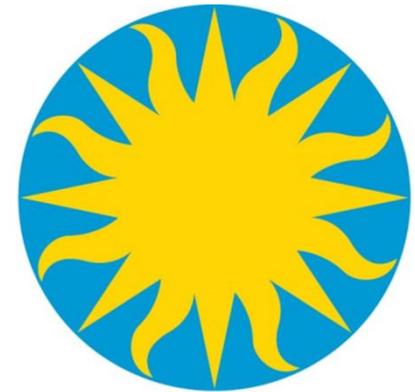


Supporting Language Learning Using Smithsonian Online Museum Resources

National Museum of American History
National Portrait Gallery
Smithsonian Center for Learning & Digital Access
September 2014



Smithsonian
SERIOUSLY AMAZING®

Teaching yourself to teach with objects

John Hennigar Shuh

Written in an easy-to-read style, this chapter explores some of the reasons why and how to teach with museum (and other) objects. Writing from practical experience, the author describes some of his own experiences working with objects in Nova Scotia, Canada.

Although this paper is written from a particular perspective in a particular environment, both the teaching methods and the conclusions about the value of using objects in learning are valid in a more general sense.

Trying out some of the ideas suggested in the paper is an excellent way to begin to practise teaching (and learning) with objects. New ideas and new methods emerge all the time.

At the centre of all our programs at the Nova Scotia Museum is a belief in the tremendous power of objects to educate. In fact, we think it is as important for people to learn to use objects as a means of discovering things about themselves and their world as it is for them to learn to use words and numbers.¹

I have worked at the Nova Scotia Museum now for four years and I am still fascinated by what I'm learning about the power of objects to educate. Furthermore, the longer I'm at it, the more I'm convinced that a museum approach to education has a great deal to offer classroom teachers. Unfortunately, learning how to use objects effectively in your teaching is not quite as easy as falling off a log. As is the case with acquiring other important teaching skills, it takes both some time and some effort. To get right down to it, what this means is that you have to learn to read objects as skilfully as you have already learned to read our printed language. And as in all skill development, there is no room for fudging the basics. The foundation of your being able to use objects as a teacher is your learning how to use them yourself for your own continuing self-education.

Since you probably were not trained as a child to read objects, it may be even harder for you to begin to learn this skill than it will be for your students. But don't worry; you don't have to become an expert in order to begin to use objects with your students, and as soon as you do begin you can start to reap some of the benefits.

So perhaps as a first step in helping you learn how to teach with objects, we should look at some of the advantages of this approach.



"READING" PORTRAITURE AT A GLANCE

The two key elements to reading portraits are looking and analyzing.

LOOKING

Sitter

Describe the sitter's pose.

Symbols

What objects are seen in the portrait?

Adjectives

Use adjectives to describe the sitter.

Clothing

What clothing is the sitter wearing?

Medium

What medium was used to create the portrait?

Setting

What is the setting of the portrait?

Time Period

In what period of history does the portrait appear to be set?



ANALYZING

Sitter

Who is the sitter? Why is this sitter significant to American history?

Symbols

What might the objects tell us about the sitter?

Attributes

What personal qualities might we attribute to the sitter based on the portrait?

Clothing

What might the sitter's clothing tell us about the sitter's profession, personality, social status, or place in history?

Artist

Who is the artist? Why is the artist significant?

Setting

What might the portrait's setting tell us about the sitter?

Time Period

When was the portrait created? What was going on in history when the portrait was created?

O say can you see?

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October 01, 2009

Using objects with English language learners

I work at the National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C. But I spent last year teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in a public elementary school in rural Taiwan. Why would a self-proclaimed museum nerd leave the Smithsonian to spend a year in a classroom?

Museum educators love to use objects, artworks, and live collections to make connections to the past, with a different location, or to get a glimpse into the mind of another person. Trained as such, I was really curious how I could use objects to cross cultural and linguistic divides. I loved how the tangible solidness of objects could tell stories in America, so why not see how far I could stretch it?

I imagine that what I learned about using objects for English as a Foreign Language would apply to English as a Second Language (ESL) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students in America, as well.

- **A picture's worth a thousand words:** When having a shared vocabulary is a problem, photographs can serve as important springboards for conversation and sharing content. I know many ESOL/ESL



teachers are challenged with conveying subject content (like history or science) to students who are behind in English language skills and images are one way to share information without having words as a boundary. For my students, this meant using photographs of my childhood Christmas celebrations to give them a cultural introduction to me, rather than needing to translate a description of what Christmas was like for me.

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Video

The Smithsonian isn't just one museum...

It includes 19 museums and galleries, the National Zoological Park and nine research facilities.

The total number of artifacts, works of art and specimens in the Smithsonian's collections is estimated at over 137 million!

