

LESSON PLAN

Step 2

LEARNING THROUGH OBJECTS

Objectives

- Observe and describe selected objects from *America's Smithsonian*.
- Match written descriptions with visual images.
- Use objects as the basis for creative writing.

Materials

- Copies of Activity Pages, 10–13.
- Pens or pencils.

Subjects

Social studies, science, language arts

Procedure

1. Ask your students if they have visited places where people display collections of objects (e.g., a school science fair, a trophy case, or an antique car show). Ask them to describe what they saw and learned from the displays.

2. Find out if any of your students have ever visited a museum. If so, what objects do they remember most from their visits? Tell them that museums care for and display objects so that people can enjoy and learn from them. Museums can be as small as a gallery of objects or big enough to hold thousands of visitors at one time.

3. Tell your students that museums bring history, culture, and science alive by collecting and displaying objects that teach us about the past, move us with their beauty, and help us understand the physical world.

4. Divide the children among groups of three or four and give each team a copy of the object photographs on pages 10 and 13. Tell them that the mystery objects they are looking

at are from *America's Smithsonian*, a traveling exhibition commemorating the 150th birthday of the Smithsonian Institution.

5. Give each group a copy of the mystery object descriptions on pages 11 and 12, cut out and individually pasted onto note cards to make them durable. Tell students to read quietly all ten of the descriptions and then to look at the objects again. After everyone has finished reading the note cards, have each team work together to match each object with its description. Tell students to write the number of each object on the note card that they think best describes it. (*Be sure to tell students that there are two extra descriptions of objects that are not shown.*) As a class, confirm the students' reactions to the objects. [Key: Description A is object 6; B is 3; C is not shown; D is not shown; E is 2; F is 1; G is 5; H is 7; I is 8; J is 4.]

6. Extend this activity with one or more of the following writing projects.

- Have each child choose one of the eight objects. Make photocopies of the objects, hand them out with blank paper, and have students create picture

postcards. Have them write out their card, telling someone about the object and why the writer thought the recipient would enjoy seeing it.

- Visit a museum in your area and find postcards of the collections. Have students write out the cards to each other or friends, describing the objects and why they like them.

- Using cameras or sketchbooks, have students create cards depicting objects from their personal collections. Have them write descriptions or labels for the objects.

- Have the class come up with its own group of treasures like the ones in this issue of *Art to Zoo*. They could organize the objects under themes such as “community,” “school,” “family,” or “our class.” Have them write labels or descriptions and set up the display in the classroom or some other part of the school.

ACTIVITY PAGES

Mystery Objects

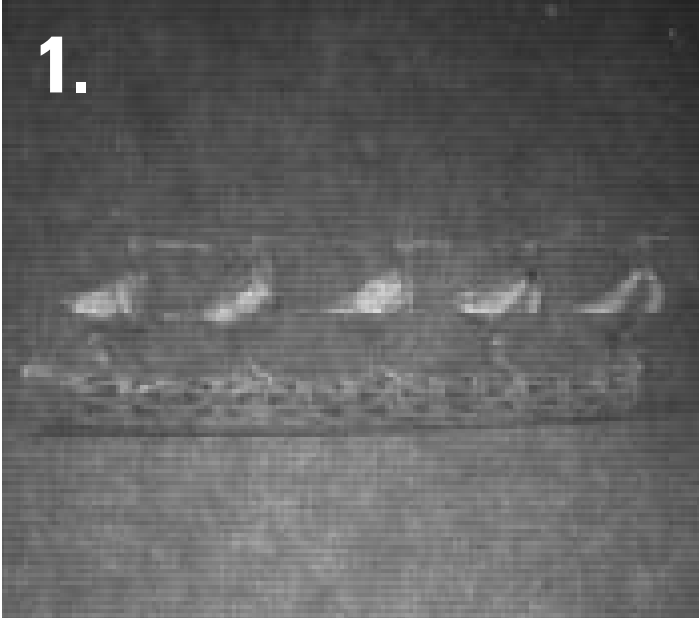
To the teacher

- Duplicate pages 10–13 for students.
- Use with Lesson Plan Step 2.

