

# Electrifying Minnesota

A traveling exhibit from the Minnesota History Center and The Bakken Museum.

## Mystery Objects

### Overview:

Help your students connect to a time when modern electric conveniences were just entering our homes and lives. This activity can include: a matching game like “memory”, a sorting and classification lesson, or a Visual Thinking Skills activity.

### Materials

Mystery object images: print, cut apart, laminate for sturdiness  
Mystery object key

### Fifteen minute activities

#### **Observing and Reasoning**

Pick an image that you think will be unfamiliar and interesting to most of the students. You may want to print or copy the image onto an overhead transparency so you can project the image larger for all students to see easily. Or try this activity with a smaller group of students.

Ask them to spend two or three minutes just looking at the image—if in a small group, allow them to pass it around. Then ask: “What do you notice in this picture?” If students make any inferences (“that’s an iron!”), ask, “What do you see that makes you say that?” To spur more comments, ask, “What else can you find?” As students offer comments, accept all neutrally, but do paraphrase their comments and link them together. Point out when students are finding further evidence to support each other or where there is disagreement.

\*If you are going on to the next activity, don’t give any information about the image(s) at the end of the student discussion.

\*If not...let the students try to make guesses about the objects, ending by revealing to the class what the items are and how they were used.

#### **Categorizing**

Mix up the images so they are no longer paired. Place all the images so all the students can see them—on a rug as you sit in a circle or on the board with magnets or tape. Allow the students a chance to move around to look at all the images—you might want to ask them just to look and not to say anything yet.

Then say, “We need to sort these pictures. Anyone have an idea where we should start?” Or “Do you see two pictures that have a connection?” Someone might suggest two images that go together or a general category.

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\*Don't let the first student who speaks say where all the images should go!

Record the categories that develop in the beginning of the discussion and keep letting students sort the images into those categories until all the images have been placed. Then ask: "Is there another way we could sort these?" Students may be able to categorize the images in several different ways. The class could also do this in small groups—each group would need its own set of images.

### Some more category ideas:

Match the old way of doing something with the modern way, things that use electricity and things that don't, where objects would be used, what objects are used for, things we can identify and those that we can't...

At the end, you may want to share with students the information about each object from the answer key.


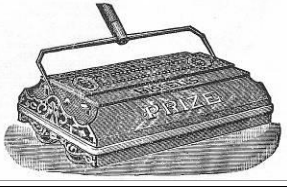

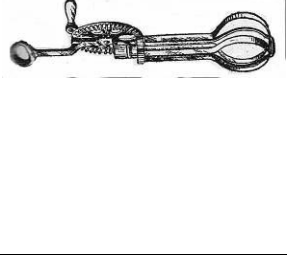







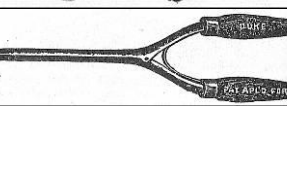
### ***Other good questions***

- How do you think this works? How would it work without electricity?
- What kind of noise might this make?
- What is this used for?
- Who might use this?
- Do you have something like this at your house?
- Does this remind you of something?

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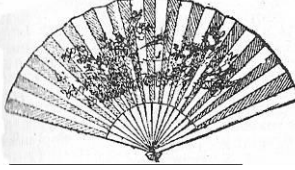



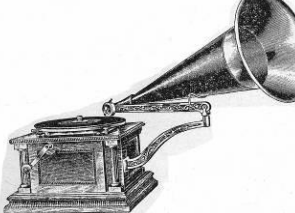

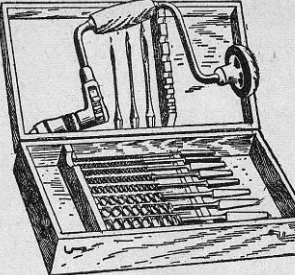

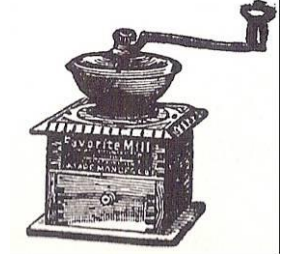
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## Mystery Object Key

	Electric vacuum cleaner 2007		Non-electric carpet sweeper 1897 Sears Roebuck catalogue "raises the dirt from where the broom never reaches."
	Electric mixer 2003		Non-electric eggbeater 1902 Sears Roebuck catalogue
	Electric food processor		Non-electric revolving grater 1897 Sears Roebuck catalogue "for grating horseradish, cocoanut, pumpkins, squash, lemon, crackers, cheese, etc."
	Electric sewing machine 1990		Non-electric sewing machine 1902 Sears Roebuck catalogue "A sewing machine, writing desk, center table or book stand in one."
	Electric hair clippers 2001		Non-electric hair clippers 1897 Sears Roebuck catalogue "for family or for barbers' use"
	Electric curling iron 2000		Non-electric curling iron 1897 Sears Roebuck catalogue "the jaws open practically parallel with each other thus securing the hair at all points"


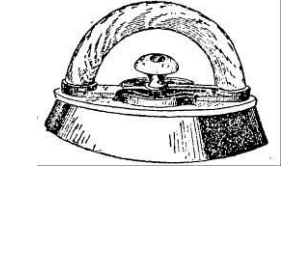
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	<p>Electric fan 2008</p>		<p>Non-electric fan 1897 Sears Roebuck catalogue</p>
	<p>Electric laptop computer 2005</p>		<p>Pen 1897 Sears Roebuck catalogue</p>
	<p>Electric stereo 2005</p>		<p>Non-electric disc graphophone phonograph 1902 Sears Roebuck catalogue "a perfect talking machine with unbreakable records"</p>
	<p>Electric drill 2004</p>		<p>Non-electric brace and bit 1902 Sears Roebuck catalogue</p>
	<p>Electric coffee grinder 2002</p>		<p>Non-electric coffee grinder 1897 Sears Roebuck catalogue</p>

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	<p>Electric iron 2006</p>		<p>Non-electric sad iron 1897 Sears Roebuck catalogue</p>
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