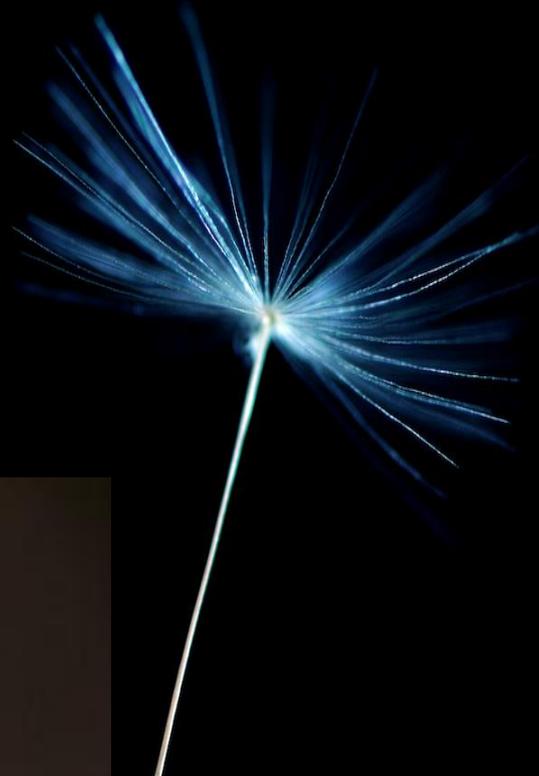


FUN FACT:
The Smithsonian
owns 35 million
insect specimens!



I James Smithson son to high first Duke of Northumberland
& Elizabeth heiress of the barony of Arundel &
now of Barchin the second Duke of Somerset now
residing in Pall Mall Street second square, do this
twenty third day of October one thousand eight
hundred & twenty six make this my last will
and Testament I bequeath the whole of my
property of every nature & kind down to my
bankers Messrs. Downings of Chancery Lane and
trust, to be disposed of in the following
manner: and I desire of my said executor
to put my property under the management
of the Court of Chancery.

To John Fitch formerly my servant, but
now employed in the London docks and
residing at No 21 Jubilee Place North mile
End old town in consideration of his
attachment and fidelity to me & the long
and great care he has taken of my effects
& my having done but very little for him
I give and bequeath the annuity or annual
sum of one hundred pounds sterling for
his life to be paid to him quarterly
free of legacy duty and all other deduction
the first payment to be made to him



Collections



Collections Database (collections.si.edu)



› Abraham Lincoln

ARTIST: Unidentified Artist
MEDIUM: Salted paper print
TYPE: Photograph
DATE: 1859
OBJECT NUMBER: NPG.88.64
DATA SOURCE: National Portrait Gallery
VISITOR TAG(S): [No tags yet, be the first!](#) [Add Your Tags!](#)

› expand

Add to My List



› Abraham Lincoln Life Mask by Clark Mills, 1865

ASSOCIATED PERSON: [Lincoln](#), Abraham
PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: plaster (overall material)
OBJECT NAME: mask, life
DATE MADE: 1865
ID NUMBER: PL*004853
DATA SOURCE: National Museum of American History, Kenneth E. Behring Center
VISITOR TAG(S): [No tags yet, be the first!](#) [Add Your Tags!](#)

› expand

Add to My List



› Abraham Lincoln's Watch, around 1858

ASSOCIATED PERSON: [Lincoln](#), Abraham
PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: gold; glass (watch material)
OBJECT NAME: watch, pocket
ID NUMBER: PL*219098.01
DATA SOURCE: National Museum of American History, Kenneth E. Behring Center
VISITOR TAG(S): [No tags yet, be the first!](#) [Add Your Tags!](#)

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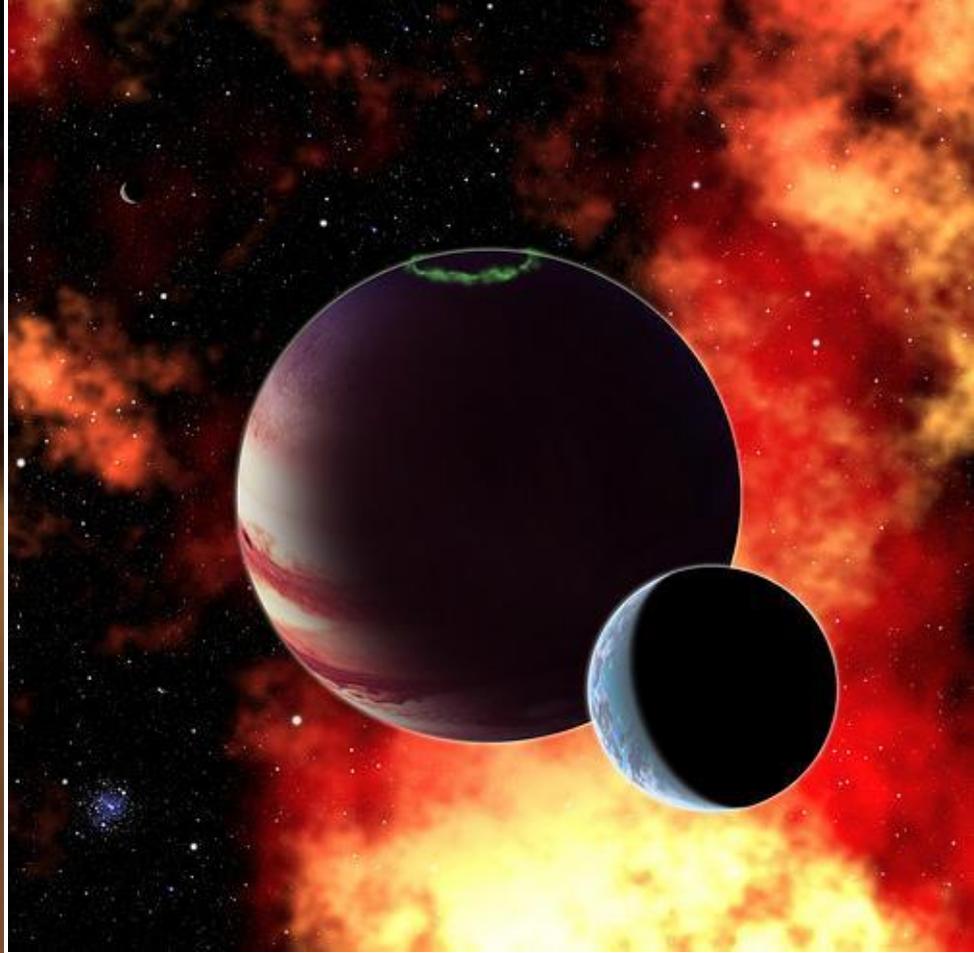
› Abraham Lincoln's Top Hat

