down at the dinner table. You pull the cakes out of the fryer, set them on the white china plates, and garnish them with the delicious lingonberry jam, ready to serve. More of the kids come clambering down, patiently waiting for the delicious entity. You carefully take the plate in your hands, cautiously setting it on the table. You notice that the whole family is enjoying them. You have brought your culture here, and have made a new family, a Swedish-American one at that.

Ellis Coyier



Object Introduction

I chose Grenville Dodge's trunk as my artifact. Grenville Dodge, who owned the trunk, was born in 1831, and lived most of his life in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Dodge was a Civil Engineer who later became Chief Engineer of the Union Pacific Railroad. He was appointed to become colonel of the Fourth Iowa Volunteer Regiment, after the beginning of the Civil War. He then was promoted to Major General and led the 16th Corps. Once the war ended he worked for different railroad jobs. Most intriguing, he was part of a spy ring. Dodge also served a term in Congress from 1867-1868.

Trust No One: A Civil War Story
Ellis Coyier

I hear a gun go off behind me, it frightens me and a bullet grazes my head.

Earlier...

"This is probably the most important mission of my life." I consider as I get up in the morning. I will steal Confederate correspondence, which will show the Confederate's next move in the war, and then we'll surprise attack them. I don't have many troops, only the 16th Corps, so it will definitely be brain over brawn. In the Union camp, I have a large, snug as a bug tent compared to the normal infantry's. Some of the soldier's families are also here so it is crowded. All I own is a campaign desk and trunk at the foot of my bed with my name inscribed upon it. The night before, I settled on disguising as a Confederate soldier. I will leave for the Confederate Camp in a few hours.

"Grenville." I hear my name shouted by someone outside just as I finish packing and getting on the gray Confederate uniform. I make sure to wear my signature black hat. As I step outside I see my friend in his disguise, also part of the spy ring. My friend speaks like he is unsure of himself and walks hesitantly, acting a bit mysterious. I can't tell if he's nervous or something is bothering him.

"Good morning, I feel nervous for the adventure ahead."

My friend grumbles in agreement. I load my trunk in the back as we hop in the horse drawn wagon and start our journey South. The horses gallop like a thunderstorm. We pass plantations, with slaves bent over cotton plants. It reminds me of why I am on this mission.

Later...

We arrive close to the Confederate camp. Tents in disarray, smoke rising from campfires. We plan to sneak into General Lee's tent and steal the correspondence. The entrance of the camp is heavily guarded, but the guards don't check us, the uniforms helped us get in.

When General Lee walks out of his tent we peek inside- it is empty, this is our chance to steal the correspondence! I look for it in his campaign desk while my friend searches his trunk. On the campaign desk, I see a stack of letters related to the war. I grab it and quietly whisper to my friend: "I found it, now let's get out of here." I tuck it in my uniform and then we walk, so we don't arouse suspicion. When we near the gate I hear a gunshot, a bullet flies. It grazes my head and makes a hole in my hat. I quickly glance back and see General Lee's revolver held high, for he had noticed the correspondence missing in his tent. My heart is beating like a horse galloping. We start to run, and we make it to the wagon. I whip the horses and we are off.

Later...

We arrive back at the Union Camp, the soldiers are oblivious to what just happened, they are playing checkers and cards.

I announce to the camp: "Who is ready to battle the South?" The soldiers slowly and reluctantly agree.

"We are going to attack them, for I have their correspondence," I add proudly, "get in your uniforms, grab your musket, pepperbox, and hornets." The soldiers rise obediently, fit as a fiddle.

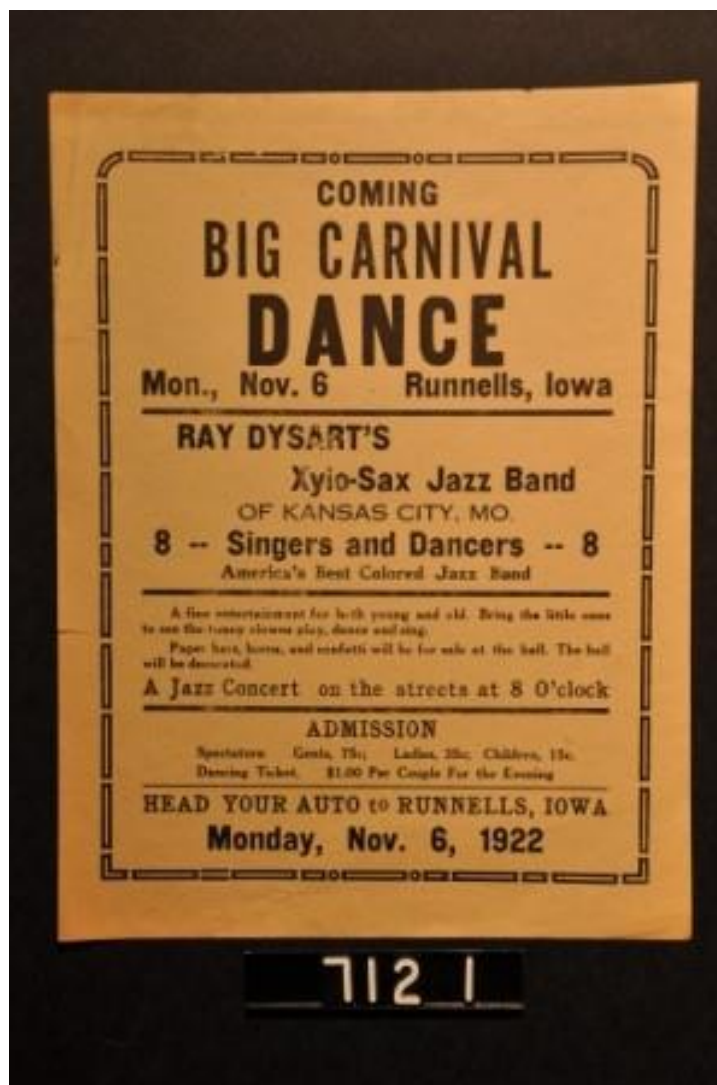
It takes a couple days to travel to the battlefield. I lead my troops into battle, muskets raised. "Stop actin' like fresh fish. Skedaddle and kill some Graybacks!" I say to the soldiers.

