

Candle Mold



Each month The California Museum will introduce a new artifact with accompanying information and questions, which will consist of three different difficulty levels to choose from. To be used as a sponge or opening activity, you can use the artifact of the month for your students to study, question and form ideas. You can also print the image and place it on each student's desk, have them work in teams or project the image for a class activity.

Use the provided questions to help your students learn more about the artifact and its importance to California -- or make up your own questions. Most importantly, have fun!

Be sure to check out our web site, CaliforniaMuseum.org, for other interesting and unique activities for your students.

Candle Mold



Pioneers of the 1800s used molds to make candles. Candles were a necessity in the days before electricity and the light bulb and a popular source of light after the sun went down.

Pioneer women had to make their own candles. Up until about the 1850s candles were made of tallow from animal fat. Making candles was a long process. It would begin with boiling meat over a hot fire, to separate the animal fat from the meat and bones. When the fat, called tallow, became liquid it was ready to be poured into a mold. The mold had to have a wick inserted before the tallow could be poured into it. When the tallow cooled, the candles were removed.

There were some drawbacks to using tallow to make candles. They gave off an odor of rancid meat as they burned. Also, they did not burn very long, because they melted quickly. But they certainly were important for giving off light in the home during the long, dark winter nights.

After 1850 paraffin wax with stearic acid was available for candle making. This was an improvement over tallow. It made candles that were much stronger and smelled better.

Now we can enjoy candles as decorations in our homes. There are many delightful shapes, scents and colors available today. Candle making is a hobby instead of a chore. This is quite a contrast to the long history before electricity, when candle making was a difficult, but necessary task.

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Elementary

- 1) What were candles made of in 1800? What were they made of in 1865?
- 2) Can you think of any other household necessities that pioneers would have had to make by themselves?

Middle

- 1) A pioneer family would be sure to bring their candle mold with them in their covered wagon. What other necessities would they need to bring?
- 2) If you were going to an isolated frontier for a week, where there was no electricity, what necessities would you take?

High School

- 1) Electricity and electric lights were becoming widespread in the 1890s. Think of 5 ways these developments improved people's lives in the late 19th century.
- 2) What recent inventions have improved your way of life?

Coloring Fun!