USER: [Lincoln](#), Abraham
PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: silk (overall material)
OBJECT NAME: top hat
DATE MADE: mid 19th century
ID NUMBER: PL*9321
DATA SOURCE: National Museum of American History, Kenneth E. Behring Center
VISITOR TAG(S): [Lincoln's top hat](#) [Add Your Tags!](#)

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Research





BAT LISTENER
Rachel Page



FROG FOLLOWER
Justin Touchon

All kinds of people become scientists. And scientists do all kinds of things. Watch and read about these scientists at the Smithsonian. What kind of scientist would you like to be?

Look for these icons to find:



video



profile



extras



SNAIL SLEUTH
Rachel Collin



DINOSAUR HUNTER
Matthew Carrano



ART SCIENTISTS
The Freer Team



BEE TRACKER
Dave Roubik

Collections + Research = Learning Resources



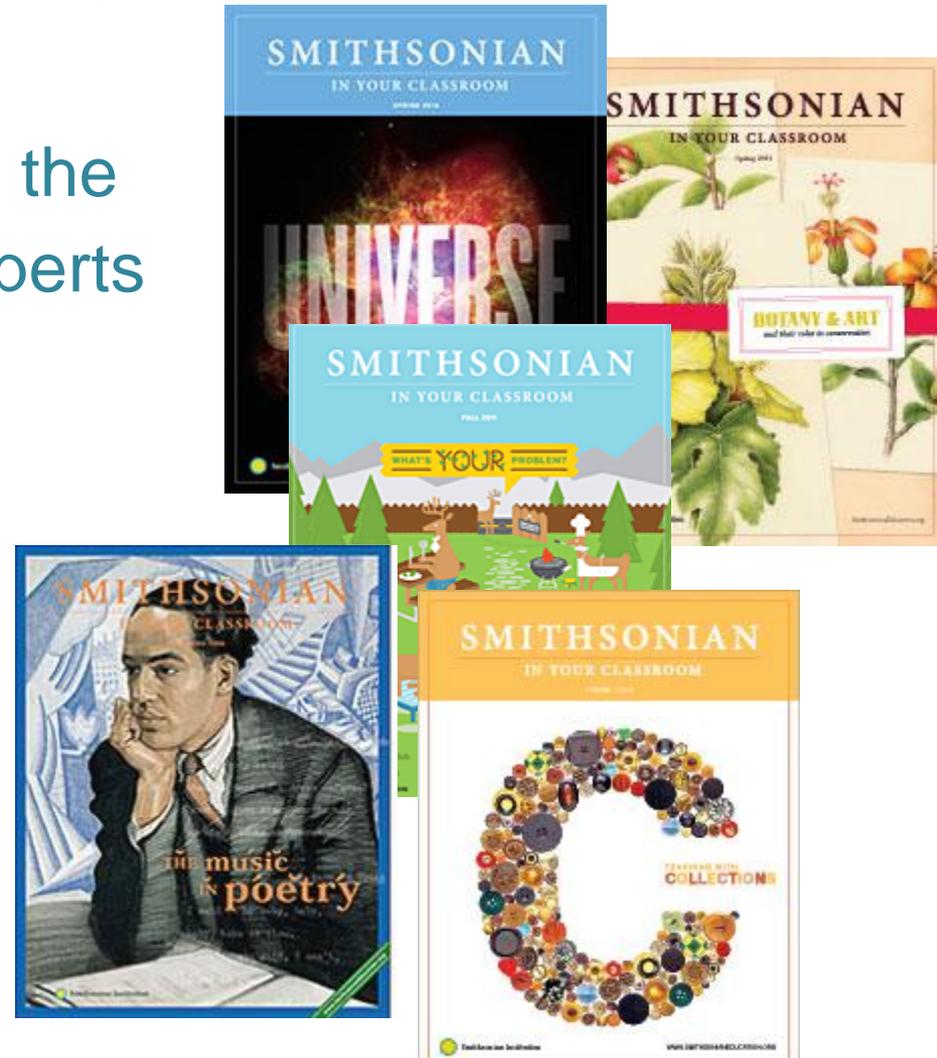
Online Searchable Database: SmithsonianEducation.org

The screenshot shows the Smithsonian Education website. At the top, the logo and name 'Smithsonian Education' are on the left, and navigation links 'Educators | Families | Students' are on the right. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with links: 'For Educators | Field Trips | Professional Development | Lesson Plans | Resource Library | Online Events'. The main banner features the text 'Educators Prepare, Plan, Teach' on the left and an illustration of a person with a magnifying glass and a tree on the right, with the text 'WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM? A LOOK AT THE ENVIRONMENT IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD'. Below the banner are four columns: 'Lesson Plans' with subject categories (Art & Design, Science & Technology, History & Culture, Language Arts) and an 'IDEALABS' advertisement; 'Find Resources' with a search box and filters for grade and subject; 'State Standards of Learning' with similar search and filter options; and 'What's New' with icons for various programs and text about 'SMITHSONIAN QUESTS', 'May is Asian Pacific American Heritage Month', 'Invent it Winners!', and 'Online Conferences: SI Quests Americans All Series: From Where I Stand.'.