I steer my horse to my friend, get off, and immediately shoot him.

"Why'd ya kill 'em?" A nearby soldier asks me in a gruff voice.

I pull the correspondence out of my jacket and hold it up. It shows a sketch of the dead man and beneath it the word "Spy".

Carolina DePaula



Object Introduction

The poster was used for a concert for a jazz group, and the concert took place on Monday, November 6, 1922. The group, Xyio-Sax Jazz Band, was considered to be the best colored jazz band. Jazz was a new music type for lowans in the 1920s. Robert Patten was the African American business owner who printed this poster. He was very influential in Des Moines history, and the State History Museum has over 1400 photos that he printed.

Darkness
Carolina DePaula

Betty runs.
No, her heart does.
Her body merely follows.
A building.
A patch of grass.
A flapper.
The light smile of the night.
She runs from
A father who has nothing to give her.
A sun that never sets.
Race.
Discrimination.
Fear.
The poster, a golden bridge of opportunity,
That leads her from the shadows of ambivalence to the clarity of freedom,
As clear as a melody that sings to the night.
Betty reaches the street, where the light interrupts the darkness.
She clutches the poster. Seven Man Jazz Group at 8 pm, it reads.
The musicians come.
The song commences.
Betty drifts off with the melody,
The notes holding up the calloused skin that she's been born in,
The cadence saving her from floundering in the abyss of the past,
The tomb of what could have been if life were simpler.
The night saves Betty from starving eyes and
Her race.
Not even Betty's mother, not her caution can take away
The music that she thirsts for.
The music that she holds at the depths of her heart.
The music that dwells inside everything she sees, everything she's had since her childhood.
As a young girl, Betty was hurt by her lack of opportunities. Her father gave her so little, yet
Expected so much.
He didn't give Betty her music, and yet he expected her to not even try and acquire it.
He didn't give Betty her freedom, yet expected gratitude.
He didn't give Betty a choice, yet expected jubilation.
And Betty's family would never forgive her for leaving so abruptly, for putting her among
People that she doesn't know, people that could be malevolent.

But Betty would never forgive herself if she didn't try to listen to the music, the music that Makes her forget about all the troubles of the world. And she would never forgive herself if she Didn't try to be free, free from all of the rules.

Betty has to do this.

She has to do this for those who wander behind the curtain of despair,

For those who languish in cuffs of sorrow,

For those who dwell behind the stars, never able to witness those soft kisses that gift the night Sky with beauty.

Betty has to do this for April, her sister, who was born to a world of limitations.

Discrimination.

Blunt inferiority.

Once April finds out Betty's missing, she'll understand that Betty's had enough of this world.

And enough of following its rules.

As Betty scrutinizes her dark surroundings, she can see the drunk men, bantering about some trivial matter, their eyebrows thick against their dark eyes. Betty sees them approach her, and she quickly puts a hand to her hair, the only part of her that might seem feminine. To Betty's alleviation, the men go away, but just their arrival already reminds her of what she's done.

A million atrocities come to Betty's mind, atrocities that other colored people have suffered through before.

Rape.

Murder.

Betty cautiously makes her way right next to the jazz group, until she bumps into another Woman. Betty looks her over. The stranger smiles benevolently to Betty.

But Betty doesn't smile back

For the stranger's white.

And Betty is not.

People like Betty shouldn't interact with people like her.

However, before Betty maneuvers her way out of the evident tension in the air, the stranger clutches Betty's hand.

"I'm Elizabeth," the stranger says, her tone affable.

Betty looks straight into her eyes, trying to conceal her fear. "I'm Betty."

Elizabeth suddenly looks contemplative.

"Did you have to escape our world too? Is that why you're here? To finally forget about all of the injustice?"

Betty nods, unable to say anything. How did she know?

Elizabeth sighs.

"I know I shouldn't be saying this, but I hate our world. I hate to pretend that I don't care." Elizabeth looks at her hands. "But I do care..."

Finally, Betty gathers the courage to respond.

"Why are you talking to me?"

"Because I'm looking for change." As if on key, the music starts to turn woeful, the notes drag on, burdened by solemnity. Elizabeth takes a sheet of paper out of her pocket.

