



AMERICAN PICKERS

CLASSROOM GUIDE

TERMS TO DEFINE

Ask students to define the terms below before or after watching this program. They can also write down a list of their own words to define while watching this documentary.

Antique

Bargain

Collectible

Flea Market

“Picking”

Preservation

Refurbish

Relic

Restoration

CURRICULUM LINKS

American Pickers is appropriate for middle school and high school students. Each episode runs for one half-hour. It would be useful for American History, Social Studies, and Current Events classes. Note – this classroom guide is designed to be used with any episode of *American Pickers*.

INTRODUCTION

Every week, viewers tune in to *American Pickers*® on **HISTORY**® to learn about the antiques and rare treasures Mike Wolfe and Frank Fritz uncover. The Pickers travel the country, searching through basements, barns and other remote locales to find valuable collectibles to bargain for, purchase, and sell at the Antique Archaeology shop in Le Claire, Iowa where Danielle Colby manages the store. As they search for hidden valuables, Mike and Frank encounter intriguing characters and slices of American history along the way.

During each episode, viewers learn when an item was made, how it was used, and what it is worth. Not only is one person’s trash another person’s treasure, but *American Pickers* gives us a unique and entertaining glimpse into history. The series also provides insights into the art of bargaining, and the process of refurbishing and preserving historical items. Every item they find tells a valuable story about the past, helping students understand history in a new way.



SPOTLIGHT

Kid Pickers: How to Turn Junk Into Treasure

by Mike Wolfe with Lily Sprenghelmeyer
Visit <http://tinyurl.com/c8mpd52> to order the book. In his book *Kid Pickers: How to Turn Junk Into Treasure*, Mike Wolfe gives young people valuable tips and resources to start their own “picking” adventures. Mike believes that picking helps young people learn about their communities, their own history, and the history of places far from their own backyards. Visit kidpickers.com to learn more about how kids throughout the country are learning about the past through picking.



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is “picking” and how is it different from shopping?
2. What are some of the ways that someone can prepare to go picking?
3. Where are some of the places Mike and Frank go to look for valuable items that may be hidden from view? If you were to go picking, what locations might you go to in order to find collectible items?
4. What role does bargaining play in picking? How do you think Mike and Frank determine the value of an item?
5. What is “sentimental value”? What items in your life have sentimental value?
6. What characteristics do you think can help make someone a good “picker”?
7. What is Danielle’s role in *American Pickers*? Would you rather have her position or be out on the road with Frank and Mike?
8. How do you think someone can learn more about how to be a good “picker”? What kinds of classes or books do you think someone might take or read in order to learn more about antiques?
9. How do you think Mike and Frank help preserve history through their roles as *American Pickers*?





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EXTENDED ACTIVITIES

1. What Did They Pick? Ask students to fill in the chart below after watching an episode of *American Pickers*.®

What are some of the items Mike and Frank picked in this episode?	During what era was the item made? What else do you know about that time period?	What were some interesting facts you learned about the item and its historical use or value?
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2. **Picking at Home.** Have students ask family members if they have any antiques or heirlooms in their homes. If they do, ask students to do some research on what the item is, how old it is, and how it was used. If they do not have any antiques at home, have them research any antique or collectible they find interesting and write a short description of the item.

3. **Antique Archaeology Advertised.** Design a print ad, radio ad, or commercial for Antique Archaeology or another vintage or antique store. These ads can be presented in PowerPoint, QuickTime or any other format. If you do not have access to these forms of media, you can design the print ad on a poster, or prepare a written script for a radio ad.

4. **The Value of Picking.** Ask students to write a letter to the editor or an opinion piece about the value of “picking.” What can we learn from the past by “picking,” and how is it an important aspect of historic preservation?



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PICKING 101 (Learn more at www.kidpickers.com)

Picking Checklist

Be prepared.

Do your homework before you start your treasure hunt.

- Find out the best picking place in your neighborhoods.
- Ask your parent or grandparent to go with you. They might know some history.
- Take a journal with you to take notes about items and prices.
- Bring a backpack to carry your stuff.
- Always be safe.



Picking Places

Here are a few places you might start exploring. Ask your parents for more ideas.

- Garage and Yard sales
- Secondhand stores (a.k.a. thrift stores)
- Collectors Shops
- Auctions
- Antique Stores
- Flea Markets
- Your Own House

Learn More About Your Picks

Let's say you've found an item – now what? Check out the list below to find some great ways to learn about the history behind your pick.

- Your local library
- The internet
- An antique store
- Your Family
- Other people who may know about history such as your teacher



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PICKING WITH A PURPOSE

Why picking is not only fun, but green (good for planet Earth!)

Think of yourself as a “treasure rescuer.” Every time you find an item that someone else no longer finds worthy, or valuable, you are finding a new home for something that may have ended up in a garbage dump or been lost forever. That is called repurposing. Now what was once considered old, is new again! Good job.

Books

Callaway, Libby. *American Pickers Guide to Picking*. (Hyperion, 2011).

Loomis, Frank Farmer. *Antiques 101: A Crash Course in Everything Antique*. (Krause Publications, 2005).

Stanton, Maureen. *Killer Stuff and Tons of Money: Seeking History and Hidden Gems in Flea-Market America*. (Penguin Press, 2011).

Wolfe, Mike with Lily Sprengelmeyer. *Kid Pickers: How to Turn Junk into Treasure*. (Feiweil and Friends, 2013).

Websites

Watch clips online and learn more about *American Pickers*:

www.history.com/shows/american-pickers

Mike Wolf’s Kid Pickers program:

www.kidpickers.com

www.kidpickers.com/pages/parents-and-teachers

Antique Archeology’s official website:

www.antiquearchaeology.com



Learn more on Facebook

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