

Object Lessons: Create your own Exhibit!

This Activity was designed for use after visiting Fort Ticonderoga's exhibit: Object Lessons: Perspectives on Material Culture. In the exhibit ten objects are on display with four separate labels, telling different but interconnected stories. The four labels explain ways the object gives us information about art, culture, manufacture, and function. We hope visiting this exhibit will help students think about objects in a different way.

After visiting Fort Ticonderoga, ask students to create their own "Object Lessons" exhibit. You could bring in objects, ask students to bring in objects, or probably select things that are already in your classroom. You can use any objects for this exhibit, but objects with some information or decoration on them work best. Here's a list of suggested items, but be creative! There are stories behind almost everything we use in daily life!

Suggested Items:

Food Packaging

Clothing

Cleaning Solution Bottles

Distinctive Classroom Supplies

Batteries

Classroom Desks and Chairs

Paperweights

Photos

Like the exhibit, classroom desks or tables make great display tops for objects. Objects can be placed on tables with a label on each side of the desk. Ask students to work in groups of 2-3 and design labels for their objects. You could have each group design all 4 labels for an object, or have groups responsible for each type of label.

Here are some questions that students will want to answer in their labels:

Art: How is this object decorated? What colors and details were added to this object? Is it a very utilitarian object, or are their artistic elements that go beyond function?

Culture: Who used this object? What was it made for? Was it created for a specific person or event?

Function: What does this object do? How does its shape or design help it to function?

Manufacture: How was this object made? What materials were used? When and where was this object made? You won't be able to answer all of these questions, but looking closely at the item, or using the internet to research identifying characteristics on the object might help you with this.

After students have made their exhibit, you could invite a neighboring classroom to explore it, and have them ask questions from your students.

Example for a Modern Object:

Art- This stapler is mass produced and while devoid of much ornamentation, most of the outside of it is a bright green plastic. It features clear lines and sharp angles. The green color makes the stapler very visible.



Culture- Staplers are commonly placed in offices, schools and copy centers where large quantities of paper are processed. This particular stapler is used by the Education Department at Fort Ticonderoga.

Function- This stapler handles standard manual staplers, and can perform at typical stapling function. The plastic cover separates from the head to refill staples. The stapler also feature a rotating “anvil” (the metal piece on the base) , allowing a temporary pinning function. The hammer or top piece can also be pulled away from the base to tack items into bulletin boards or other flat surfaces.

Manufacture- This stapler was made of a plastic cover, rubber base, and metal components which appear to have been mass produced and then assembled. The rubber base is imprinted with the word “Made in China”. It is not certain when this stapler was made, but it is likely between 5-10 years old.

National Standards Addressed in this Activity:

C3 Framework Standards:

D2.His.11.6-8. Use other historical sources to infer a plausible maker, date, place of origin, and intended audience for historical sources where this information is not easily identified.

D2.His.12.6-8. Use questions generated about multiple historical sources to identify further areas of inquiry and additional sources.

D2.His.13.6-8. Evaluate the relevancy and utility of a historical source based on information such as maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose.

D3.1.6-8. Gather relevant information from multiple sources while using the origin, authority, structure, context, and corroborative value of the sources to guide the selection.

Common Core State Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7 Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.2 Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/ experiments, or technical processes.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.2.D Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.