Betty hesitantly takes the paper. Elizabeth smiles.

“I knew you were different,” she says, her eyes taking in the people around them. “Now, you might want to go. It doesn’t seem that great here with all of these drunkards...” Elizabeth tries to make Betty go, but Betty doesn’t move at all.

“I-I came here because I needed to leave my home.” Betty wipes a tear that she didn’t know had fallen. “I can never go back, even though I want to protect April, my sister.” Betty sighs. “Ever since April was born, I felt as if I had the responsibility to take care of her. And now, whenever I think of her, I wanna take her out of this place. But I fear I’ll spend forever waiting for the right time if I have to take her too.”

Elizabeth looks down.

“I understand. I wish you safe travels.”

But before Elizabeth bids farewell, before Betty can think any longer, and as the music crescendos into a wave of notes and harmonies,

April, Betty’s sister, arrives, her face burdened with tears.

Everything goes black.

Except for Betty’s heart.

Betty runs to her, but, once again, her heart is the one that runs, her body solely keeping up with it.

This is the right time.

There are no barriers.

No music.

No people except for Betty and April.

Betty snatches April’s hand, with the poster in the other.

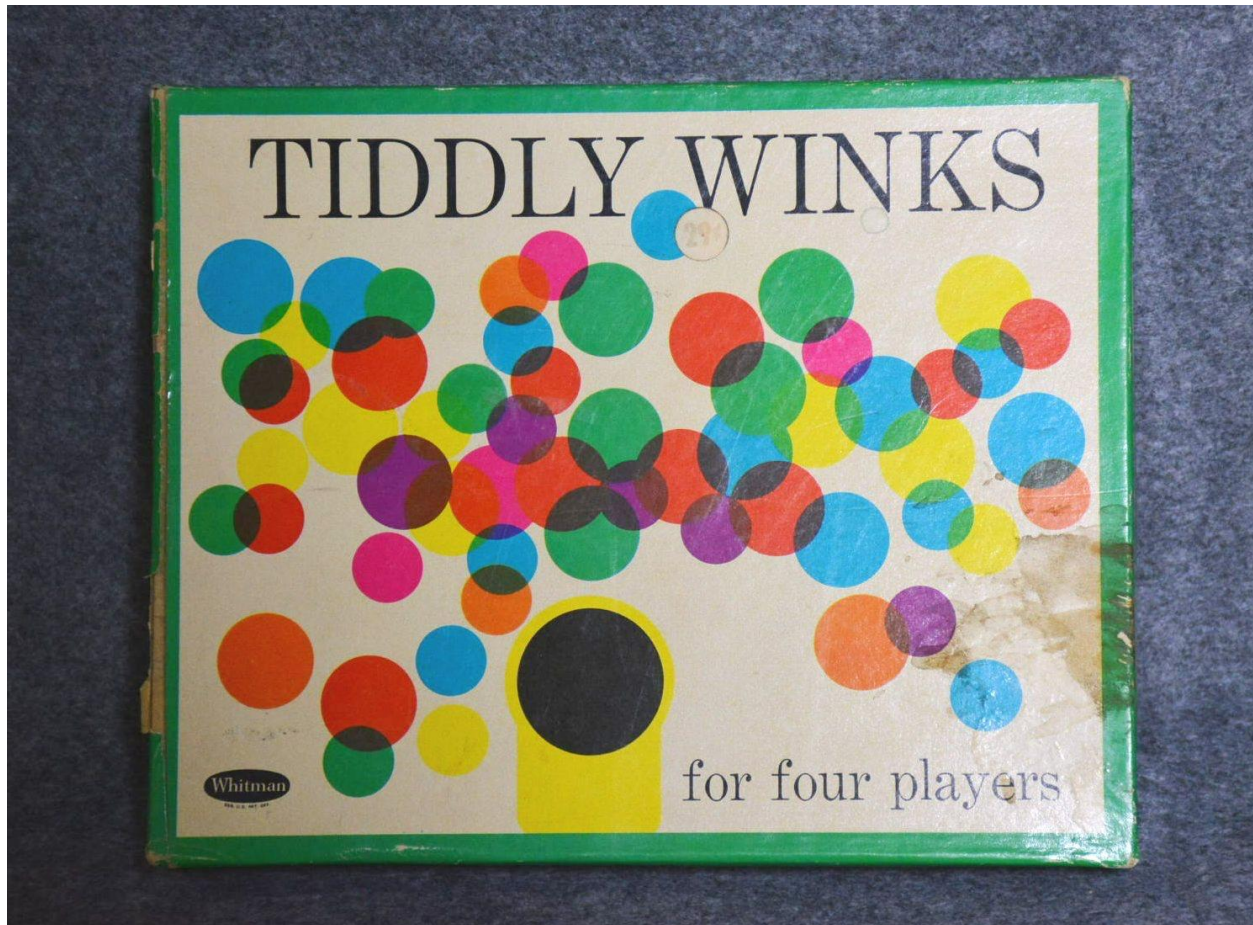
Not waiting to see April’s response,

Betty runs to the night,

Heading up north,

Never hoping to see the exposing sun again.

