Family Matters

GUIDE FOR FAMILIES

This self-guided experience asks you to explore history and how you can use it to learn more about yourself and others.
How can history help you to better understand yourself and others?

What is the point of history? Is it just a record of dates and names? Or can history be used for something more? This self-guided experience through the Community Galleries asks you to think about history and how you can use it to help it reflect on yourself, your experiences, and your world view. How can this help you understand others?

This is designed for families, however you define that. There are seven stops. Each stop asks you to consider questions and try an activity. Ask each other the questions. You and your family can do as few or as many stops as you like.

Below is a map of where you can find the locations.
**Setting the Foundations**

**Lyles Station, Indiana**, offers a window into the largely unknown story of free Black pioneers on the American frontier. The Lyles family, led by brothers Joshua and Sanford, recruited other free Black families to begin settle in the area. Joshua Lyles donated six acres to establish a railroad station and, in 1886, the settlement was officially named Lyles Station.

- Give your group three minutes. Everyone choose one object in the Lyles Family Station section that reminds you of someone in your group. Share what object you chose and why you chose it.
- Would you rather meet your great-great grandchildren or your great-great-grandparents?
- Strike a pose. Imagine that you and your family have just moved to Lyles Station in 1886. Pose for a group photo to place in your new home.

**History and Heritage**

Enslaved Africans and African Americans cultivated rice along the southeastern seaboard of the United States for nearly 200 years. The *transformation of the landscape* along this coast is a story of great creativity and cruel coercion in which the culture, knowledge, and skills that enslaved people brought with them from Africa played formative roles. Following slavery, African Americans continued to cultivate rice on their own land, sustaining their families and forging-close knit communities.

- How do you think the rice farming objects on display represent the history and legacy of African American rice cultivation?
- How has the legacy of enslavement impacted your family history?
- Would you rather meet yourself in the past or see yourself in the future?

**Family Business**

Today known as the **R. H. Boyd Publishing Corporation**, it is one of the oldest continuously operated, family run African American businesses. Several generations have worked to uphold and expand the founder’s legacy.

- Look for the image titled “The Boyd Family.” What three words come to mind looking at the image?
- What was the most interesting job that you ever had? (For those that have not had a job: What job do you think would be fun to have?)
- If you had to start a family business, what would it be?
Your Dreamteam

Since the first modern Olympics in 1896, the Games have been an international stage to demonstrate superior athletic ability and display exemplary character and conduct. As African Americans fought prejudice at home, the Olympic Games provided an opportunity to them to display important amateur ideals—character, discipline, and intellectual capacity—before a worldwide audience.

- Give your group three minutes. Everyone choose one object in the Olympics section. Share what object you chose and why you chose it.

- What sport would you participate in during the Olympics? What country would you represent? Why?

- Strike a pose. Have your family pose for a group portrait. Everyone is posed as if competing in their sport of choice during the Olympics. Have someone take a picture to capture the moment.

Let’s Stay Together

**In Covert, Michigan** Black and white students sat side by side in a one-room schoolhouse, while their parents did business together, went to church together, and raised barns together. Despite a state law prohibiting interracial marriage, Black and white residents of Covert also had families together.

- Find the image title “Students outside the Town line School in Covert Township, ca. 1900.” What three words come to mind looking at the image?

- If you could travel back in time to any decade or era, what would it be?

- Would you rather have an intimate luxury dinner party with family or a gigantic casual BBQ with family?

Gone but Not Forgotten

Throughout history from the Revolutionary War through the War on Terror, African Americans have served in the United States military. Next to the life of a fallen serviceman or woman, the ultimate wartime sacrifice is that of a mother, father, wife, husband, son, or daughter who suffers the loss of a loved one.

- Find the image of the Gold Star Flag in the “Loss Over Time” section. What does the flag symbolize? What is the difference between a blue star and a gold star?

- How do you honor those who have passed?

- What is your favorite memory of someone that has passed?
Recording the Past, Present, and Future

The first African American newspaper, Freedom’s Journal, was published in 1827. Ever since, African Americans have used the press to establish an independent voice for Black communities and advance the struggle for freedom and equality.

- Look at the paper cutter. What did it cut? How do you think it worked?
- Would you rather change the past or predict the future?
- How can you record your family’s history and culture?

So, how can history help you to better understand yourself and others?

CONTINUE YOUR EXPERIENCE

- Enjoy a meal in the Sweet Home Café featuring a special menu takeover by Executive Chef Ramin Coles.
  
  Café Hours: 11am - 3pm

- Shop our Museum Store’s thoughtfully curated selection of Valentine’s Day gifts.

  Gourmet Chocolates from the Harlem Chocolate Factory
  Gifts from the Sheila Bridges Collection
  Frères Branchiaux Candles and Room Spray
  Clementine Hunter Homeware
  Love Poems by Nikki Giovanni
  For the Cook: The Spice Suite, Local Sauces & Seasonings, and Klancy Miller’s Cookbook, For the Culture

  Museum Store Hours: 10am - 5pm

Cover image: Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Gift of Jackie Bryant Smith

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