

Changemakers: Legacies and Evidence of the Past

This inquiry is adapted from material created by Jennifer Suchland, Ph.D., The Ohio State University.

Compelling Question

What legacy and evidence will you leave for future generations?

State Standard(s)

Ohio/ Grade 8 Content Statements 1 & 25
Kentucky 8.E.MI.2, 8.H.CH.2

C3 Framework Indicator(s)

D2.His.3.6-8, D2.His.6.6-8, D4.7.6-8

Learning Goals

Students will understand

- How racial prejudice hid and denied the intellectual property created by African Americans.
- How historical markers shape community history and values.

Students will be able to

- Identify one way in which your life is linked to one of the patents you've discovered.
- Explain who and what are considered "important" in their community's history and how those decisions reflect the community's identity and values.
- Determine a course of action for leaving a positive legacy.
- Determine the evidence that will inform future generations about their legacy

Supporting Question

What do we learn from John Parker's evidence and legacy?

Featured Sources

- **Website:** Bellis, M. (2019, Jan. 27). *African American Inventors*. Thought Co. thoughtco.com/african-american-inventors-1991278
- **Website:** InQuartik. (2022, Jan. 13). *Different Types of Intellectual Property Rights...* (cont.)

Supporting Question

How do we assign value to evidence and legacy?

Featured Sources

- **Website:** Govtrack. (n.d.). S. 2610 (113th): *John P. Parker House Study Act*. govtrack.us/congress/bills/113/s2610
- **Website:** MNdb.org. (n.d.). *Ripley / The John P. Parker House*. hmdb.org/m.asp?m=135431

Featured Sources (cont.)

and Why They Are Important.

inquartik.com/blog/basic-intellectual-property-rights

- **Website:** Johnson, S. (2017). *With Patents or Without, Black Inventors Reshaped American Industry*. Smithsonian Magazine. smithsonianmag.com/innovation/with-patents-or-without-black-inventors-reshaped-american-industry-180962201
- **Website:** Justia Patents. (n.d.). *Patents by John Parker*. patents.justia.com/inventor/john-p-parker
- **Website:** National Inventors Hall of Fame. (2022). *Guide to Intellectual Property: What is a Patent?* invent.org/blog/intellectual-property/patent-definition

Formative Performance Task

- John Parker's Patents (Appendix A)

Featured Sources (cont.)

- **Website:** New Jersey Maritime Museum. (2016, Aug. 4). *The Importance of Museums: Preserving Local Culture*. njmaritimemuseum.org/the-importance-of-museums-preserving-local-culture

Formative Performance Task

- Historical Markers (Appendix B)

Summative Performance Task

ARGUMENT: Create a primary and secondary source using performance, writing, or drawing relating to your life. Where would someone find these sources and what would others learn about you from them?

EXTENSION: Create a classroom library of all these primary and secondary sources. Take turns learning about each other using these sources.

Taking Informed Action

UNDERSTAND:

The Legacy Project

The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center spotlights the stories of those who endured and battled against slavery in the United States. These freedom seekers and freedom fighters modeled the courage, cooperation, and perseverance that inspires and guides us to pursue social justice for all. Their actions influenced future generations.

ASSESS: What legacy and evidence will you leave for future generations? The actions you take today and tomorrow can be a model for future generations to follow. You have the power, so how will you use it? We challenge you to reflect upon the example you wish to set for others and determine a course of action that will make it happen. Your actions speak volumes. What do you want to say?

Taking Informed Action (cont.)

ACT: Create a two-minute video. In the video, explain the lesson future generations will learn from your story. In addition, tell us what you intend to do in your life that will set an example for others to follow. What evidence will you leave behind? Perhaps you will continue upon a path, or perhaps you will change the path you are currently taking. Don't focus on your past actions. The Freedom Center wants to know your intentions for your future.