Max Fahrenkrug



Object Introduction

Tiddlywinks is a board game created in 1888 by Joseph Assheton Fincher. However, its competitive version didn't start until 1954. Tiddlywinks is a relatively simple game that comprises of shooting little disks called winks into a jug. If you make it, you get an extra shot like in pool. You shoot the winks with a bigger disk called a squidger by putting pressure on the wink with it. You can also shoot your winks onto the other team's winks to block them from shooting. Each team has two colors of winks and the game ends when all of the winks of one color are in the jug or the specified time limit is over and is then scored based on a scoring system.

The Tragic Tiddlywink Tournament
Max Fahrenkrug

Benjamin couldn't fail. He had to line his shot perfectly otherwise he might ruin his chance of \$5,000. He put his squidger down, making sure it was lined up with a wink. He thought about all the things \$5,000 can buy, like a new Chevrolet Nova, or maybe a new oven. He pressed hard on the squidger, making the little wink go high in the air. Benjamin could see the light glisten off the disk as it slowly descended into the jug where it made a slight rattle. The crowd erupted with applause as his opponent slowly got up to congratulate him.

After winning the semifinals of the National Tiddlywink Tournament, Benjamin walked over to his coach who was wearing some bell bottoms which did not go with his slightly pudgy body.

"Nice play out there!" said his coach as he approached him, "that bomb you shot was amazing!"

"Thanks," Benjamin responded, "but I didn't come here for complements."

"Oh, so you want some critiquing?" His coach said with a chuckle, "Well, it looked like you blitzed way too early in the game."

"No, I want pointers for the next game."

"Don't blitz too early-"

"You got to be kidding me," Benjamin said as he walked out of the hallway. He was on in five minutes and his coach was not giving him good pointers like to be more aggressive or be more centered like he did last match. This time his coach seemed like he didn't care if Benjamin did well.

As the minutes ticked by before the finals, interviewers swept in asking all sorts of questions about Benjamin's family and career. Before, he would have thought being in the newspaper would feel amazing. But after looking at the endless swarm of interviewers in front of him, he started to feel bad for celebrities like Gene Wilder or Bruce Lee who have to go through this every day. Suddenly he heard a bell and the interviewers backed off. It was time to play.

The game started smoothly as both players went for the defensive approach of squopping the winks. But when Benjamin took a shot and made it in the jug, his opponent only had to cover one more of his winks to win as he wouldn't be able to shoot. So his opponent shot, sending the little disk flying in the air like a small little bird. It fell thumping against the table as it slid right past Benjamin's wink. Benjamin let out a sigh of relief.

Now only five minutes remained, and Benjamin was becoming more and more anxious as the game progressed. His opponent had two more winks than him, and every time he tried to shoot, he thought about how his coach didn't help him, which made him angry, and that would make him miss, making him more angry. He just wished that he'd forget about what happened so he can just make one, little, shot into the jug. Suddenly the bell rang. It was Benjamin's turn to shoot. That meant he had one more turn and the game would end. One more turn to win.

He needed to make two shots in a row and he'd tie it up. He spent his time lining the squidger with the wink, making sure every adjustment would help his shot. He remembered what he'd done last game, thinking about all the things \$5,000 can do, but then his thoughts drifted to his coach. He remembered his unhelpfulness, his stupid aviator glasses- click. He accidentally hit the wink making it slide across the table.

Benjamin stared blankly at the wink. He was furious, not at his coach, but at himself. He was too focused on yelling at his coach after the game that he completely forgot the game itself. Benjamin slowly got up and walked out the door.

He went over to the parking lot, trying to hide his frustration until he got home. But as he unlocked his car, Benjamin noticed someone talking behind the building. It was his coach. Benjamin carefully peered around the corner and listened:

"Man, you got to pay me. I won the bet."

"Hold your horses. I'll pay you later-"

"Benjamin lost. And you need to pay me."

"I feel like you caused this, you're his coach after all."

"I did nothing of the sort-"

Benjamin stopped listening. He had heard enough. His coach had bet against him.

Grace Keyte



Object Introduction

This poster is a Liberty Loan, American All poster that was made in the 1900's. It was made to help convince people to raise money to help the military repair equipment and to help bring the soldiers home.

All the names on the list are from different cultural groups, reflecting the fact that different cultures risked their lives for the country.

You would buy war bonds, and when the war was over you would be paid back.

The Poster
Grace Keyte

She peeked around the corner of her two-story house to only see a disapproving parent looking right at her. She groaned as she rounded the corner. "I'm only trying to eavesdrop," she said with a sigh, hoping her mother would understand.

"When you grow older you are going to realize how important privacy is for a young woman," her mother said trying to make her young, ignorant daughter understand.

She scoffed, "You're not young."

"Well, Jasper is not on leave," her mother said, then shut her eyes, knowing the reaction.

"What! Why not? Make him come home!" She yelled.

Her brother was drafted to go to the army a couple months ago and since then this is how every evening went. She didn't want to accept the fact that her brother wouldn't be home for a while.

She ran to her room angry at her mother and angry at herself for thinking he would come home. The next couple weeks went by slowly for the girl. Every night she would eavesdrop on her mother and father's conversations, praying and hoping that her brother would come home.

