



Everyone Has Interesting Stuff Teaching with Objects in the Classroom Appropriate for Elementary School

Objective: To use contemporary objects to discover how we can learn about people based on the objects they use. To relate how similar information can be learned about people from the past from objects (historical objects) they left behind.

Materials:

- Ask students to bring an object to school from their life. Explain that it should be an object that they think expresses a lot about themselves. It can be something they use everyday or something they use only every now and then. It is probably best to discourage them from bringing in something valuable.
- An empty table that the students' objects can be displayed on or empty boxes for the objects to be placed in.
- An object of your own to be used as an example before the students begin to examine each other's objects.

Procedure:

- Ask your students to place their objects on the table or in the boxes when they come into the classroom. Tell them to do it discretely so as not to ruin the secret.
- Have your class sit in a circle.
- Pass your object around the circle allowing each student to make one comment about the object's appearance while it's in his or her hands. Comments might include ideas about its size, shape, color, texture, etc.
- After the object has traveled around the circle and each student has commented encourage a discussion about what the object might have been used for and if we could learn anything about the person or people who used it. This is especially fun if it's an historical object that the students may not have seen before. If it's a personal object your students will be surprised at what they found out about you.
- Explain to your students that historians use objects to find out information about people who lived in the past. Amazingly, even small objects left behind can tell you a lot about a person—background, type of work they did, how they dressed, what they did for fun, etc.
- Then tell them that today they will have a chance to find out more about their classmates based on the objects they brought into class.
- Ask each student to pick an object from the table or boxes (one that is not their own) and return to their seats.
- Have them share their object with a partner. They should discuss the object's appearance, what it is made of, what it might be used for, and what this possibly says about the person who brought the object in.
- After they have shared with their partners bring the group back together. Depending on the amount of time you have can each student share his or her discoveries, or a small sample of students.

- It is fun to have the students guess who the object belongs to after talking about it to the class.
- Students can also guess the reason why the person might have picked it.
- The student who brought in the object can explain at the end why they chose to bring it and what he or she thinks it says about him or her.
- After they have explained their objects to the class tell them they just did the work of historians—interpreting objects.
- Finish with a discussion about working with objects and what information they were able to gather from a few items.

Assessment: Evaluation should be based on students' understanding of how objects are used by historians to learn about people from the past. This can be based on if the students were able to say something about their classmates from the objects they brought.