



Latimer House Tour: The Man Behind the Invention

Grade Level: 9th Grade - 12th Grade

Unit Objectives: Students will...

1. Learn about the life of inventor Lewis Howard Latimer, through a virtual tour of the Lewis Latimer museum.
2. Build an understanding of who Latimer was, and how he lived as a creator in the 1800s.
3. Become interested in the use of artifacts to tell a story with historic facts and meanings. Participants will take part in a scavenger hunt to find important objects in their own homes/makerspaces.
4. Brainstorm what would be in their personal tours if their homes were turned into a museum
5. Create a design of their own personal Historic House Museum. Students will share their creations with the class once complete.

Concepts/Skills:

African American history, understanding the importance of primary sources in the study of history, problem solving skills, understanding lab facilities and equipment.



The Inventor's Home

Learn about Latimer's Home and History

Challenge

Create a Historic Museum of Your Life!

Learning Objective

Build an understanding of Latimer's Personal History through a House Tour, and construct a personal museum that'll document your life in the future.

Duration

Suggestion time 60 minutes

Lesson Outline

Engage	10 minutes
Explore	10 minutes
Explain	20 minutes
Elaborate	15 minutes
Evaluate	5 minutes

ENGAGE

10 Minutes

Introduce the concept of a museum to your students. Make sure they know when they have entered the museum, and ask them to notice their surroundings to see where they are. Most students have an already made-up assumption of what museums look like (large, structured, a place where historical objects live), and ask them what museums they have visited before!

Once entering the museum of Latimer's Home, give a brief introduction of who Latimer was as an inventor and important historical figure. Brainstorm with your class what objects of Latimer's would be exciting to archive for reference.

Have you ever been to a museum before? Can a house be a museum? What objects do you see? Which are you excited to learn more about?

THINKING PROMPT

Think about the museums that you have visited before. What was inside of them? What objects did you notice the most?

Let's talk about Latimer's time! When looking around the room, what time period do you think we're in? Is there a year/period that comes to mind? What do you see?

Answers could include: There's no TV, microwave, or any other type of modern device, so we aren't in the present day. The furniture and living space looks older too, and the pictures on the walls are in black and white. Let your students explore the space and find more clues!

INQUIRY QUESTIONS

- Have you ever been to a museum before?
- What do you love about museums? What types of things do you learn in them?
- Who's house is this? How do you know it's Latimer's? Are there any clues that tell us he lived here?



EXPLORE

10 minutes

Watch Video:

[“Lewis Howard Latimer Life Story - Inventor and Innovator”](#)
(6:45 Minutes)



Lewis Howard Latimer (1848-1928), was an African-American inventor, electrical pioneer, and a son of fugitive slaves. With no access to formal education, Latimer taught himself many skills throughout his life and career, soon becoming an extraordinary inventor!

Latimer’s home was constructed between 1887 and 1889, and had a very vibrant yellow exterior that helped it stand out from the rest of the neighborhood. Latimer lived here from 1903 to 1928, living his life as an inventor behind some of history’s most important discoveries!

KEY VOCABULARY

Museum: a place that holds the history of a specific time period, from music to important objects and other artifacts. Many museums are open to the public, and encourage visitors to dive into the many different exhibits the museum has to offer!

Museum Exhibit: a curated space where objects are on display for public consumption. Like the Latimer Museum, exhibits have the ultimate goal of educating its visitors about historical figures.

Museum Curator: a person in charge of collecting, managing, and presenting works of historical objects for public viewing in museums. The aim is to educate, while also thinking about the best way to present many different artifacts as a one unified collection.

Museology: the study of museums. This area of study explores the history of museums, their societal impact, and the unpacking of activities that occur within museums: curating, preservation, public programming, and education.

PLACES WHERE HISTORY COMES TO LIFE

For some students, the concept of a museum that is not in a large space is difficult to understand. Guide students to the realization that any curated space can be a museum (including a home). Explore some new possibilities of how someone's home can be turned into a museum!

What is a historic home museum?

A **historic house museum** (noun) is a home that has been transformed into a museum. All furniture and pictures have all been preserved, in order to give visitors a truthful historic experience!

Here, at the Lewis Latimer House Museum, we have many of the historical artifacts of Lewis Howard Latimer. This house holds many of Latimer's things, and they give us an idea of who he was as a father, scientist, and artist.



What did homes look like (and how were they built) in the 1800s?

Similar to today, homes look very different, depending on where they were built. In Latimer's time, homes were much cheaper, and held between two and four rooms depending on the neighborhood.

Unlike today, most homes were newly built from brick or stone. In the suburbs (where Latimer lived) homes were also built from a wooden frame.

Latimer made two major changes to his home once buying it, the most important of which resulted in the creation of his home laboratory and maker's space in his attic. This made it easier for Latimer to create exciting things throughout the day and night!

THINKING PROMPT

Lewis Howard Latimer was an inventor whose life is on display in the museum of his home. For this prompt, look around the room you are currently in. Find one object that you would like to preserve in your own museum!

What does Latimer's living room say about his life?

"He enjoyed spending quality time with his family when not working on inventions, which can be seen by the number of chairs and wide open spacing."

Can you spot any of Latimer's inventions in his home?

"Latimer is the reason why we have lightbulbs today, and on this tour, lightbulbs are used to make our experience better."

How do you think these objects were preserved?

"To preserve Latimer's objects, they have to be stored and highly protected in temperature controlled areas so that the materials aren't ruined over time."



WORKSHEET

NAME
GRADE

DATE
TEACHER

ACTIVITY:

Mr. Lewis Howard Latimer's home is preserved in time for all to see. Look around the room, and write a list of objects that catch your eye. Try and record as much as you can, paying extra attention to why certain objects of Latimer's were kept instead of others.