She longed to see her brother again. But one eventful evening when she was walking home from her friend's house, she saw a bright poster on the wall of the tavern. She stopped to study it. The poster had a woman with a beautiful white gown standing beside a list of names. She could tell it was in the army because of the American flag. She burst with excitement. She ripped the poster off the wall and ran home. She heard her father's voice in the kitchen.

She walked in and laid out the poster on the wooden table. Her parents looked at it. "Well, we must raise money for the troops," she exclaimed. She waited for them to agree. Her eyes landed on her mother, who had tear stains on her cheeks. "Mother, why are you crying? Jasper is coming home, we are going to be a family again," she said.

"Oh, sweetie, I'm sorry, b-but he did-didn't...." Her sentence was cut by a sob that escaped her mouth.

The girl couldn't believe it. "No, Jasper said he wouldn't die, he promised," she whispered so quietly her parents barely heard her.

She looked at her father, who silently cried. She had never seen her father cry. He would always stay strong, because he wanted the girl to look up to him. When he looked up he said, "We just got a telegram from Sergeant Shepherd. He died in battle last night."

She was frozen in place. She looked like a deer in headlights. After a minute of analyzing their words she turned around and walked up the stairs to her brother's room. She sat on the quilt that she would always try to steal from him. She thought of all the memories of her brother and how he would call her spicy because she would have a short tolerance of patience with him. And how he would always trick her into doing things for him. She sat on the

bed for minutes thinking of her brother, not even realizing the tears that dripped onto the quilt. She stayed there the rest of the night.

The following Monday was her brother's funeral. Her mother dressed her in a plain black dress that ended right under her knees. Her mother wore the darkest evening dress she could find. At the funeral there were blue, red, and white decorations everywhere. There was also a picture of Jasper in his army uniform. She was sad and confused. That picture didn't look like him. Jasper had glasses, and he never wore hats. She waited through the whole service, not really listening to the priest.

When her mother went up to make a speech she started to listen. "Jasper was an amazing son. He never disobeyed me, and I loved him with all my heart. He shall be remembered as the best son in history." A tear rolled down her cheek. Everyone clapped as if it was the best speech in the world. But nothing her mother said was true. Before the girl could think she got up and walked to the podium and waited for her mother to go back to her seat.

"I'm sorry for the people who lost Jasper. I just wanted to say that Jasper was not perfect. He wasn't strong. He was silly, clumsy, caring and clever. But out of all the things about him, I like that he always tried. If he were here right now, he would be loving all the attention that he was getting. He was everything to me," she said with pain and sorrow in her voice.

She pointed to the poster on the back wall of the funeral home. "And it scares me that people are going through the same thing as I am. That is why we need to help raise money for the soldiers to come home. People are hurting because they don't get to see their families."

That day the girl learned to never take anything for granted and to help people in need. In memory of her brother she helped raise money to help the soldiers get home. She kept the poster to remind her that The Great War changed her and to help the people that need it.

Bethany Oelke



Object Introduction

This colorful dress was purchased in 1959 in Fort Dodge, Iowa. It can be formal or a party dress depending on your needs. This dress can be found in the museum. It contains the colors of red/black/gold/blue and a bow in the back and a zipper. When this dress was purchased the Vietnam War was happening.

Muvm
Bethany Oelke

May turned on her computer. There was a text from her co-worker which said: "I'm sending you a list of clients that have the symptoms." May scanned the patients and the information. Their skin was extremely pale and their veins showed. It wasn't a pleasant sight. It could give anyone the chills.

Her computer gave the spinning wheel of death. She gave up and got pizza.

As May parked in front of the pizza restaurant she noticed her friend's husband, Robert. Robert asked if May had seen Toby.

May shook her head. "He hasn't returned my calls." She wanted to reassure Robert, but it was strange because she had been texting with Toby earlier this morning for the test results at work. She remembered that Toby did go home sick today. "Maybe Toby's phone died, and he's running late."

"He must be running late." Robert said and waved goodbye.

May grabbed the pizza. The rain picked up, and she could barely see. She started to slow down when a car about side-swiped her. The other car ended up in a ditch. Driving away she looked back to a pile up.

She pulled into her driveway and locked the front door. She tried to call 911.

"We don't have any service!" her daughter Maggie said from upstairs. Maggie went to go look for her grandpa to see if he was home.

Maggie found her grandpa watching TV. She called to her mom to join them. Grandpa waved at Maggie. "The telly, how do I change the telly?" Maggie turned the channel from PBS to the news. Her grandpa threw his hands up in the air. "Blimey!" Everyone shushed him.

"Meanwhile in the city of Pine, Iowa, we wait for news on the update. Fifty-nine have died from the new virus Muvm." The news transitioned to a doctor. Doctor Ern explained, "What we know so far is that the virus is transmitted through physical contact. It's not like zombies you see on TV. Muvm just kills the victim." The TV soon buzzed out.

Everyone was silent until May said, "Get your essentials. Dad, I need you to pack."

The weather was foggy. May scanned the messages on her computer. One read: "Meet us at the safe house. May bring all you have. We can solve this." She got keys to her dad's van.

When May went upstairs to help her dad, he was in his room holding a dress. She knew it was her mom's dress. "We can bring that." Her dad smiled.

