INTRODUCTION:
Maritime activity was critical in American history and is essential to life today. Most Americans have never lived or worked at sea, yet their lives are dependent on those who have. Maritime trade established major cities, created connections between people and places and opened the continent.

TASK:
You are a curator at a history museum. You collect objects, care for them, and determine their historical importance. One of the objects in your collection is a 19th-century life-car. You have recently included the life-car in your new online exhibition, On the Water.

Upon launching your Web site, three maritime museums have contacted you and asked to borrow the life-car for their upcoming exhibitions: one about invention, one about immigration, and one about maritime safety. Because all three exhibitions will take place at the same time, you must decide which museum will get to borrow the object. You will submit a 300 word report or give a presentation that presents evidence to support your decision.

PROCESS:
Use your online exhibition, On the Water, to gather information about the life-car and the themes of invention, immigration, and maritime safety. In the report or presentation, analyze your findings and decide which of the other museum’s exhibits has the strongest connection to the life-car.

Life-car
Shipwrecks
“The Wreck and Rescue of an Immigrant Ship”
(http://americanhistory.si.edu/onthewater/exhibition/2_5.html#Shipwrecks)
“Life-car object record”(http://americanhistory.si.edu/onthewater/collection/TR_160322.html)

Focus questions to consider while doing your research
• What is a life-car?
• What was it used for?
• Who invented it?
• When and where was it used?
• How was it made and who made it?
• Was this object associated with an historic event?
• What primary sources can you find that relate to the life-car?

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1 Primary sources are the pieces of evidence that historians use to form interpretations of people, events, and everyday life in the past. A historian is very much like a detective looking at clues, sifting through evidence and reaching conclusions. Through focus on the evidence itself: documents, objects, photographs, and oral history, students can get a glimpse into the past beyond what a textbook can provide.
Invention

Shipwrecks (http://americanhistory.si.edu/onthewater/exhibition/2_5.html)
   “Inventing Safety”
   “Honoring Joseph Francis”
   “More Ideas for Saving Lives”

Focus questions to consider while doing your research

   • How does the life-car help tell the story of invention in the 19th century?
   • Why was there an increased interest in maritime safety at this time in history?
   • What were some of the other safety related inventions of the period?
   • What were some of John Francis’ other inventions prior to his invention of the life-car?

Immigration

Enterprise on the Water (http://americanhistory.si.edu/onthewater/exhibition/2_3.html)
   “Scheduled Sailings”
   “Aboard a Packet”
   “Travel by Steam”

Focus questions to consider while doing your research

   • What are the characteristics of a “packet ship?”
   • What was “steerage” and what was it like to travel “in steerage?”
   • What effect did the introduction of steam technology have on immigration?

Liners to America (http://americanhistory.si.edu/onthewater/exhibition/5_2.html)
   “Atlantic Crossings”
   “Pacific Crossings”
   “Voices from Gold Mountain”

Ship model SS Frisia (http://americanhistory.si.edu/onthewater/collection/TR_336909.html)

Focus questions to consider while doing your research

   • Who were the majority of steamship travelers by the late 1800’s?
   • How were immigrants from different regions treated on board and upon arrival?
   • How does the story of the life-car relate to the story of immigrants and immigration?

The Connected City (http://americanhistory.si.edu/onthemove/exhibition/exhibition_6_2.html)
   “Transatlantic Travel”
   “Immigrant City”

Focus questions to consider while doing your research

   • How was the experience of 1st Class travelers different than those traveling in steerage?
   • What role did immigrants play in New York City in the 1920s?
Focus questions to consider while doing your research

- What were some of the perils of traveling by water in the 19th and early 20th centuries?
- What were some of the devices used to improve safety for ships, cargo, and passengers?
- How did the outcome of the *Ayrshire* incident differ from that of the *Titanic* and how was the life-car involved?

Once you have conducted your research, review your evidence and decide which exhibit should get to borrow the life-car. Prepare your recommendation. Your report should be 300 words or less, and should cite specific references to *On the Water* (and other) materials that support your decision and include direct quotations and/or references to primary sources (from *On the Water* and elsewhere). Remember, curators and historians use primary sources whenever possible and clearly identify their sources of information.

**CONCLUSION:**

Once you are done with your research and writing, share the results with your colleagues. Good luck with your presentation!

Now that you are done, you have a renewed interest in each of the exhibitions themes. Use the webliography below to explore and answer any lingering questions.

**Immigration**

- Chinese Immigration to the United States
  ([http://lcweb2.loc.gov/learn/features/timeline/riseind/record/chinimms/chinimms.html](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/learn/features/timeline/riseind/record/chinimms/chinimms.html))
- Chinese Immigration and the Chinese in the United States
- Angel Island ([http://www.angelisland.org/immigr02.html](http://www.angelisland.org/immigr02.html))

**Invention**

- Containerization ([http://people.hofstra.edu/geotrans/eng/ch3en/appl3en/ch3a3en.html](http://people.hofstra.edu/geotrans/eng/ch3en/appl3en/ch3a3en.html))
- Whalecraft ([http://www.whalecraft.net/](http://www.whalecraft.net/))

**Maritime Safety**

- Tuckerton Seaport ([http://www.lehsd.k12.nj.us/seaport/lifesaving.htm](http://www.lehsd.k12.nj.us/seaport/lifesaving.htm))
- Nantucket Shipwreck and Lifesaving Museum
- Ocean City Life-Saving Museum ([http://www.ocmuseum.org/](http://www.ocmuseum.org/))