

Object-Based Learning

All Grades

Teaching Strategies

Why Objects?

As our students inhabit an increasingly digital world, the role of the physical object is more important than ever—and a potent tool for educators to utilize in the support of learning.



The tactile exploration of objects may be used to engage students in extended observations and conversations that support critical thinking in every subject area. Because of this, it is helpful for teachers to consider ways in which objects—from the obscure to the everyday—can serve as primary resources in their own classrooms.

Selecting Objects for Classroom Use

When determining the objects you may want to use in your lessons, ask yourself a few questions:

- **What objects would most help to illustrate the lesson or unit I want to teach?** What would be most compelling for students? What would be most effective in helping to transport students into the time, place, or subject I'm teaching?
- **How can I get access to these objects? Be resourceful.** Antique shops? Flea markets? My attic? A family member's kitchen? A loan from a museum or other institution? The natural world? Students' own homes? The school or classroom itself?

Questions for Engagement



One of the simplest and most powerful ways to encourage students to engage with objects is through close observation combined open-ended questions. It is up to you how you would like students to respond to these questions—through teacher-led class discussion, in small groups, individually—verbally, in writing, artistically—or a combination of these. Questions might include:

- How would you *describe* this object to someone who can't see it?
- *Who* do you think used or uses this object?
- *Why* did/do they use it?
- Are there any versions of this object that you encounter in *your* life? In what ways are these two versions *similar* and in what ways are they *different*?
- *How* was it made, and *who* do you think made it? What *materials* were used?
- What can we tell from this object *about the person or people* who used or use it? What was/is important to the user and his or her culture?