May unlocked her safe and took out her shotgun. Then she hid it in the van.

An hour later everyone in the backseat was asleep. Out of nowhere someone stood in the middle of the gravel road blocking their way. Suddenly, everyone was wide awake. The stranger looked at them with pleading eyes.

Maggie stepped outside. "Hello?"

The stranger said nothing. But while Maggie was focused on the stranger, a man emerged from behind the van holding a pocket knife out. Maggie fell over from fear.

The stranger yelled, "Get out!"

Everyone slowly got out of the van except for the driver.

"What the—" The man heard a click from behind.

May pointed her shotgun. "Leave!"

The man disappeared into the trees.

Maggie said, "Mom you're...awesome!"

They pulled up to the safe house. They were quickly escorted to a room.

May reappeared in her mom's dress. Her father tried not to cry. "You look just like your mum." Slowly dancing with his daughter, her father said, "If she could see you now, she'd tell you how proud she was." As the music ended her dad let go and looked at her. "Now go save the bloody planet."

May hustled down the corridor getting on her lab suit. She burst into a lab.

She saw Toby and her boss Sarah had begun testing.

Also there were rows of people who had fallen ill. They all either glanced at her or slowly turned their heads.

"Right no pressure just the fate of humanity," May said walking to her boss.

Her boss Sarah showed her and then led her to a testing room.

After hours of researching while looking through a microscope, May saw it. The virus. It reacted to the antidote, because the antidote also contained a virus. She fumbled as she yelled, "BOSS!"

Sarah ran into the room and peered into the microscope.

Sarah and May ran quickly and gave the antidote to the patients. The patients' families looked at May who was exhausted.

Sarah explained, "She's fine, just needs rest."

May turned to Sarah and handed her the antidote's "recipe."

"We did it."

June Piepel



Object Introduction

The Bessie Murray (Dutton) trunk and its companion, owned by Claud Dutton, were made from the walnut desk of their father, Jerome Dutton. Jerome Dutton was likely active in the Underground Railroad.

Goodbye
June Piepel

I looked up at my older brother. "Claud, do you think he's coming?" I said impatiently. "Don't worry Bess, he'll come," he replied.

The last train came, and its doors swung open. Soldiers came pouring out and hugged their families that they hadn't seen in years. And yet my father, Jerome Dutton, hadn't shown his face yet.

The last man hopped off the train and ran to his family. My father, he didn't make it. My mother immediately started to weep, hands covering her mouth in shock. My brother had his head down trying to hide his tears. Tears burned my eyes. We decided to sit at the nearby bench just in case he appeared. But after a quarter of an hour, he didn't turn up. We headed home disappointed, shocked, and terribly upset.

My mother didn't come out of her room the next day, and Claud and I didn't dare enter. The daily paper came as usual. Claud went out and picked it up from the step. He came in turning it over, looking puzzled. I stood next to him to see it for myself. Father wasn't in the list of the soldiers that had passed on the battlefield fighting to end slavery. Odd. My brother headed up the stairs to his room. Having nothing to do I turned and started to walk down the hall. Then I came to Father's office. I had never actually been in there. He had it locked usually. I had only glances from when he went in and out. But now he was gone. I found the key in the kitchen cabinet, right where Father left it. Then I made sure no one was around and went in.

It was the same as I remembered. But then I realized, his walnut desk was missing! Instead, two trunks sat in its place. I rushed over to them. They were the same color as the desk and smelled of wood shavings. They had carving on the front too. One with my name and the other Claud's. And in the center: "This and its companion chest made from the desk and writing table used by Jerome Dutton in his office in Wheatland, Iowa commemorate confidences, never broken, agreements faithfully drawn and advice honestly given." Laid neatly on top was a cream colored envelope. I clumsily opened it and pulled out a letter and started to read. The chest was from my father. He had made them the night he had left. I jumped up dropping the letter and burst out of the room to get Claud. When I found my brother he was sitting at his desk looking out the window.

"Claud, come, trunk in father's office, no time to explain." I grabbed his arm and lead him into the office.

"You know we can't be in here," Claud began. I heaved his trunk over to him. He sat down on the floor to get a better look. A smile spread across his face. Then I handed him the letter in the torn envelope. His eyes widened as he read it. He handed it back to me and pointed to the second paragraph. Our father hadn't passed away. He was helping slaves escape. He was working with the Underground Railroad. "He should be on his way home!" Claud said. I smiled and gave him a hug.

Yatharth Sirohi



Object Introduction

The Fire was very large sign that was always on except for when the news of someone dying on the road came to a news station. It was built by Iowa Sign and the purpose of the sign was to promote safe driving. The people that turned it on and off were the employees at KIOA. It was used in the 1970's and 1980's.

The Dead Flame
Yatharth Sirohi

I had just woken up and was on the balcony of my sixth story apartment staring at the exquisite skyline just like every other morning. Every time that I look up at the skyline I am taken back. But to me, there is an object that always stands out—the insurance flame with its alternating red and orange color scheme. When it is on it seems almost as if there is a real fire that signifies the life of the people. Generally, I am not a nervous person, but when it is off it scares me a little because it means that someone has died on the road in Polk County. However, the time that I get the most nervous is when my parents drive to the places that they work, and the sign turns off. Today the flame went out.

