



What Are Archives?

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

Why do we need archives?

Standards

Social Studies

I.1.4; I.1.5, I.1.6, I.1.9, I.1.11
3.C&G.1

English Language Arts

RI.3-5.1, RI.3-5.4, RI.3-4.7
SL.3-5.1, SL.3-5.2
L.3-5.1, L.3-5.4, L.3-5.6

Physical Science

PS.3.1, PS.4.3

Objectives

- Classify types of historic records
- Analyze causes of physical deterioration
- Evaluate the importance of archives

Lesson Contents

Archives are collections of documents and other records from the past. They preserve evidence of what happened in the past and help researchers piece together stories of people and change over time. The State Archives of North Carolina houses original documents and audio-visual materials created by North Carolinians over three and a half centuries. The State Archives preserves over 100 million records, many from government agencies, while others are donations from citizens and organizations. The State Archives is

also a place of research and welcomes patrons at locations in Raleigh, Manteo, and Asheville.

Video options:

“Welcome to the State Archives of North Carolina” [youtube.com/watch?v=NXXKnroTuGk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NXXKnroTuGk)

“Virtual Behind the Scenes Tour of the State Archives of North Carolina”

[youtube.com/watch?v=RlsaRl9Bbvg&list=PL2w9jUBdiGKt_xaUE4yMyalkGGWOPhOF&index=9](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RlsaRl9Bbvg&list=PL2w9jUBdiGKt_xaUE4yMyalkGGWOPhOF&index=9)

Assignment Options

(files on thumb drive)

- **Background: What Are Archives?**
- **Family Recipe**
- **Oral History**
- **Exit Tickets**

Supplies

- Acid-indicating pens (2 provided)
- 4 paper samples provided; may need additional papers, depending on student numbers

Lesson Preparation

- Review the video, folder contents, and slides to determine which options are appropriate for your students. Note that this box contains a variety of options from which teachers can select, based on available time, learning goals, and student capacities.
- Keep answer key at hand for the background worksheet if you choose that option. Alternatively, the material may be covered with slides and class discussion.
- Make copies of any handouts you choose.
 - **Background: What Are Archives?** is an optional assignment for individual work.
 - Print 30 copies of both for 30 students.
 - Cut the 4 provided paper samples into 30 pieces for 30 students. Number pieces from each sample, 1-4, or place pieces from the each sample in 4 separate envelopes and number each envelope. (The

number assigned to each sample does not matter as long as it is consistent with other pieces of the same sample to check student answers on the worksheet.)

- **Family Recipe**—print 30 copies for 30 students.
- **Oral History**—print double-sided 30 copies for 30 students.
- **Exit Tickets**—print single-sided and cut in quarters (8 copies for up to 32 students).

Background Knowledge

(5 minutes)

Ask students: *What is important to save? What causes things to deteriorate? How can we keep them for many years?* Student answers will vary but should include elevated levels of light, temperature, and humidity; also people (handling, theft, neglect), pests, and pollutants.

Procedure

- Watch the video, “[Welcome to the State Archives of North Carolina](#)” (5 minutes)
Or “[Virtual Behind the Scenes Tour of the State Archives of North Carolina](#)”

(16 minutes)

Discuss the types of records shown in the video. Ask students, *what should we keep forever?* Or, for higher-level students, *how is knowledge shared and preserved?*

Have their responses changed since watching the video? (10 minutes)

- Pass out **Background: What Are Archives?** worksheets and allow students to complete. Review answers as a class using the answer key. (15 minutes)
Or, use the slide option to view the list of record types and example documents. Discuss as a class which type(s) match each record and look for clues to date each example.
- Set up a station to test paper samples for acidity with the provided 2 acid-indicating pens and 4 paper samples. Note this station may combine well with a quill writing station and a wax seal station, as listed in **Cross-Lesson Activities** and **1776 Constitution** folders. The combined station set-up would give 6 students at a time hands-on activities. (5 minutes per station)

Modifications

- Students could be paired with a higher-achieving or differently behaving student for extra support.

- Students could be given extension activities if they finish early or need more challenging or independent work. The following can be done independently or collaboratively.

Extension Options: (using notebook paper)

- Apply what you have learned about damage to documents by looking through the primary source folders in the DocsBox. Each folder contains copies of original documents. List the document and any damage you can see on each. (e.g. discoloration from acidity, tears, ink bleeding, other stains.) Write a paragraph about ways preservation supplies and methods slow further deterioration.
- Write one or two paragraphs about the documents you would select from your life to preserve for the future. What would you choose? Why? Evaluate their significance for you and your family. Would they hold significance for your community or even beyond?
- Create your own archival materials by completing the **Family Recipe** and/or **Oral History** collection forms as homework with content from your family members.
- Explore the State Archives' [Discover Online Catalog](https://archives.ncdcr.gov/search-catalog/search-doc), archives.ncdcr.gov/search-catalog/search-doc. Scroll down to the types of records. Pick 3 different types of records. Then visit the [North Carolina Digital Collection](https://digital.ncdcr.gov/), digital.ncdcr.gov/, to find one or more items of each of the 3 selected types. For each, write a paragraph identifying what the record represents. Include time period, subject(s), and why it is historically significant.
- Imagine the North Carolina legislature is planning to cut funding to the State Archives. Without funding, the archives will not be able to pay staff or order supplies. Write a letter to the legislature to protest the funding cuts and argue that the state of North Carolina needs the State Archives.

Exit Tickets

(5 minutes)

- *Write a definition of archives in your own words.*
- *Why are archives important?*