



## American Artifacts: Essays in Material Culture

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When defining culture, one must indeed take into account even the minutest of details. What of a lighter, for example, or a telephone? The essays in this new collection examine just that. The contributors pose not only a historical, pragmatic use for the items, but also delve into more imaginative aspects of what defines us as Americans. Both the lighter and the telephone are investigated, as well as how the lava lamp represents sixties counterculture and containment. The late nineteenth-century corset is discussed as an embodiment of womanhood, and an Amish quilt is used as an illustration of cultural continuity. These are just a few of the artifacts discussed. Scholars will be intrigued by the historical interpretations that contributors proposed concerning a teapot, card table, and locket; students will not only find merit in the expositions, but also by learning from the models how such interpretation can be carried out. This collection helps us understand that very thing that makes us who we are. Viewing these objects from both our past and our present, we can begin to define what it is to be American.

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