

Activities & Projects

Shoe Stories

Level: Grade 7–9

Preparation: Print “50 ways to look at a Big Mac box”, *Worksheets 2–7: How to Read a Shoe*, or *Worksheet 8: How to Read a Shoe (General)* and/or *How to Read a Shoe – The Extended Version*.



Duration: 120 minutes; more if the narrative work requires drafts, peer editing and a polished finished product to be produced in class

Materials: Styrofoam cup

Goals:

- enhance the skill of “learning through objects” through close observation, questioning and hypothesizing
- gather ideas to support ideas for writing, using a variety of strategies and a wide range of print and electronic sources
- establish a distinctive voice in their writing appropriate to the subject and audience
- write narratives that present a particular perspective or point of view and descriptive detail

Description:

Begin: Introduce the concept of learning from objects. (For more information on object-based learning, consult the article “Teaching Yourself to Teach with Objects” by John Hennigar Shuh, *Journal of Education*, Volume 7, # 4, page 8. [Click here](#) for the article.)

Print or project *50 ways to look at a Big Mac Box*. Explain that these questions were written when Big Macs came in polystyrene boxes. Show the Styrofoam cup so that students understand the material the box was made from. As a class, try to answer as many questions about the box as possible. Close observation and asking questions can tell us a lot about an object, as well as about the culture that produced it. (This exercise can also be done with any common item – such as the Styrofoam cup itself – but the questions will need to be slightly modified.)

Learn: Divide the class into six groups. Distribute *Worksheets 2 – 7: How to Read a Shoe*, one to each group. Each worksheet asks questions of a different pair of shoes in *Chronicles of Riches*.

Alternatively, you may wish to assign shoes that connect with other aspects of the curriculum – for example, First Nations in grade 7 and 8, *The Ontario Curriculum*, or a particular continent or period of history. *Worksheet 8: How to Read a Shoe (General)* is provided in the event that you want to assign the particular shoes the students will use from the exhibition.

Ask students to work together to find out as much as possible about their shoe by examining it, and to answer the questions. NOTE: If possible, have students locate their shoe in the web exhibition and use the zoom features to more closely examine it. Have the students present their findings to the rest of the class.

Print or project the exhibition and artifact text and compare the student's findings. Don't over-emphasize right or wrong answers. The studying/inquiring/questioning/guessing process is part of the activity's objectives. The point of the exercise is to find out as much as possible about the artifact/shoe by closely examining it, not to be able to deduce everything about it.

Apply: Discuss narrative writing, and how a text can be written adopting a point of view, or perspective. Ask students to write a narrative from the perspective of the shoe they learned about in the group activity. Who is their owner? What are they like? What is it like spending a day as their shoes? Distribute *How to Read a Shoe – The Extended Version* for further ideas to generate content.