To the student

- Look closely at these objects and match them with their descriptions.
- Why do you think they are in the Smithsonian?

1.



2.



3.



4.



A. With all my crooked angles and colors, I look like a piece of pure art, sprouting out of a sculptor's dream. However, I also have a definite function. Can you guess what it is? Look closely now and you can see my handle (a series of twigs), spout (a branch), and base (a sturdy slab of rock).

The artist of this work, Ralph Bacerra, used his sense of humor and playfulness to make such an ordinary object into a fantastic sculpture. I look so unusual that it takes a while to figure me out. Leaning over at an angle, I look like an old tree—certainly not something you would likely see beside a plate of cookies and cake!

I am mystery object _____

C. The artist Thomas Eakins used dark and somber colors to paint me, a portrait of his wife. The realistic style of his painting shows how Eakins, unlike most artists before him, never tried to make his subjects look prettier or happier than they actually were. He tried to depict them exactly as they appeared in person, allowing their features and expressions to tell their own story.

You can see his method in this portrait. Although the subject certainly does not appear beautiful, the realistic depiction of her features reveals a quiet strength within her character.

I am mystery object _____

E. You probably have not seen me around your neighborhood or at home. I was built to protect people as they walk and work in places that are far, far away from us. My outer layer guards against micrometeorites, fire, and extreme temperatures of more than 120 degrees Celsius (250 degrees Fahrenheit) to negative 120 degrees Celsius (negative 250 degrees Fahrenheit). My inner suit has even more layers, complete with special joints that allow movement and a water circulation system that prevents sweating and dehydration.

Altogether, I weigh around 82 kilograms (180 pounds) on Earth—a lot to carry but well worth the effort. Besides, once we get where we are going, you will hardly feel me at all!

I am mystery object _____

B. Do I look familiar? I belonged to a very famous person: Abraham Lincoln, our sixteenth president. He may have been holding me when John Wilkes Booth fatally shot him at Ford's Theatre on April 14, 1865. Many people admired Lincoln's bravery, but many others—including Booth—passionately disagreed with the political and societal changes that he brought about.

The Civil War (1861–65) demanded all of Lincoln's energy as president. He studied military history and helped develop a strategy that eventually led his Union troops to win the war. Part of that strategy was the Emancipation Proclamation, which Lincoln issued on January 1, 1863. In it, he declared that slaves in the seceded states were "forever free." This statement inspired his troops, black and white, with a strong moral reason to continue fighting.

I am mystery object _____

D. I am more than just a rock. Someone spent a long time chipping away to give me sharp sides and a point. He needed me for his day-to-day chores, like cutting meat, animal hides, and plants.

I am old, dating back to the Paleolithic period (2.5 million to 10 thousand B.C.). Back then, objects like me were the most advanced form of human technology. Scientists today call the people who made me *Homo erectus*, the first humans to live outside of Africa.

I am mystery object _____

F. Hundreds of years ago in what is now Colombia artists became very skillful working with gold. They made me to show how they saw the natural world around them.

Besides being beautiful, though, I also had a practical purpose. I slipped onto a wooden rod or spear, probably helping the thrower get a good grip.

I am mystery object _____

G. You have probably seen and used machines that do what I do, but not ones that look like me. Even your grandparents would not remember me. I am that old!

My inventor, Alexander Graham Bell, and I share a distinguished place in the history of communication. On November 26, 1876, Bell used me to send voice messages from Cambridge to Salem, Massachusetts. I worked so well that he used me as the model for the first commercial telephone, introduced in the United States in 1877.

I am mystery object _____

I. I was more than some whimsical dragon that an artist dreamed up—I really existed! But I died long before you were around to see me fly overhead. I belong to a family of dinosaurs called Pterosaurs, the first and largest flying animals with backbones. While some were much bigger than me, others were as small as canaries.

You can see how my long fingers connect directly to my wings, giving me a lot of control when I fly. I can swoop down and pick up fish to eat, chomping them down with my powerful jaws and sharp teeth. I was quite a sight!