“Smithsonian In Your Classroom” Publication

Making connections between the Smithsonian collections & experts to teachable moments

- The Arts
- History
- Culture
- Science



EXPLORE

With Smithsonian Experts

a film series for students and teachers



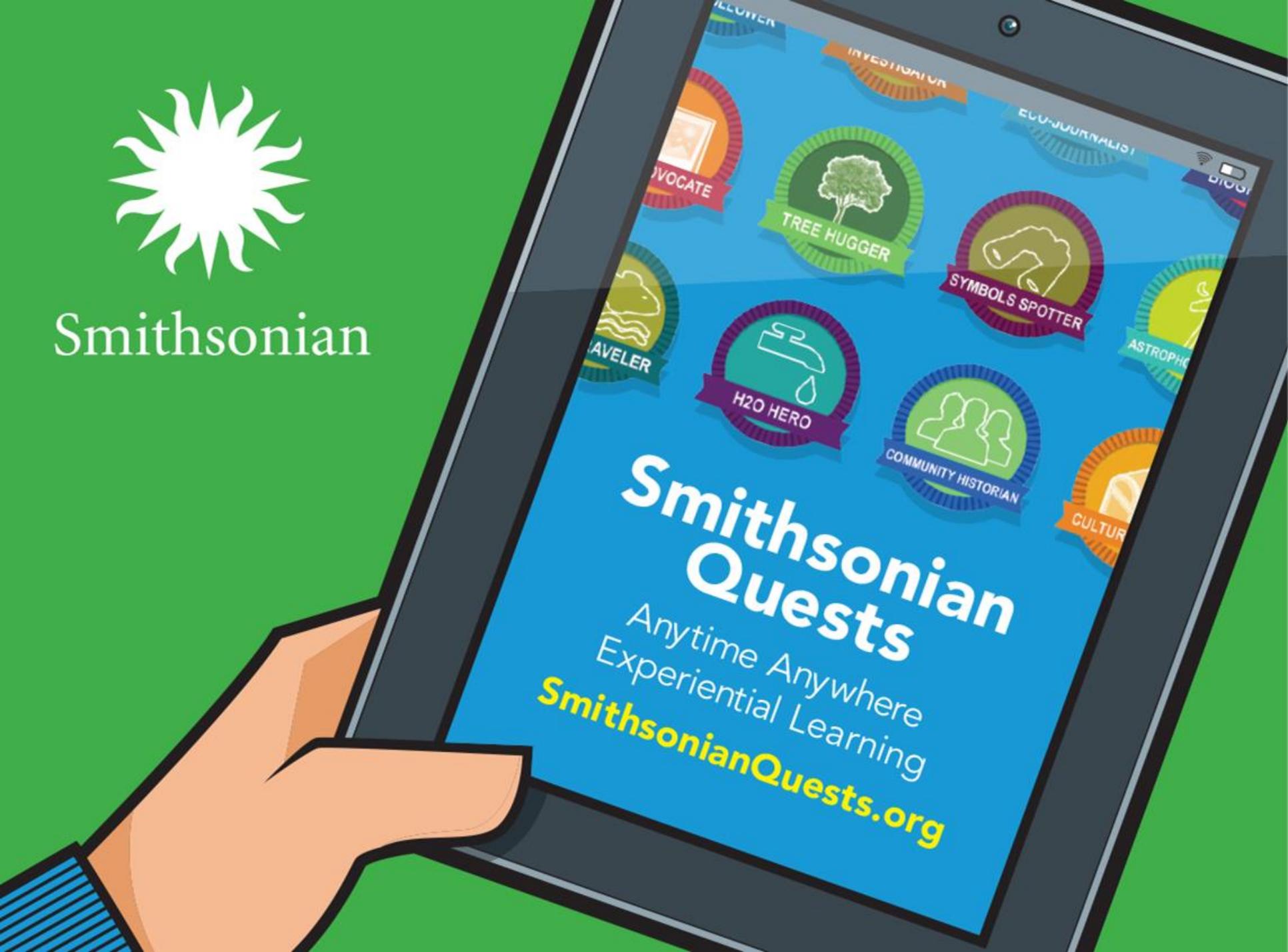
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Video





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- H2O HERO
- COMMUNITY HISTORIAN
- CULTUR

Use Smithsonian Quests to...

