



Everyone Has Interesting Stuff

Teaching with Objects

Appropriate for High School

Objective: To understand how ordinary objects can tell a story about people's lives.

Materials:

- ◆ A collection of contemporary objects. These objects can be as ordinary as a newspaper (foreign language newspapers work well too), a magazine, or a curling iron.
- ◆ Bags in which to put the items.

Procedure:

- ◆ Give pairs of students a bag with an artifact in it.
- ◆ Have students pull out their object and discuss the following:
 - Describe the object—what is it made from? How big is it? How heavy? Size? Shape? Texture? Etc.
 - Do you know what the object is?
 - If you don't know what the object is, make a guess as to what it is
 - Who might have made it?
 - Where was it made?
 - Who might use it?
 - What do you think it tells you about the person/people who use it?
 - Do you have/use something similar in your life?
- ◆ After students have discussed with their partners the attributes of their objects have the class sit in a circle or some way in which they can all see each other.
- ◆ Have the pairs present their objects, one group at a time. The pairs should present their findings to the class. Allow the class to respond—make additions, ask other questions, give their own opinions as to the object's importance. If the group has correctly guessed what the object is have a brief discussion about what you can learn from the object. If they have not, tell them what is and follow up with a brief discussion about what you can learn from the object.
- ◆ Follow this format for each pair.
- ◆ Conclude with a discussion about the importance of objects/artifacts for historical research. This discussion could include:
 - Imagine the world in 70 years, what objects might you leave behind that people could learn from? Can they learn about you? About teenagers in 2004? About life in 2004?
 - Do objects have to be unique or special for them to be of value or important? What about a cereal box, can you learn something from it?

Extension: It is often fun and interesting to choose one object and have the class make up a story about how the object got from its original location and into

the classroom. You can have one student begin by talking about where the object was made and some person that was influential in its creation. Then have the second person pick up the story from there with a new person and location for the item to come into contact with. Continue this for the entire class, with the last person getting the object into the classroom.

Assessment: You can base your assessment largely on the discussion that your students have about the objects. Consider if they were able to understand how an ordinary object would be able to give a historian insight into the type of people who used it and the culture from which it came.