I. **Outcomes:** Students tell stories about their own objects with description and personal meaning.
   
a. **Indicators:** Prompts for describing own object with detail.

   Prompts:
   - What is at the heart of a story?
   - What is an object that represents a dream you have? Describe your dream...
   - What is an object that someone gave you or you got somewhere special?
   - What is special about that person or place?
   - How does this object remind you of that person or place?

   b. **Indicators:** Prompts for supporting story and developing meaning.

      i. Students tell about the relationship between own object and self: time, place, or people.

      Prompts:
      - What is an object that someone you care about gave you?
      - What is special about that person?
      - How does this object remind you of that person?
      - What do you remember about when/where they gave you this object?
      - Who is connected to your object? How does it reflect this person?
      - Where do you keep this object? Where does it live?

      ii. Students identify the meaning associated with the object.

      Prompts:
      - What is the “heart” of the story?
      - How would you feel if this object disappeared or was altered?
      - List three descriptive words that they feel get to the “heart” of their object and the emotions connected with each word.

II. **Big Idea:** Objects of all kinds carry personal and cultural stories across time and place.

III. **Materials:**

   a. Archived Object Stories (technology to play examples for the class)
      i. [www.objectstories.org/stories]
   b. Sharpies
   c. Materials for word quilt
   d. Graphic Organizers (see following pages)
IV. Lesson – 90 min

1. Opener- 2 minute Life Story:
   Students will pair up for a quick storytelling icebreaker. The students will tell a their “life story” in 2 min. The teaching artist will tell her 2 min life story as an example. (15 min)

2. Procedure-
   1.) Storytelling Activity (35 min)- Explain to students they will hear stories from the Objects Stories archive. This will be guided listening, students will respond to prompts after listening to each story.
      i. Play the stories and ask students to think about what the “heart” of the story is, as they listen. (story ex: Aldis Hodge, Maurice and De’Treonna)
      ii. Students will have a timed response period to write their responses to prompts delivered by the teaching artist.
      iii. Discuss the student responses and continue the writing exercise by prompting students to write about:
          • What is an object that someone you care about gave you? Describe it.
          • What is special about that person?
          • How does this object remind you of that person?
          • What do you remember about when/where they gave you this object?
      iv. Students use their brainstorming to tell their partner about an object that represents someone special in their lives.
      v. The partner must identify what the “heart” of the other students’ story is.

   2.) Storytelling about own object (20 min)- Using the responses generated in the previous activity students will go deeper with their selected object.
      i. Divide students into small groups.
      ii. Ask students to identify more details about their object
          • How did/do you use this object?
          • Who is connected to your object? How does it reflect this person?
          • Where do you keep this object? Where does it live?
          • How would you feel if this object disappeared or was altered?
      iii. Each student will generate their own list in their small group. The list should include three descriptive words that they feel get to the “heart” of their object and the emotions they associate with it.
C. Activity - Word Quilt (20 min)
Students will select one word from their list. Students will artistically render their word on their word quilt piece. Each individual’s word will be added to the class quilt. The finished product will be a class word quilt that represents what is at the “heart” of each of the students object stories. Share out as time allows.

Quilts tell stories.
*Why a quilt?* Originally, the social process by which some quilts are made (otherwise known as a quilting bee) drew me to quilts as a starting point. The common image of a group of women, each sewing and talking around a quilt lends itself to storytelling. But there’s more to a quilt, similar to an art object. Perhaps the visual elements give explicit clues to a time or place. With this in mind, I decided to approach *Object Stories* by making collective quilts with students, inspired by students’ objects and the elements of their stories.

Starting from scratch. *What makes a good story?* Our ears know the answer to this question, however allusive because when we hear a good one we naturally want to keep listening. To begin, I ask students this essential question and they always brainstorm an impressive list. The one I’m secretly looking for is description or vivid details. Students then write down at least six details about their object (see “Storytelling about own object,” above). These are usually specific descriptions like color, size, and function. At this point, I ask students about the personal significance of their object. Why is it important to you? What does your object represent? At the end of this process students select their favorite descriptive detail. Another way I’ve described this – is the descriptive detail that gets to the heart of your object’s story. (*see graphic organizer, following*).

Making it square. *How can a word be brought to life?* With a buffet of materials collected from Scrap ([http://scrappdx.org](http://scrappdx.org)) students begin their quilt square. This is the fun part. Some students decide to include imagery alongside their descriptive word while other students weave imagery into the letters of their word. As a teaching artist, I appreciate this hands-on time because I’m able to check-in with students individually while they’re occupied and ask them about their objects. This is an excellent time to ask questions that bridge student’s visual quilt square to a verbal story about their object. Why did you pick your object? What is a vivid memory about your object? (*see object memory, following*).

Connecting stories. *What do our objects have in common?* With quilt squares completed, it’s time to start putting the quilt together as a class. We use safety pins because it’s a simple way to connect all the squares and can be easily deconstructed – so students can take home their individual squares. All the words together make a dynamic collection and we spend time as a group discussing if there are other words that apply to students’ objects. Afterward we break up into small groups to start telling stories. I love this part and found it to be a powerful experience for students to share their stories with peers as nervousness mixes with a desire to share. Students begin by sharing the descriptive word they picked for their quilt square and then telling a story about their object. If students don’t have a specific “story” in mind – I ask them to tell us about a vivid memory they have about their object or how they got it. After each student shares I ask the rest of the group to ask questions about what they heard.
**Story slam (optional).** If I had one more class to spend with students I would do a story slam based on students’ objects. When students start telling stories there is a contagious quality to their storytelling (it’s like wildfire). For example, a student picked their dog’s leash and told a story about chasing their dog after it escaped from the dog park. After the student finished talking (actually before) hands shot up with excitement as if to shout, “Me too, I have a story about that too”. So I would invite students to choose another student’s object – one that they too have a personal story about and tell it in front of the class in story slam style. The thing I like about group storytelling is it incorporates listening and through listening we often find ourselves empathizing with the storyteller. I also feel that verbally processing ideas is an important part of the writing process (especially for struggling writers).
# OBJECT STORIES

1. Draw your object (from memory or the real thing or a photo)

2. Write 6 words that describe your object (can be a 6-word story or 6 random words)

3. Choose your favorite word
Now the fun part. Draw your word 4 different ways. (You can draw around the letters too.)

You'll need to choose 1 of these for your Quilt square.
A VIVID MEMORY of YOUR Object

Your word to describe your object:

Your object:

How does your memory relate to your one word that describes your object?

*BE SURE TO INCLUDE THREE DETAILS*

1.  
2.  
3.  