Pick a room in Latimer's House to sketch. Be as detailed as possible.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What are objects that you found around Latimer's home?

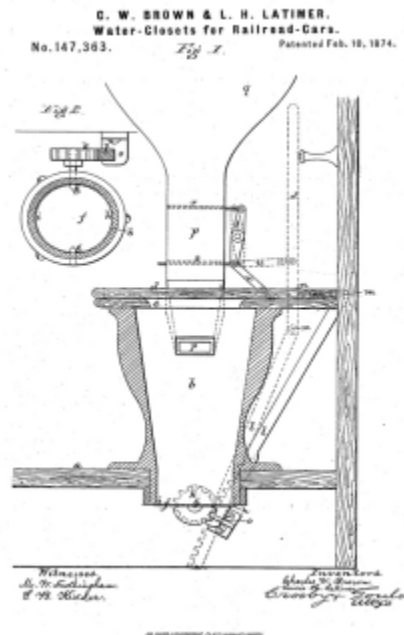
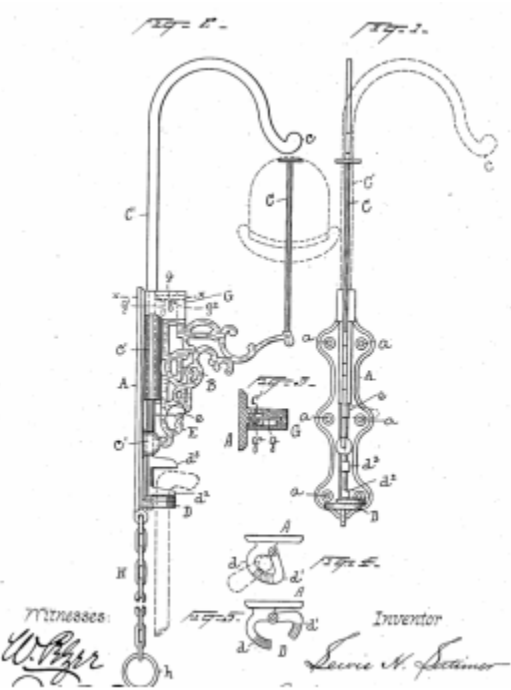
Why do you think these artifacts were kept by the Museum?

How are these objects similar or different from the historical objects in other museums you've been to?

What kind of objects were your favorite to find? Why?

EXPLAIN

20 minutes



Lewis Latimer was an inventor who lived and invented in the late 1800's. His ideas brought new inventions to people in the United States and around the world. His innovations - and the tools used - are the foundation of a few machines we have today.

BRAINSTORM

Explain to your students that inventions come from ideas, and that the best inventions come when in a group! Ask your students what brainstorming means to them, and which to remember a time when they had to come up with something exciting with either friends or family!

Inventing Something New: 3 minutes discussion

Take notes on a board or Padlet. Exploring Lewis Latimer's workspace will support students as they gain an understanding that there were many inventions that changed the world. Where would we be without the lightbulb? What are other cool inventions that have changed our lives?

Examples: Perhaps a car that could fly? Or galactic space pods to explore different planets.

Classroom Workspace for Inventing: 3 minutes discussion

Students can also brainstorm how creation can be sparked in their classrooms, as well as moments when brainstorming has helped them solve a creative issue. What thoughts come to mind? What was the environment of this brainstorming? Was it with friends? Family? Classmates?

Examples: One time, I had to brainstorm to figure out how to create a new toy with my friends. We used objects in our rooms to build something cool, and couldn't wait to show our classmates what we had created!

ELABORATE

15 minutes

After learning about Lewis Latimer's home, we will ask students to complete a short design challenge to consider what their own personal museums would look like if their homes were preserved for the future!

Work with students to brainstorm and draw one object that they would like in their personal museums.

What object/artifact of your life would you want others to see in the future? How would this object represent who you are as a creator/inventor?

Remember students should consider:

1. The space of their museum.
2. What room would be preserved?
3. How would their museum be an educational experience for others?

The sky's the limit for this activity! Encourage students to think big. Many students will not know exactly how to create a fully functioning museum, this is not important for this assignment. The focus is demonstrating an understanding of the importance of house museums, while envisioning a world where their future aspirations are on full display!

WORKSHEET



NAME
GRADE

DATE
TEACHER

ACTIVITY:

Latimer and all of his personal household items have been permanently housed in the Lewis Latimer Museum. Think about a room in your home that means a lot to you. Use the space below to list the objects in this room. Remember, these objects are meant to paint the full picture of who you are!

List these objects below.

EVALUATE

5 minutes

Assessment Rubric

Use the students' design and written descriptions to evaluate students' ability to determine the layout of their personal historic home museums.

Evaluate their room description for the use of descriptive adjectives, voice, and organization and their illustration based on relative accuracy of size and dimensions.

	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement
Student demonstrated understanding of the requirements of a Home Museum.				
Student provided a clear understanding of the function of a Home Museum.				
Student shared their work successfully.				
Student clearly depicted their Home Museum using grade level descriptive language.				
Student shared their work confidently to the class and were able to communicate with others.				

Common Core Standards

Speaking & Listening

SL.6.4

Present claims and findings, sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

Speaking & Listening

SL.7.4, SL.8.4

Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with pertinent descriptions, facts, details, and examples; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

Next Generation Science Standards

MS-ETS1-1

Define the criteria and constraints of a design problem with sufficient precision to ensure a successful solution, taking into account relevant scientific principles and potential impacts on people and the natural environment that may limit possible solutions.