It was the first day of summer vacation, but it didn't feel like it at all. There was heavy rain outside with a chance of flash flooding. It was very windy when I woke up. I turned on the TV to watch The National Tiddlywinks Tournament, but I decided to open up our curtain first so that I could get a bit of extra sunlight. When I went to open up the curtains I noticed that the normally lit insurance fire was off. I felt my body tense, my heart rate increase, and I felt as if my heart would jump out of my chest. My parents had just left to go to work. I contemplated the possibility that they had gotten themselves in a crash due to the weather. We were a wealthy family so we did have car phones in our cars, but we only used them for emergencies. I thought about calling my parents but quickly dismissed this idea.

Just to be safe I rushed to change the channel to see if I could find out who had died. When I did I saw a male news reporter that was wearing a horrible beige suit with a wide bottom tie, he said that three cars had crashed together in an intersection and that the types of cars that were involved were a 1986 Mercedes-Benz and two 1987 Buick Grand National GNX. I paused. Two of the three cars that were in the crash were the type of cars that my parents drove. At this point I was pretty scared. I felt goosebumps start to form on my skin. I also started to feel fear grab ahold of the back of my brain and try to force its way through to my whole body and all my thoughts. However, I knew that the only way to remove the fear was to find out everything that I could about the crash and deny the fact that my parents were involved.

So, I kept watching the news reporter give out information throughout the day when the news was on. I found out that the only human remains were bones that were badly burnt. The reporter also said that when they laid out one of the skeletons the approximate height was five foot and eleven inches. These two things got me really nervous because if either of my parents had somehow survived before, there was now a hundred percent chance that they were dead. Second, my dad is around five foot ten inches, so the person in the crash may have been him. The fear in the back of my head crept up into more of my body.

At this point I had become nervous enough to have to start to pace and constantly be moving just to keep my body and head calm. After about five minutes of this I decided that I had suffered enough of this torture of unknowingness and I would call my dad and see if he was okay. I ran to our home phone that was hooked up to the wall, dialed my dad's number and called him. I did not get an answer. I called him four more times to no prevail. After this I

called his work phone another three times, and I didn't get a response. I also did this with my mom but to the same result. Fear crept into more of my brain.

At this point, I had no idea what to do next. All I could think about was calming myself down, so I started reading my book to get my mind off my parents' possible death. I fell asleep at some point and woke up later in the day. I checked the clock and noticed that it was 5:45 pm. My parents should have been home from work nearly forty-five minutes ago. This scared me even more because my parents had only been late from work once and that was because they had to help a friend move his things into a car for his trip to Alaska. At this point I was blinded by fear and I could barely think straight when I heard a knock on the door. Who could it be, I wondered as I open the door. I tried to think about it and considered that it was most likely someone coming to tell me my parents had died.

"Woof!" I heard. Both my parents stood right behind a puppy that I had asked for the last day of school.

Abbie Welbes



Object Inspiration

The historical piece that I choose was a doll that was made in Germany around 1900. It originally belonged to Gladys Fish who lived in Eddyville with her parents. In early 1902 Russell Fish, her father, died while working at Lost Creek mine in an explosion, and the following year Gladys died of pneumonia. Later, her mother and two brothers moved to Albia and in 1918 they gifted the doll to Mildred Crosson. The doll was later donated to the museum by Mildred Crosson Zieke.

Red Flags
Abbie Welbes

“Run girl, run,” was all her father managed to rasp out before she was yanked along by her mother and brother. Their feet slapped painfully against the hard stones as they ran down Main Street towards the train station. A small porcelain doll was clutched tightly in her hands, while Mother carried a heavy leather case that contained jewels and money to buy a safe trip out of the country and rations along the way.

The cobblestones caught at the heels of her shoes making her tumble towards the hard ground, but she was tugged upward and forced into a speedy pace. She stared as people milled around street corners and in front of small shops. Others sped by on bicycles or in automobiles and some stared at burned storefronts or read the newspaper, frustration clear in their faces. Her eyes met a large red flag hanging from one of the larger buildings in town and then to the guards patrolling on the street. She quickly averted her gaze to her feet and pulled her doll closer to her chest.

She had almost forgotten to grab it in their haste to get out of the small apartment. Mother told her to only take the things you couldn't live without, money, extra clothing, and food. But to her this baby meant everything, a small light of hope in a very dark world. A reassurance that after they had escaped this country and moved somewhere new and full of opportunities Father would meet them and they would be happy. They would get a new apartment with three bedrooms so everyone would have their own and they would get a little bed for her doll to sleep in. She had gotten it on her fifth birthday, a baby that matched her exactly. They had matching dresses, matching short blonde hair, and matching green eyes. She knew this doll would go everywhere with her, even to jail if the Bad Men came.

They had almost made it to their car. They had bought tickets and a pass to the sleeping quarters, pretending to be a rich, carefree family going away for the weekend. Before leaving they had put on their best clothes, Mother in her pretty, purple floral and the girl in a brown striped dress that matched her doll. Late last night they had scrubbed their garments free of any dirt or food and polished their shoes until they could see their reflections. Brother had spent hours tying his tie and making sure not a hair was out of place while Father had packed all their money into a case. Mother told them to walk slowly saying if the Bad Men came they would not question a rich widow taking her kids on a trip. But, of course, almost wasn't good enough.