Inquiry Description

The Changemakers series of inquiries provide teachers multiple opportunities to incorporate the history of the Underground Railroad into their curriculum across the academic year. Additionally, there are opportunities for cross-disciplinary study and collaboration. While the inquiries are aligned to eighth grade Ohio and Kentucky standards, we hope teachers across grade levels and disciplines utilize these materials. Throughout this series, lessons and activities will connect the Underground Railroad and the abolitionist movement to today through personal and community stories. Spanning various subjects, the overarching theme focuses on the impact changemakers have during their lifetime, the evidence they leave behind, and their ongoing impact today. Lessons and activities are unique and can build upon each other.

The theme is “Changemakers in the Past, Present & Future.” The series begins with an inquiry about historical myths and assumptions emphasizing historical and critical thinking. The second and third inquiries require students to apply these skills while developing questions and completing research regarding two historical narratives: John Parker and Francis Watkins Harper. The next two series inquiries provide the opportunity to consider, reflect upon, and engage the question of how we are connected to the past. The fourth inquiry has students consider the legacies and evidence we leave for future generations, including the powers that limit and restrict such evidence. The fifth inquiry engages students in changemaking to identify and address a problem of today to create a better tomorrow.

In inquiry 4 of 5, “Legacies and Evidence of the Past,” students engage in the historical investigation of the legacy of John P. Parker outside of his role in the Underground Railroad. By researching Parker's patents, students will consider how racial prejudice hid and denied the intellectual property created by African Americans. In addition, students will investigate how historical markers are established and consider who and what are considered “important” in our society and how these decisions impact history.

Students will engage in social justice work by considering the legacy they will leave for future generations. Students will establish action plans for leaving positive legacies and inspiring others.

This inquiry embodies the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center principles of courage, cooperation, and perseverance by illustrating how each was necessary for the success of the Underground Railroad. We encourage teachers and students to visit our museum and continue this exploration through our exhibits and focus on narratives. The Freedom Center uses education to dispel myths and promote historical truths, so a visit would be an excellent addition to the “Changemakers in the Past, Present & Future” series of inquiries.

Required Prior Knowledge

Students should have completed the Changemakers: John Parker inquiry.

Staging The Compelling Question

Have students participate in Hicks and Lisanti's “Artifact Bag: Museum of Me” activity from *The First Day of Class: Developing and Awareness of Inference in History and Culture* published in *Social Studies and Diversity Education: What We Do and Why We Do It* edited by Heilman, 2010. An online version can be found at mcp.org/common/pages/DisplayFile.aspx?itemId=3472670. This assignment asks students to consider the evidence of their lives and the legacy they are leaving for the future.



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Supporting Question 1

The first supporting question — What do we learn from John Parker’s evidence and legacy?- has students engage in the historical investigation of the legacy of John P. Parker outside of his role in the Underground Railroad. By researching Parker’s patents, students will consider how racial prejudice hid and denied the intellectual property created by African Americans

By examining this question,

- **Students will understand** how racial prejudice hid and denied the intellectual property created by African Americans.
- **Students will be able to** identify one way in which your life is linked to one of the patents you’ve discovered.

Begin by sharing the following information with students:

What is a legacy? What are the different ways that people leave evidence of their lives and deeds? What evidence did John Parker leave? There is only one known photograph of John P. Parker. What happens to someone’s legacy if the evidence is missing or lost?

Appendix A, John Parker’s Patents, guides students through an investigation of the many patents developed by Parker. In the process, students will reflect on how patents are an example of a legacy that is built upon over time. Students will also learn about patents and intellectual property rights and consider how racial prejudice hid and denied the intellectual property created by African Americans.

Ask students to consider the overall legacy of John Parker? Why is it important to remember his contributions to the Underground Railroad AND technology? How easy is it from evidence to be lost to history?

Supporting Question 2

The second supporting question - How do we assign value to evidence and legacy? Has students investigate how historical markers are established and consider who and what are considered “important” in our society and how these decisions impact history.

By examining this question,

- **Students will understand** how historical markers shape community history and values.
- **Students will be able to** explain who and what are considered “important” in their community’s history and how those decisions reflect the community’s identity and values.

Appendix B, Historical Markers, guides students as they research the processes that determine historical markers. Begin by sharing and discussing the following:

Historical markers are evidence of the people and events of the past. But historical markers do not just appear, they are created with intention and sometimes controversy. Historical markers represent what a community values and decides is worthy of preservation. Some historical markers are controversial because they relate to an issue that continues to be debated.