Explore Interests
Build Skills
Try Out New Roles

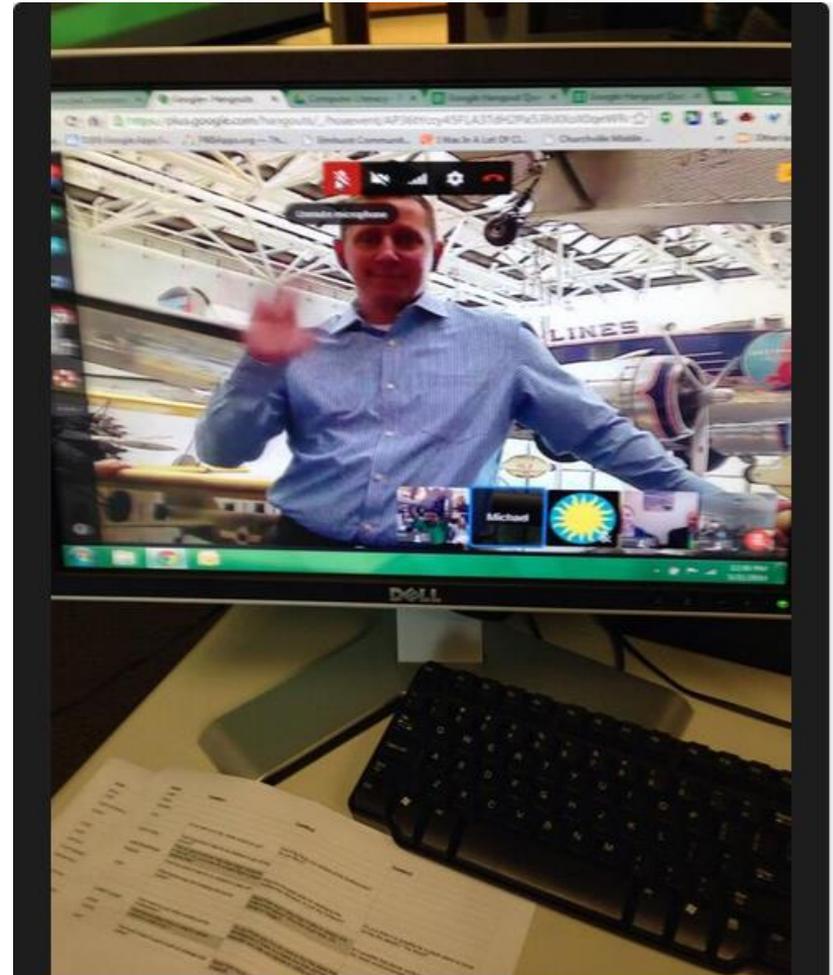


WING-ING IT
A Conversation about Flight

with Dr. John Anderson
 and Michael Hulslander
 from the National Air
 and Space Museum

Smithsonian

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 **Farheen Beg**
 @TheMrsBeg Follow

Thanks @airandspace @smithsonian had fun w/
 #googlehangouts Ss learned how important #aspectratio is!
 @ReachTeacher

7:34 PM - 21 May 2014

1 RETWEET 4 FAVORITES ↩ ↺ ★



SmithsonianEducation

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Following

Cool! RT @Plummersclass: Our class is having a Google Hangout lunch w/ the Smithsonian learning about flight. #cbcscd pic.twitter.com/4HB1mzSORU

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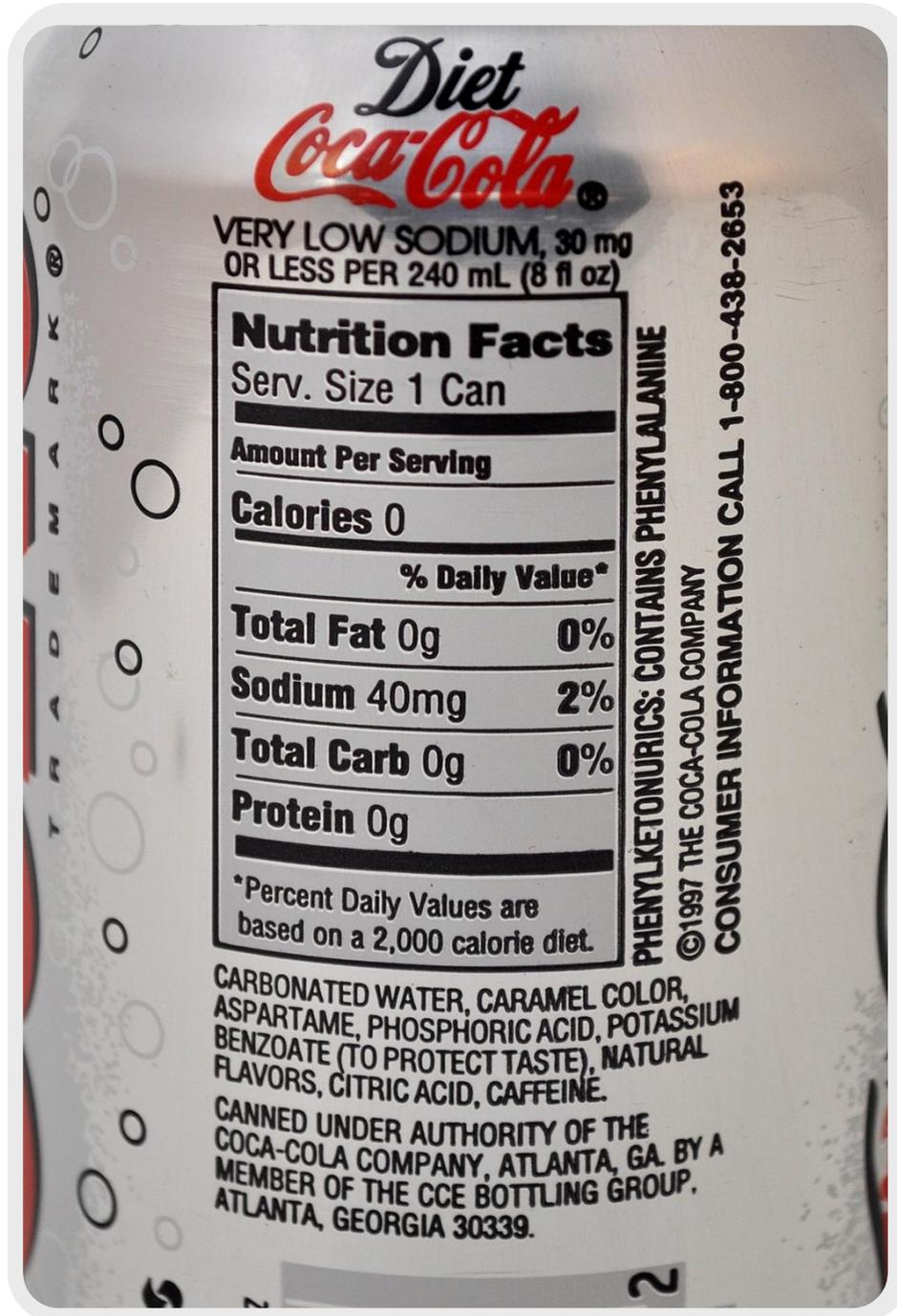
Reply to @SmithsonianEdu @Plummersclass

