

WRITING ABOUT OBJECTS

DEVELOPING A RIGOROUS UNDERSTANDING OF CULTURAL OBJECTS leads to productive starting positions for assignments like formal analyses, exhibition reviews and essays, praxis papers and artistic research.

Having a good reading strategy helps to lay the path, and foster a critical understanding of cultural objects making them easier and more interesting to write about.

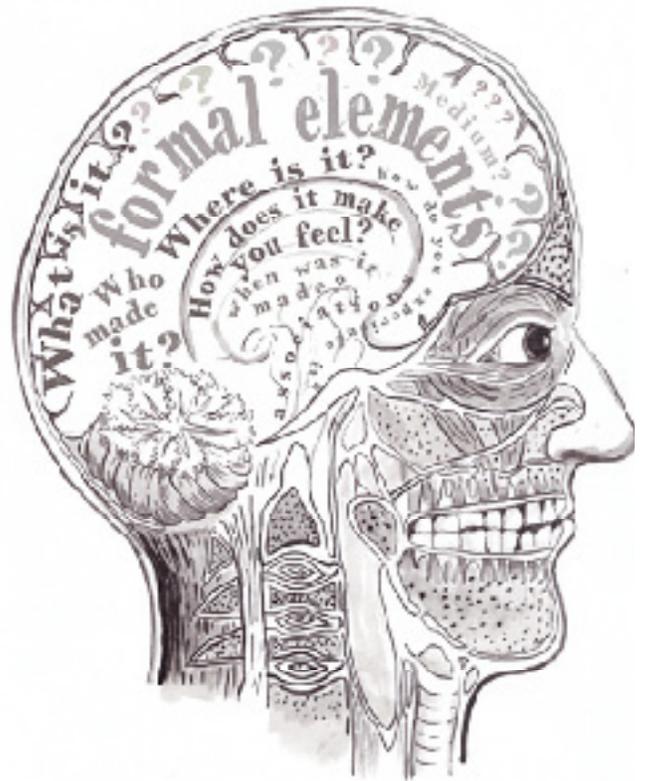
WRITING ABOUT THE OBJECT

When you begin writing about your object, review your research and the details of the assignment. Use the questions you asked yourself in the initial reading and research as a guide to develop a draft.

Ask yourself: *“What does my reader think or know about the object already?”* and then, *“What do I want them to think or know about the object?”*

Thinking about your reader’s understanding will help clarify purpose and structure in the writing. For example, if you are writing to argue a point or persuade your reader, you will need to provide them with more evidence and connective ideas than if you are writing simply to inform someone about a topic they know relatively little about.

As you think about how you might approach writing, keep in mind that it’s normal to get stuck in between research and writing stages! Listed in the additional resources are some pre-writing strategies like brainstorming, mindmapping and free-writing to get you off to a great start.



DEVELOPED BY T.J MCLACHLAN AND
JENNIFER DICKIESON.

ILLUSTRATION BY AUTUMN QUIGLEY 2017

READING THE OBJECT

Reading can mean the literal reading of a written text, but, it can also mean to read an image, artwork, gesture, product or idea. To read an object or an artwork with this second meaning is to spend time closely looking at it.

Begin by identifying the basics—what it is, what it is made of, and who made it—then build on those observations. This is something you can practice as a mental exercise, something you may wish to take notes on for the development of further writing, or a strategy you can use in group critiques of artwork/objects.

READING BY QUESTIONING

How is the object being represented?

Consider what techniques are used and what decisions have been made in the creation of the object.

What are the formal elements?

How do they create personal/cultural associations?

Consider how you subjectively experience an object and why you relate to it the way you do. Also think about the cultural associations an object may carry.

How do you experience the object?

Think about how the object makes you feel apart from associations.

For example, is it comforting, unsettling, inviting, or overwhelming? What do these feelings tell you about the object?

RESEARCHING THE OBJECT

Performing additional research will make your writing and thinking more complex and exciting!

Some research will be easily directed by assignment goals, for example researching the creator of the object, but others can be more driven by your ideas produced by reading the object. For example, if you were writing about a park bench, your research might consider the urban planning of the park and the history of the materials used.

This type of research is not considering the object itself, but factors that led to the object. Making clear connections from the object to the world and information that surrounds it will ultimately help in forming a critical interpretation.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

<http://writing.ku.edu/prewriting-strategies>

<http://slc.berkeley.edu/you-start-writing-paper-guide-prewriting-techniques-0>

<http://theconversation.com/three-simple-steps-to-understand-art-look-see-think-33020>

DEVELOPING RESEARCH WITH QUESTIONS

What led to this object?

Were there specific geographic, social or political conditions that led to the creation of this object?

Why is this object where it is? Who put it here?

How might the site surrounding the object be significant?

What aspects of the object would have been significant in the past?

Think critically about the choices the artist/designer made when it was made. Consider how different choices would have affected how the object is read now.

TIP!

Be warned: research can be endless, but at some point picking the most important ideas you have accumulated and writing is paramount to completing an assignment.