

Object-based Learning

An Activity

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What to do

Gather a selection of six to ten objects for the classroom. Place one object on each table. Divide the class into equal groups. If you have enough time, each group can travel to each table and for step one and step two. Alternatively, you could have them complete steps one and two at each table and then could report out to the class. Step three works best if students are allowed to choose the object that appeals to them the most.

Step 1: Explore

Collect ideas, images, and thoughts

Look closely at the object.

- Look at it for at least two minutes without speaking.
- Draw or photograph your object.
- Think about how you would describe the object to someone.

Touch the object, being careful not to harm yourself or the object.

- Notice the weight.
- Notice the texture.
- How does it feel in your hand? (Does it fit your hand? Is it right or left handed? Is it not meant to be held?)
- Notice the temperature.

Step 2: Evoke

How do you move from looking to critical thought? Use analytical skills to talk about what you see.

Generate ideas

- What questions would you like to ask this object? Don't judge, prioritize or critique the questions, just create a whole long list.

Access **prior knowledge** (what do you already know about your object?)

- What does the object remind you of?
- Discuss with others.
- If you are at a museum, gallery or interpretive centre, read exhibit labels to get some relevant information about your object. If not at a museum, can you find information about your object or a similar object in the library or online?

Step 3: Engage

What themes, big ideas, or feelings jump out at you from looking at this artifact?

Relate

How does this object relate to your life? What impact might this object have had on its owner's life? How does the object impact the environment?

Thinking Further

What do you want to know more about?

- Ask yourself "What do I want to know?" and start with familiar questions and then try to move to something more abstract.
- Prioritize and rework your questions to try to come up with something that you want to answer.
- Use the criteria in [The Big Six Historical Thinking Concepts](#) to help students develop good questions for further inquiry.
 - Good questions are based on what we already know (from the source and our inferences), but...
 - ... we don't already know the answers, although...
 - ... with more investigation they should be answerable, and ...
 - ... they will lead to greater understanding.

Reference:

- Alvarado, A.E. & Herr, P.R. (2003). *Inquiry-based learning using everyday objects: Hands-on instruction strategies that promote active learning in grades 3-8*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press Inc.
- Seixas, P., Morton, T., Colyer, J., & Fornazzari, S. (2013). *The big six: Historical thinking concepts*. Toronto: Nelson Education.