National Museum of American History

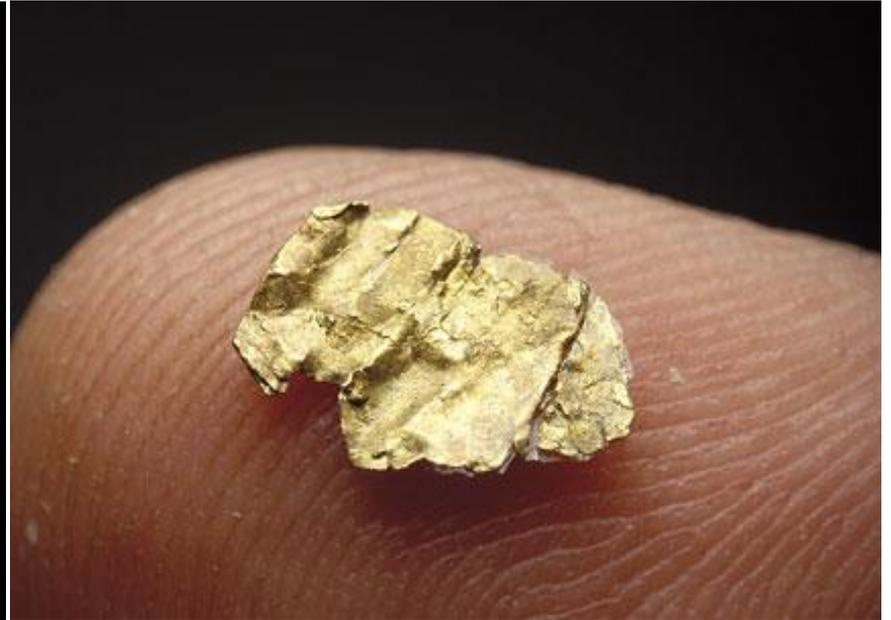


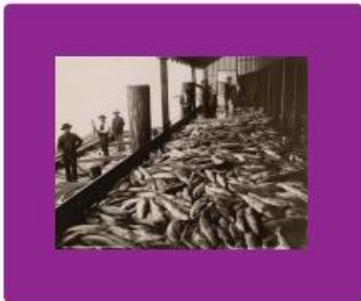
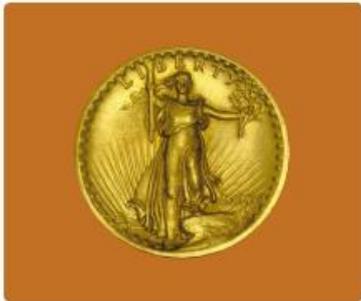
*Courtesy of Ted Eytan via the
Creative Commons license*

- What do you observe about the object?
- What is it made of?
- When was it used?
- What is its purpose?
- What story does it tell?



How big is the nugget that started the California gold rush?