I am mystery object _____

H. I have a nose, eyes, and head but do not look like anyone you have seen. In fact, the artist who painted me, Pablo Picasso, never intended for this portrait to look exactly like its subject, a friend of his named Marie-Therese Waiter.

Picasso painted in a style called *cubism*, which he developed with another artist, Georges Braque. A cubist painting portrays the different ways in which the artist sees his subject—both with his eyes and in his imagination. Not all cubist paintings showed people. Some were of inanimate objects, like houses, or of plants and animals. Given all those possibilities, it might take you a while to figure out exactly what the subject is!

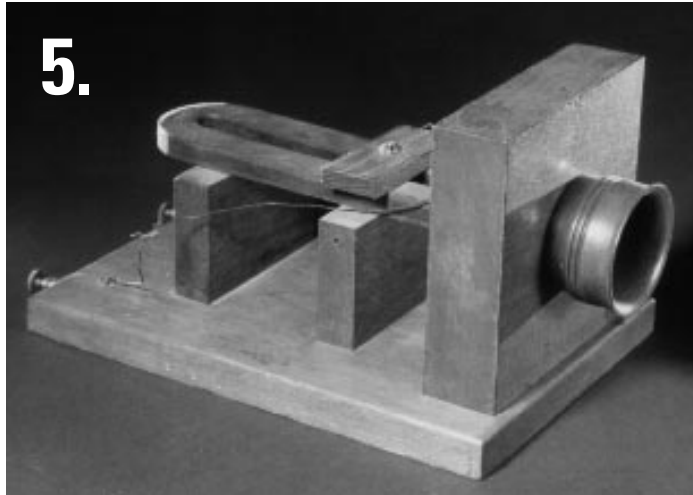
I am mystery object _____

J. I am unique because someone made me for a special child. I am made of red and blue wool cloth and am beautifully decorated with carved replicas of elk teeth. The person who made me was part of the American Indian tribe called the Crow. To them, elk teeth symbolized love and long life.

My people often gave pretty objects (like me!) to newborn children. The person who wore me was lucky to have such a beautiful gift, filled with love from the person who made it.

I am mystery object _____

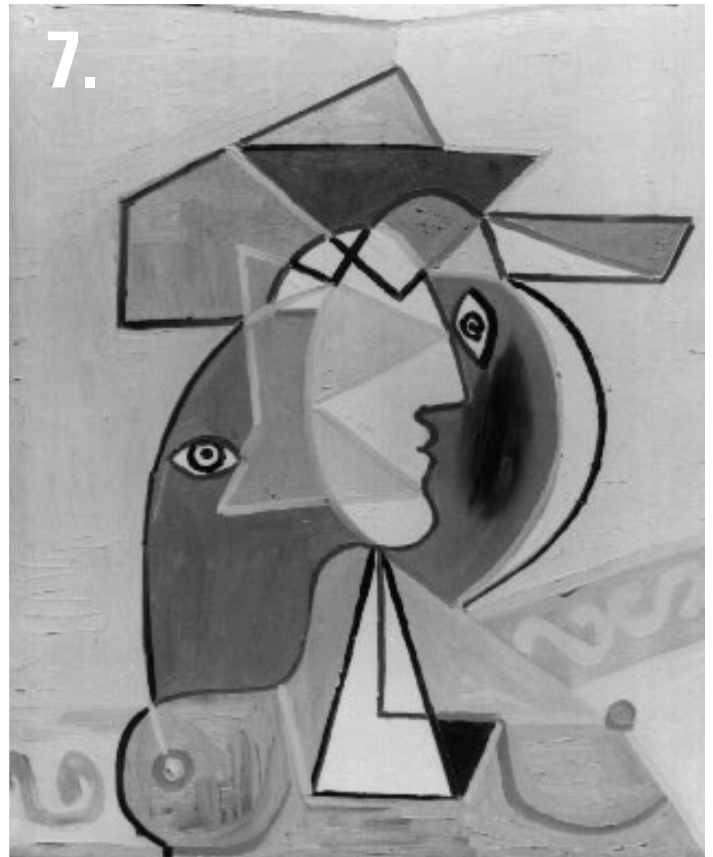
5.



6.



7.



8.

