

Why use objects or artifacts to learn?

Object based learning is a fundamental part of museum work. Object based learning has changed and developed over time to reflect what is now referred to as 'object literacy'. This type of learning uses creative ways to embrace knowledge and uses artifacts to promote language.

Through activities, exercises, and conversation, object-based learning can provide a direct link to a topic. Learning from physical objects encourages discussion, promotes the value of museums, and develops skills by drawing conclusions based on the examination of evidence.

The best part? Learners of every age can relate to objects!

Object Literacy – The Basics

The aim of the virtual e-learning toolkit is to assist educators using artifacts as a springboard to literacy.

By using historical objects, we can teach the representation of the passage of time (as it relates to a family), investigate stories, or evaluate the ways technologies have impacted daily life. The teaching possibilities for learning with objects is endless!



How to Use

Using this toolkit as a starting point, educators can utilize the activities and worksheets to examine different topics using artifacts. Though eLearning does not provide actual artifacts for hands on learning, our goal is for these virtual kits to spark conversations and activities that promote continued literacy learning.

A Framework for Investigating Objects

These questions can help guide you through the process of analyzing objects. This can be done as a discussion or as an individual worksheet.

OBJECT

ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT

History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who made it? When? Why? • Has it changed since it was made? • Is there a story to go along with it? • What is the story?
Physical Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is it made of? • Describe the shape, size, weight, smell and sound. • Is there writing on it? • Is this a complete object or is it part of a bigger object?
Construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was it made of? • Would it have required special skills or tools to make? • Could you make one yourself?
Function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was it made to do? • Does it have a practical function? • Is it a toy? A decoration?
Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does it do what it is supposed to do? How well? • Has the design of similar objects changed or stayed the same over time?
Value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is its monetary worth? Who would find it valuable? Has its value changed? • Does it have sentimental value?

Accession Numbers – What are they?

You may notice catalogue numbers on some of the artifacts. Just like a library number when you sign out a book, museums assign accession numbers to their artifacts to keep track of each item.

Accession numbers are usually assigned by the year they were donated, the donor



number (donor means the person who gave the object to the museum) and the number of objects that came into a donation.

An example of our system is PC2017.07.01. This mean the

artifact is part of the Programming Collection (PC), was donated in 2017, the person who gave it to us was the 7th donor of the year, and it was the first item donated by that person.

What the difference between Primary and Secondary Sources?

These E-leaning packages include both primary and secondary sources. It is important that learners understand the difference between the two before documenting or analyzing the artifacts.

Primary Sources

First hand, original records, or evidence about and artifact, person or event. Created at the time of the event, or very soon after it happened. Some examples are:

- Letters
- Journals
- Personal experiences
- Recorded interviews
- Poems and songs from that time
- Artifacts
- Illustration, paintings and photographs
- Original maps
- Film clips, cartoons, posters, or advertisement
- Laws and proclamations
- Records of court documents or legal documents

Secondary Sources

An account, record or evidence derived from original or primary sources. Created after the event.

- Reference books
- Magazine and newspaper articles
- Bibliographies
- Websites
- Commentaries

Analyzing Historical Photographs

Historians use different types of primary sources when studying the past. Knowing the different types of primary sources will help you better evaluate the reliability of the source.

Historical Photographs are viewed as a primary source as they can capture a moment in time and relay powerful messages. Photographs can be staged, candid, altered, or have select focus. The background can also be a good way to learn about a photograph.

While historical photographs are memorable, be aware that it does not tell everything about that period.

Photographic Evidence and Reliability

Photographic evidence may be unreliable in four ways:

1. **Staged Photographs:** Photographers may arrange subjects or objects in a photo to deliver a message.
2. **Unrepresented Images:** Photographs may depict an atypical situation or event, one which is not representative of the people or circumstances shown.
3. **Altered Photographs:** Photographs may be deliberately altered now that digital technology allows us to move people from one location to another place or remove objects in the photo.
4. **Selective Photographs:** Photographs may exclude important aspects of a situation.

Suggested Object Literacy Activities

There are many different activities that can be tied into object literacy. We have included a few in this toolkit that can be applied to any object-based learning initiatives.



Investigative Learning

- Essay building; writing exercises.
 - Write a report about the process of analyzing the objects. What you found, what you observed, conjectures about the objects or history revolving around objects.
- Read a book related to the topic.
- Write a book or short story related to the object. Illustrate.
- Write about the objects and the people that may have owned them.
- Use the '*Investigating Objects*' worksheets while examining photos of objects and artifacts.
- Use the '*Analyzing a Historical Photograph*' worksheets
- Literacy in the home: Story Telling from Objects
 - Using objects from your own home:
 - Collect and construct a story or poem about them
 - Collect and count (number literacy)
 - Collect and colour sort onto coloured paper

Innovative Language Learning

- Read questions or stories aloud to each other.
- Create Then and Now charts. What other objects would do the same job?
- Write a letter written from the perspective of someone who may have interacted with the objects.
- Compose a letter to one of the historical figures. Reply to one of theirs or compose your own.
- Compile questions you would ask one of the historical figures you've learned about.
- Use props to dress up like one of historical figures from the e-learning packages.
- Read questions or stories aloud to each other.
- Compose a story or synopsis of an old photograph. Use some of the historical photographs as prompts.

Making Connections

- Look for common elements. Group common ideas or objects together.
- Read books that share how people pass their history on to others through heirlooms.
- Start a conversation about your own family history and heirlooms.
- Write about how the artifacts are connected to national, community or family events.
 - Use writing prompts that encourage learners to relate the artifacts from other eras to the events of current times. This can promote reading, writing and thinking.
- Determine what life would be like for the people who used the objects.
- Discuss how an understanding of history, people and stories contribute to a sense of belonging and identity.
- Create Then and Now comparisons.
 - What did travel look like?
 - Why do you think videos were not included as sources?
 - What kind of technologies did they have?

Accompanying Worksheets

- Investigating Objects
 - Printable Worksheet
 - [Online Wizer Worksheet](#)
- Analyzing Historical Photographs
 - Printable Worksheet
 - [Online Wizer Worksheet](#)

[Don't have access to a printer? Try the Wizer worksheets!](#)

Wizer is a platform for teachers to easily create and assign digital worksheets. Educators can copy the worksheet onto their profile and share the link with their students. It does require you and your learners to create a login, but it is a free, easy platform to accommodate eLearning.