ENGAGING
STUDENTS
WITH
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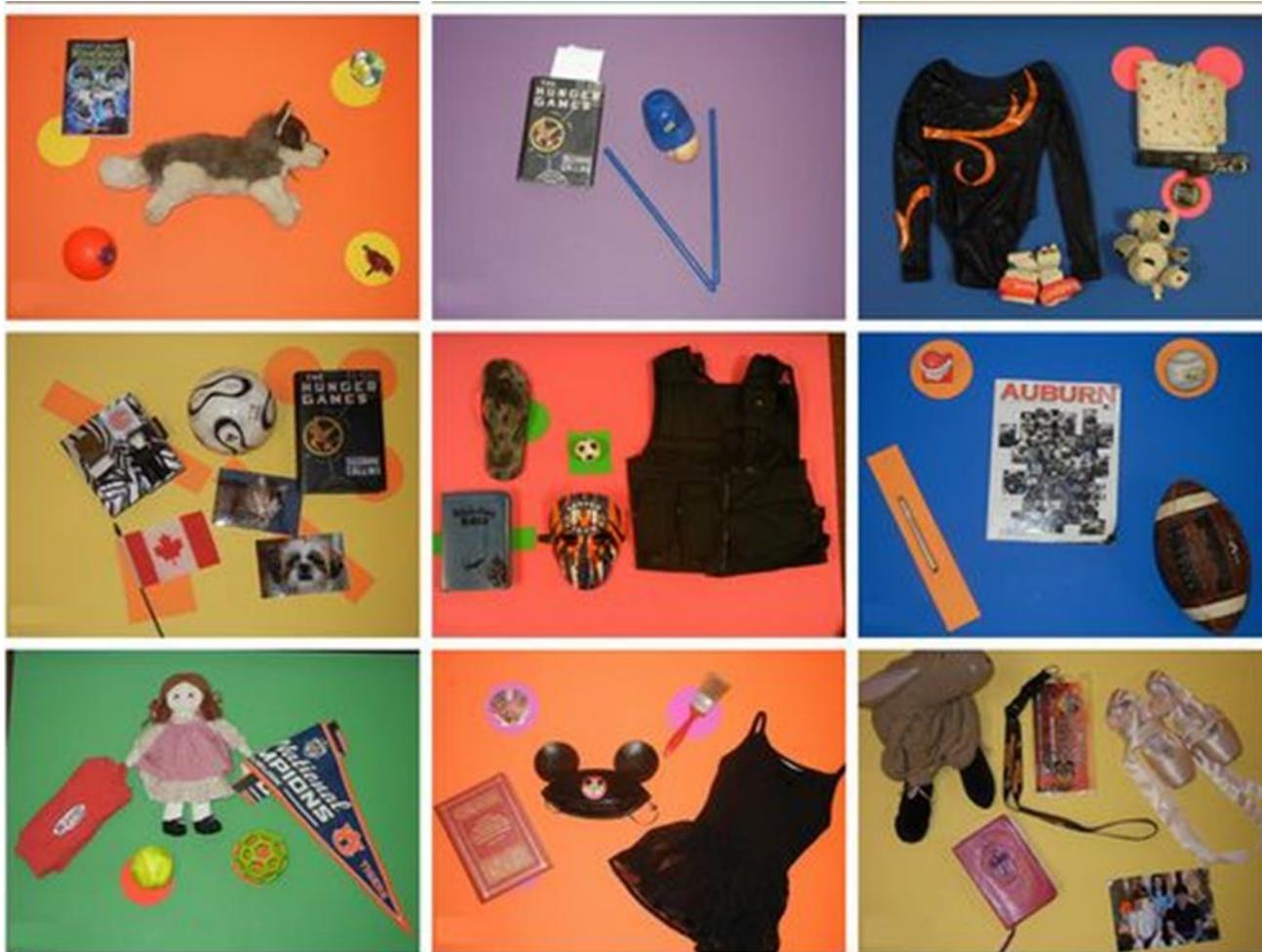
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[http://historyexplorer.si.edu/
PrimarySources.pdf](http://historyexplorer.si.edu/PrimarySources.pdf)

Object Portraits for Middle School



Object Portraits for Fifth Grade

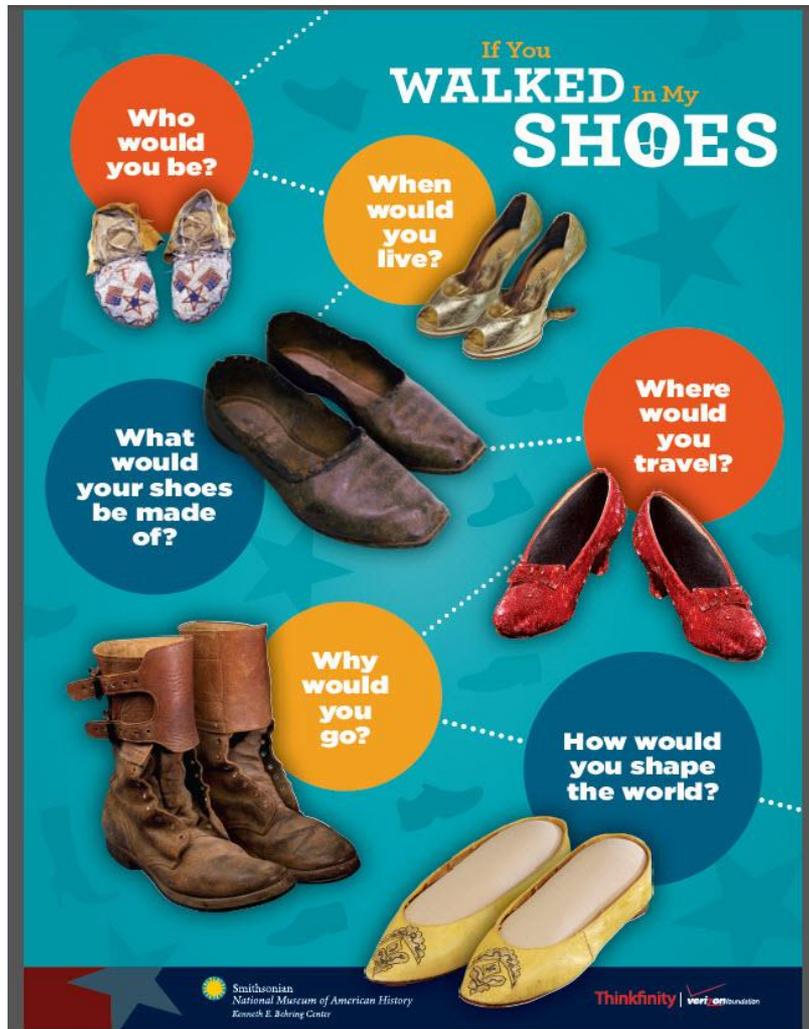


Object Portraits for Kindergarten





If you walked in my shoes...