She had just passed the locomotive's large wheels when shouts erupted from behind. Big men in green uniforms barged towards them, the same red flag as in the street wrapped around their arms. Their shiny, black boots clicked against the hard stone floors. They were grabbing people as they went, loading them into the back of filthy trucks. Not the pretty, sleek automobiles the rich people had, but mud and rust coated monsters with wooden beds in the back, covered by cheap canvas and complete with a heavy metal door. No one was safe as they pulled women from children and pushed violently. Mother had remained calm until three shadows were upon them. One grabbed Mother and another grabbed her brother. She hoped they would be careful and not ruin her little baby, her only hope.

Instead two enormous hands yanked her roughly. Ripping the delicate collar of her dress, causing her to shriek and flail. The man had a large mask that covered his whole face except for two glass holes that he could look out of. In the mouth area, there was a tube that was connected to a pack on his chest. The front of his uniform was decorated with pins that pressed sharply into her skin as he pulled her closer. She watched as other men roughly grabbed shocked women and screaming children.

She almost thought he was going to let her keep the doll. He began to stomp towards the ugly trucks when she accidentally hit him with it in her desperation to get away. He snatched it angrily and threw it to the ground, the delicate porcelain cracked at the force leaving the head split in two. The girl stared at her doll as she was dragged away, still thrashing but less now that her precious baby was out of reach. She watched as another man in green stomped on the poor doll, shattering it. They were at the trucks now and the girl laid limp as the Bad Man shoved her in with other sobbing women and children. Her mother and brother were nowhere in sight and her baby was lying broken and alone. The man yelled something to his companions while slamming the door shut, with the image of a shattered doll burned into her mind. All hope was lost.

Emma Zheng



Object Introduction

My historical item was the Barnum and Bailey Ringling Bro. poster. On this poster is the Loyal Repenski family, the World's Greatest Riding Troupe. The family is performing on three white horses. The poster was part of the Wagner Circus Collection, formed by Jacob A. Wagner. He traveled to Iowa in 1875 and was appointed the superintendent of the Des Moines Union Railway in 1893.

Up in Flames
Emma Zheng

Bella Zeola hurried down the hallway, pinning up a blonde headdress. Hairpins were used to fasten the wig onto the headdress that she wore, and the headdress had the tiniest hook that helped her with the act. Her act was almost up, and she was late. She could hear the roaring of the crowd, cheering for the Repenskis. Bella ducked aside as white ponies pranced out of the Big Top tent flap.

“Bella! What are you doing?! Get out there!” A forty-six-year-old tramp clown, Charlie, already decked in his clown makeup and costume, came waddling toward her.

As the last of the Repenskis cleared out, the ringmaster stepped out into the ring, and cleared his throat importantly.

“That’s your cue! Hurry!” Charlie gave a little shove, and Bella stumbled up the metal stair steps.

“And next, we have the amazing Bella Zeola, just shy of nineteen, who will perform a death-defying swing by her hair!” declared the ringmaster. The lights and eyes swiveled to Bella, and she smiled nervously.

Bella smoothed her flowy blue costume, and fastened the little hook to the three-hundred-foot wire. The headdress covered her hair on purpose, as the headdress was designed to look exactly like her hair. No hair was harmed, and the ‘death-defying swing’ was simply a light stroll in mid-air. She listened for the music cue, and, perfectly on time, she leapt delicately from her perch and flew.

A blaze of fiery paper, a circus poster specifically, streaked past Bella’s ear. Somebody screamed where it had landed, and the tent erupted into flames. She must finish the act, otherwise she would be stuck mid-air. Bella landed, stumbled, and ran. She ducked under the tent flap, and tried to ignore the screams behind. Running into the cue area, Bella desperately searched for him, releasing animals along the way.

“Charlie!” she yelled. He came, running, and almost knocked her over. Together they unhooked the cages to the animals, and gently pushed the lions and ponies out. “Bella! Go help all those innocent people! I’ll make sure the animals find their way out,” Charlie said.

Bella rushed back through the gasoline water-proofed tent and started ushering people out the door. Hundreds of people, circus performers, audience members, all of it blurred together before her eyes. The worst were the already dead. The flames grew higher, and higher, and the smoke nearly choked Bella. She spotted a box in the corner with plenty of circus posters flying out. She rushed over, shut the box, and looked up just in time to see a lick of fire overtake her, and then she fell to the ground.

“Notice: Died in Hartford Circus fire. Please report to your local post office if you recognize the following person: 19 or 20, blonde, neat teeth, average height and skinny. Wearing circus costume with headdress. A memorial will be held if any persons decide to come forward with information.” A girl read, standing in front of a store window.

She looked up to see a blonde, pretty girl appear directly in front of her, ghostly, almost like an apparition.

Group Photo



Left to right: Ellis Coyier, Yatharth Sirohi, Max Fahrenkrug, Dashiell Coyier, June Piepel, Angela Bambo, Emma Zheng, Abbie Welbes, Grace Keyte, Carolina DePaula, Stephanie Hemphill, Bethany Oelke