As students research, they will discover how and why some people and places are deemed “historical” or “significant.” They are then prompted to investigate their community and surroundings for evidence of historical markers or designation of importance. They are asked to research one marker and find when it was established and determine what values and stories are illustrated with the marker?

As a class, students then create a visualization/map of the different historical markers in your community The overarching purpose is for students to discuss how history in their community is portrayed and to determine what values and stories are emphasized. What history is included and what is not included and why?

There also are examples of public art and [Street Art](#) that reflect local history. Students could look around their community and schools for murals and other public art that reflect important historical figures.

Extend the discussion to include museums. The article, *How Museums Shape Meaning* at smarthistory.org/how-museums-shape-meaning is an excellent teacher resource for facilitating in discussion. Have students consider the following passage:

To control a museum means precisely to control the representation of a community and its highest values and truths. It is also the power to define the relative standing of individuals within that community. Those who are best prepared to perform its ritual—those who are most able to respond to its various cues—are also those whose identities (social, sexual, racial, etc.) the museum ritual most fully confirms. It is precisely for this reason that museums and museum practices can become objects of fierce struggle and impassioned debate. What we see and do not see in art museums—and on what terms and by whose authority we do or do not see it—is closely linked to larger questions about who constitutes the community and who defines its identity [pp. 8-9].

Students could read *The Importance of Museums: Preserving Local Culture* at njmaritimuseum.org/the-importance-of-museums-preserving-local-culture, and assess a local museum to see if it indeed preserves all aspects of local culture.

Summative Performance Task

To answer the question – What legacy and evidence will you leave for future generations? – students should assess and plan for the legacy they wish to leave behind, and the evidence that will support it. As a summative task, students could create a primary and secondary source using performance, writing, or drawing relating to their life. They should consider where would someone find these sources and what would others learn from them? To extend the learning, students could create a classroom library of all these primary and secondary sources and take turns learning about each other using these sources.

Taking Informed Action

In this inquiry, the Taking Informed Action project could be used as the summative assessment. The Legacies Project (Appendix C) outlines the assignment requirements and includes a rubric. By completing this project:

- **Students will be able to** determine a course of action for leaving a positive legacy.
- **Students will be able to** determine the evidence that will inform future generations about their legacy.

UNDERSTAND: The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center spotlights the stories of those who endured and battled against slavery in the United States. These freedom seekers and freedom fighters modeled the courage, cooperation, and perseverance that inspires and guides us to pursue social justice for all. Their actions influenced future generations.

ASSESS: What legacy and evidence will you leave for future generations?

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ACT: Create a two-minute video. In the video, explain the lesson future generations will learn from your story. In addition, tell us what you intend to do in your life that will set an example for others to follow. What evidence will you leave behind? Perhaps you will continue upon a path, or perhaps you will change the path you are currently taking. Don't focus on your past actions. The Freedom Center wants to know your intentions for your future.

References

Bellis, M. (2019, Jan. 27). *African American Inventors*. Thought Co. <https://www.thoughtco.com/african-american-inventors-1991278>

Farber, A. (2015, Dec. 6). *How Museums Shape Meaning*. Smarthistory. <https://smarthistory.org/how-museums-shape-meaning>

Govtrack. (n.d.). S. 2610 (113th): *John P. Parker House Study Act*. <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/113/s2610>

Hicks, D. & Lisanti, M. (2010). *The First Day of Class: Developing and Awareness of Inference in History and Culture* published in *Social Studies and Diversity Education: What We Do and Why We Do It* Heilman, E. E. (ed.).

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MNdb.org. (n.d.). *Ripley / The John P. Parker House*. <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=135431>

National Inventors Hall of Fame. (2022). *Guide to Intellectual Property: What is a Patent?* <https://www.invent.org/blog/intellectual-property/patent-definition>

New Jersey Maritime Museum. (2016, Aug. 4). *The Importance of Museums: Preserving Local Culture*. <https://njmaritimemuseum.org/the-importance-of-museums-preserving-local-culture>