Creative Writing Prompts

- Write about a historical event from the object's perspective.
- Write about the person behind the shoes.
- Write about what your shoes say about you.

http://historyexplorer.si.edu

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Grade Level

Historical Era

Cross-Curricular Connections

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United States National 34 Star Flag

The United States National 34-Star flag was adopted with the admission of Kansas as the 34th state in January 1861. It was used until 1863 when West Virginia became a state....

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Founding Fragments: Star-Spangled Souvenirs
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Blog Post: Star Spangled Women: Mary Pickersgill
Reference Materials

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JOIN THE CONVERSATION

What strategy do you use to help your students learn about our United States Presidents?

Presidents Day, originally known as Washington's Birthday, falls on the third Monday of February each year. Many teachers honor the ...

History Explorer Now on Edmodo!

Even though the Thinkfinity Community will be shutting down in June 2014, Smithsonian's History Explorer will continue to provid...

If your school went all digital, what online social studies resources would you use?

PLAN YOUR VISIT

Bringing your class to the museum?

The [School Visits](#) page has tips and details on events at the Museum.



National Portrait Gallery

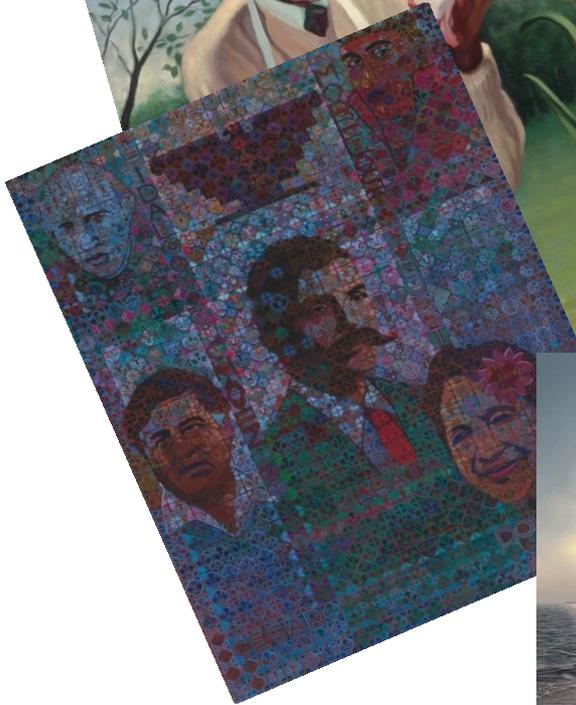
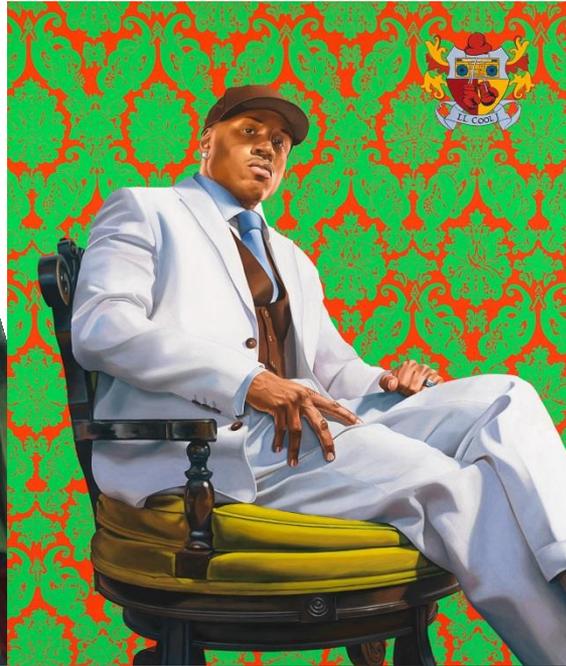


Mission

The Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery tells the stories of America through the individuals who have shaped U.S. culture.

The Gallery presents the wonderful diversity of individuals who have left—and are leaving—their mark on our country and our culture.

Inquiry and Reading Portraiture



Elements of Portrayal



Elements of Portrayal

- Expression
- Hairstyle
- Pose/Posture
- Clothing
- Setting
- Objects
- Medium
- Scale
- Artistic Style
- Color



“30 Second Look”





Jumping In



Compare and Contrast



Ætatis suæ 21. A. 1616.

Matoaks als Rebecka daughter to the mighty Prince Powhatan Emperour of Atanoughkomouck als Virginia converted and baptized in the Christian faith, and Wife to the wor.th M^r Tho: Rolff.

Puzzle Activity



Learning to Look Strategies

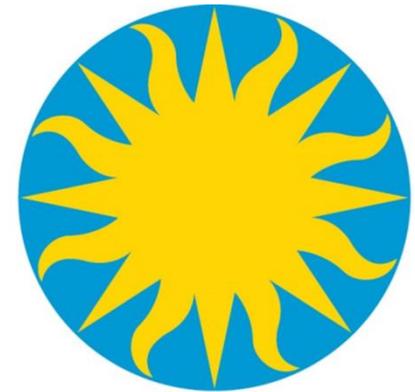
- Compare and Contrast
- 30 Second Look
- Jump-in
- Puzzle Activity

TO NAME A FEW...



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