

Resource List for “Bringing Objects & Artifacts to Life” by Museums Unbound

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A good article that talks about the value of objects:

Rainey Tisdale, “Do History Museums Still Need Objects?” *History News*, 2011

https://www.academia.edu/3166280/_Do_History_Museums_Still_Need_Objects_

Susie Wilkening & James Chung, *Life Stages of the Museum Visitor*, AAM Press, 2009.

https://books.google.com/books/about/Life_Stages_of_the_Museum_Visitor.html?id=80uAPgAACAAJ

Reach Advisors <https://reachadvisors.com/>

Wilkening Consulting <http://www.wilkeningconsulting.com/>

A handy guide from Scholastic for introducing young learners to the idea of an object:

<http://www.scholastic.ca/education/nlscience/pdfs/grade1/unit3/PropertiesObjectsMaterials.pdf>

The Penn Museum’s take a close reading in creating an “object biography”

<https://www.penn.museum/documents/Object-Biography-Instructions.docx>

An entirely different way to use the idea of a close reading: <https://www.slowartday.com/>

The PALS blog has a great summary of how to apply close reading to a class or in a classroom setting:

<https://teachingpals.wordpress.com/2017/02/27/close-looking-art-in-the-classroom/>

The U.S. National Archives has a tool for close reading photographs. Here’s two different versions:

https://teachingpals.files.wordpress.com/2017/02/photo_analysis_worksheet-old-version.pdf

<https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/photo.html>

Cindy Ingram’s & Art Class Curator, <https://artclasscurator.com/>

Visual Thinking Strategies <https://vtshome.org/>

Phillip Yenawine, *Visual Thinking Strategies*, Harvard Education Press, 2013.

https://books.google.com/books/about/Visual_Thinking_Strategies.html?id=5SSzngEACAAJ

New York Times column using Visual Thinking Strategies:

<https://www.nytimes.com/column/learning-whats-going-on-in-this-picture>

Springboard for the Arts Community Development Programs,

<https://springboardforthearts.org/work-with-artists/community-development/>

Nathan Pyle - Strange Planet webcomic - <https://www.instagram.com/nathanwpylestrangeplanet/?hl=en>

“Working With Different Ages—Audience Analysis Reference Chart” by South Suburban Parks and Recreation, www.sspr.org/nature Updated and used by NAI with permission, December 2013.
<https://www.interpnet.com/docs/CIT/Child-Development-Reference-Chart.pdf>

Brief Accessibility Checklist, National Endowment for the Arts,
<https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/BriefChecklist-February2020.pdf>

The Field Museum’s take on a activity that looks at an object through various points of view (in this case various disciplines of study) <https://www.fieldmuseum.org/sites/default/files/objects.pdf>

For more on using “tags” in museum for radical good:

Frank Vagnone, *Anarchist’s Guide to House Museums*, Left Coast Press, 2016.

https://books.google.com/books?id=ftjDCgAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=anarchists+guide+to+house+museums&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjs6JK30u_nAhVfgnIEHTzQC8Q6AEwAHoECAEQAg#v=onepage&q=anarchists%20guide%20to%20house%20museums&f=false

Metadata Games <https://metadatagames.org/>

David Macaulay, *Motel of the Mysteries*, Houghton Mifflin, 1979.

https://books.google.com/books/about/Motel_of_the_Mysteries.html?id=dO3vf15Gxd0C

A simple template example for introducing folks to the difference between knowing vs. guessing or observation vs. inference:

https://www.nps.gov/goga/learn/education/upload/Questioning_Artifacts-Observation_worksheet.pdf

Museums Referenced:

Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum

<https://www.glasgowlife.org.uk/museums/venues/kelvingrove-art-gallery-and-museum>

Sauer-Beckmann Living History Farm at LBJ State Park

<https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/lyndon-b-johnson/sauer-beckmann-farm>

Lake Jackson Historical Museum

<http://www.lakejacksonmuseum.org/index.php?page=historical-museum>

Maribor National Liberation Museum https://www.culture.si/en/Maribor_National_Liberation_Museum

Minneapolis Institute of Arts <https://new.artsimia.org/>

Columbus Museum of Art <https://www.columbusmuseum.org/>

St.Louis Art Museum <https://www.slam.org/>

Minnesota Landscape Arboretum <https://www.arboretum.umn.edu/>

Science Museum of Minnesota <https://www.smm.org/>

American Swedish Institute <https://www.asimn.org/>

Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum <https://www.gardnermuseum.org/>

Richfield Historical Society <http://www.richfieldhistory.org/>

Space Center Houston <https://spacecenter.org/>

Doing a short “close reading” of an object or artifact

A close reading is an observational and intellectual analysis of an object. This means that not only can you observe the obvious physical characteristics but you can examine the object for any latent clues on its role in society, symbolism, meanings, uses, etc.

With every question, it is important to ask yourself: Do I KNOW this or am I GUESSING? Is this information OBSERVED or is it INFERRED? Answering “unknown” to some of these questions is better than a wrong guess!

What does the object look like?

What is the shape of the object?

What is the size of the object?

What colors are visible?

Does it have a visible texture (shiny? rough? etc)

Do you know what the object is made of?

Is there more than one material used?

Describe the form of the materials (thickness, structure, etc)

Is this object created by natural process or human process or both?

What observable evidence is there of its creation?

Are there marks, tags, or signatures that identify a maker?

Does this object have a smell?

Does this object have a sound?

Does this object have a taste?

What is the texture of the object?

What is its weight?

Does it have moving parts?

Is an individual or company responsible for making this object?

Do you know or is there evidence of the object's age?

Do you know what this object's purpose was when made?

Did it or could it have other purposes in the past?

What is its use in the present?

Are there marks, motions, or other evidence of use or wear?

Is there evidence of breakage or repair?

Does the breakage, repair, or wear reveal anything about the object?

Do you have any knowledge of where this object was located, made, or found?

Do you have any knowledge of what kind of person would have used this object?

Do you have any knowledge of what location or environment this object was used in?

Do you have any knowledge about theories, scholarship, or controversies about this object?

Do you know if this is a unique item?

Was this item mass-produced or do similar versions exist?

Are there any symbols or writing on this object?

Do you have any knowledge of the meaning or symbolism or importance of this object in the past or present?

What questions remain about this object?

What resources are available to learn more about this object?