Object-Oriented Storytelling: Brainstorming Web

Portland Art Museum Education
Middle School Curriculum

Note: We found from experience that the more familiar students were with thinking about objects in their own lives and connecting them to story, the better able they were to communicate meaning and create compelling stories. If you can support the students by introducing the project concept before their first assignment it will set them up to go deeper into meaning and storytelling. Below are some ideas and strategies that were vetted last year and have been compiled for your convenience.

I. Outcomes: Students tell stories about their own objects with description and personal meaning.

   a. Indicators: Prompts for describing own object with detail.
      1. What is the object? Describe it.

   b. Indicators: Prompts for supporting story and developing meaning.
      i. Students tell about the relationship between own object and self: time, place, or people.
         1. When did the storyteller get_______ object?
         2. Where did the storyteller get_______ object?
         3. Who/how did the storyteller get _____ object?

      ii. Students identify the meaning associated with the object.
         1. What is the meaning, or significance to the storyteller?
         2. What is the meaning, or significance to you?

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

III. Materials: Roll of tape, brainstorming web, connection to internet to view object story archive (optional).

IV. Lesson
   a. Opener 1: Object Transformation (aka This is not a roll of tape)-

   Hold up a roll of tape and give the participants an imagination challenge. The object of the game is to transform the tape, or whatever the object is, into something it is not (you may need to set guidelines: it cannot turn into a gun, etc...). The goal of the game is to explain what the object is and to use it in the appropriate manner as the phrase, “This is not a roll of tape, this is a ...”
For example, “This is not a roll of tape; this is my new, shiny camera.” Then snap a picture with the “camera.”

**Remember**: Say what the transformed object is AND use it physically. Try not to repeat what someone else has said.

**Opener 2: Crossing the Line**

The students are directed to physically place themselves according to their levels of agreement, disagreement and somewhere in the middle. The crossing the line means they strongly agree, staying put means they disagree, straddling the line means they are in the middle. A series of statements are read for them to place themselves based on their opinion and instigate discussion led by the facilitator:

1. **Sample Statements**:
   - I am a cat person
   - I love homework.
   - Batman is a better superhero than superman
   - The bat signal is an object that has/recalls a story
   - Everyone thinks of the same story when they see batman’s sign (discuss: same characters but different stories)
   - I can think of another object that carries a story or multiple stories just like the bat signal (checking for understanding here. If there are many students outside of the cluster try more prompting before continuing)

**b. Procedure:**

1. After Introducing and practicing Crossing the Line, the facilitator describes and explains the Object Stories concept.
   a. Objects have stories and people have objects that are important to them. We are going to investigate objects in your lives that have stories and meaning to you. These objects can be anything that is important to you. The reason it is important to you is because it has **meaning** in your life. Let’s look at some examples and discuss;
   b. This is a good time to play some object stories from the archive or to tell your own object story, or about your process for selecting an object.
      i. Have students describe what the object is....
      ii. Relationship between the object and storyteller (time/place/people).
      iii. The meaning or significance to the storyteller.

2. **Brainstorm own Object Story** - Then transition the Crossing the Line prompts to help students brainstorm their own story. (See Brainstorming Web, below)
Sample Prompts:

- The objects held special meaning for the storytellers.
- The objects were important because they were expensive...
- I have an object in mind...
  - that I use often.
  - that makes me think about a special place.
  - that connects me to a family member, or special person.
  - that I’ve had for a long time.
  - that is handmade.
  - that was given to me by someone special
  - that I would want my kids to have
  - that reminds me of a something unique to me.
- I have at least one object in mind that also has a story.

c. **Closer** - Students reflect on their object ideas.
   1. Have students write down their object ideas and reflect on why they are picking these objects. (see brainstorming web)
   2. If there is time have students share their brainstorming.
Object Story Brainstorming Web
(Impspired by Kasia/Leslie/Christa - Jackson Elementary)

Choose 3 Different Objects

1. Description of object

2. Relationship
   - Time: When did you get it?
   - Place: Where?
   - People: Who?

3. Meaning
   - Why is it important to you?

Which object do you think will make the best object story?