Archival Research Assignment

Objectives:
- Frame research questions that will guide formal inquiry; select appropriate research methods that will lead to answers to those questions; and evaluate the usefulness and quality of sources.
- Use multiple investigative methodologies and sources of data (including interviews, surveys, and observations, as well as historical and library research) to investigate research problems and questions.
- Draft and revise arguments to take into account possible objections/critiques and to shape content, tone, organization and style to correspond appropriately with rhetorical situation and context.
- Present research effectively, selecting textual genres and rhetorical appeals appropriate to audience and purpose and drawing on various modes of communication (written, digital/visual, oral).

Assignment Instructions:
You will choose an object about which you want to know more--it may be a document, letter, diary, or it might be a baseball, uniform, pot, pitcher, doll, toy, or anything else. The limitations are as follows:
- It must be from the 1940s or earlier.
- We must be able to verify the age of the item.
- You must prove that you have been in the company of the item recently.

In addition to this artifact, you must find two additional primary documents from the 1940s or earlier that will help you tell the story of the original artifact. Your items must be related to folk knowledge, tradition, or tales in some way; basically, your items and project need to relate to traditional ways of living.

After finding your items and discovering as much information as is possible about them, you will write a four- to five-page paper that tells the story of your research and your artifacts. The purpose is to situate your main artifact within its cultural and historical context through the use of additional archival materials. Not only are you telling us about the artifact, but how it was used, who used it, and what it tells us about those people at that time and in that place.

Failure to include a Works Cited page or even one in-text citation is grounds for failure of this assignment.

MLA guidelines for formatting must be followed exactly.

Papers that do not include at least three archival sources (artifacts, primary sources from the 1940s and earlier) will not earn a passing grade.
Grading Criteria:

As always, grading is holistic. I consider content, organization, and mechanics and style collectively; there is no set percentage for each area although failing to follow the assignment results in an automatic C or lower. See the descriptions of each grade below.

A—The writer has a significant claim or organizing idea about the assigned topic and shows analytic ability, creativity, and powers of argumentation in presenting this claim in the light of alternatives (or counter arguments). He or she supports the primary claim with sufficient examples, details, reasons the claim is better than the alternatives, and indications of the claim’s or idea’s significance. The claim and its examples, details, and alternative viewpoints are organized so that a reader can follow as well as remain engaged (i.e. the reader is neither confused nor bored). The writer controls sentences purposefully for the level of complexity, variety, and emphasis appropriate for the claim and the reader, and he or she uses words and figures of speech so that their denotations and connotations create an appropriate tone and the effect of a writer addressing a reader. The writer follows current conventions in grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

B—The writer has a significant claim or organizing idea, reveals analytic ability, creativity, and powers of argumentation in presenting this claim or idea in light of alternatives. He or she follows current conventions in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. The writing may fall short of that of an A-level paper in one of the following: organization, sentence structure, or diction.

C—The writer has a significant claim or organizing idea and shows some, but not all, the analytic ability, creativity, or powers of argumentation evident in A and B writing. The C paper is not as controlled as the A or B paper in several of the following: organization, sentence structure, diction, usage of conventions in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. The writer has used more than 4 internet sources. The writer may have used an internet source that is not reliable. OR the writer has not included hands-on or historical research.

D or E—The writer has no claim or organizing idea, or the claim or organizing idea is thin or self-evident. The writer may not reveal the analytic ability, creativity, or powers of argumentation evident in an A, B, or C paper, may lack either organization or control over sentence structure and diction, and frequently departs from conventions in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. The writer has fewer than 3 archival sources included in the paper OR the writer has used more than one unreliable internet source. The writer may have also forgotten to include hands-on or historical research.