

Object Biographies Exercise

1. **Examine your object carefully.** Spend a few minutes with the object, looking at it from new angles. Try pretending that you're looking at it for the first time.

2. **Write the biography of this object and its life.** You may want to start by free-writing about this object—the things you know about it, what you've said about it on tours, how you imagine it being used, why you think it was chosen for the collection, gallery, or historic site. You have scrap paper on which to begin collecting your thoughts.

No one expects you to know everything about this object, so don't worry about the details of when or where it was made, etc. Try imagining some if not all of the following ideas as you think through this object's "life":

- Where do you imagine this object came from? (Where do you imagine it was made, who do you think acquired it, and from where did they get it?)
- Did someone have to save to get it? Was it a "special" object? Or part of everyday life? Would it have been noticeable?
- What did the owner think of when they looked at the object? What did others think?
- Who used this object? The owner? Family? Friends? Strangers? Is there anyone who would not have used it?
- Would this object have been passed down in a family? Gifted to someone else? Donated? Thrown away? Recycled?

3. Follow-up Questions.

1. Why did you choose this item? Do you have a personal connection to it? What about it piqued your curiosity?
2. How could you use this object to contribute to the story you already tell at your museum?
3. What information are you missing about the object that you would need to tell its story in your museum?
4. Has this activity made you think of other objects in your museum that you'd like to learn the stories of?

Every object in your museum has true stories like this associated with it!

Adapted from the work of:



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