

Joseph Allen Skinner: The Collector

Slide show, In-class activity, Optional take-home activity

Learning Objectives

This lesson will give students a better understanding of what a collection is and who Joseph Allen Skinner was as a collector, as well as develop background knowledge to contextualize a future visit to the Museum. The in-class activity (curating a classroom collection) gives students the opportunity to practice working and communicating with others in small groups and public speaking by sharing their findings. The focus of this lesson is to understand what a collection is, ask questions about what a collection says about its collector, and to reflect on how to create and display a collection, both as a class and individually. This lesson has three components:

- **In-class slide presentation: *Joseph Allen Skinner: The Collector***

The educator may:

- use the slide show and accompanying Educators' Guide to facilitate a classroom discussion
- adjust questions and content to reflect topics covered in class

- **In-class activity: *Creating a Classroom Collection***

The classroom collection will:

- reflect the members of the class
- convey what is important to the group
- represent a significant moment in time that the students' experienced together (a day, a year, an event, etc.)

- **Optional take-home activity: *Curating a Personal Collection***

Students will:

- develop their own ideas on collecting
- consider what a personal collection says about them

Slide Presentation Overview

The slide show includes an introductory activity that asks students their thoughts on what collections might be and why someone would build a collection. It then moves through Joseph Allen Skinner's life starting with his childhood collection of minerals and culminating in the donation of his life-long collection to Mount Holyoke College. At the end of the slide show, there is an opportunity for a brief class discussion to summarize the lesson topics.

In-class Learning Activity:

After the slide show, students should divide into small groups, in which they will work together to create a micro-museum that represents their classroom.

- Students should first brainstorm what they want to share with others (outside of the class), reflecting their classmates, their learning, and classroom experience.
- After coming up with 8-10 objects to make their collection, students should come up with a collection title or theme and make an illustration of each object.
- Each student will have a worksheet that has space to illustrate the objects in their collection.
- A possible classroom collection might include: a favorite read-aloud book, math counting cubes, exemplar student work, a popular game, school mascot/colors, a photo of the school or class, etc.

Guiding Questions to Ask Each Group:

- What do you want other people to know about our class?
- What's a funny or happy memory you have of this year? Is there an object that represents that moment?
- What are the objects in our classroom that represent the current year (perhaps something you'd put in a time capsule for students in 2100)?
- What's your favorite thing about being in this class? Is there an object that demonstrates that feeling?
- What do we already collect in the classroom?
- How could we show this moment (this day, this week, the year?) with things in the classroom?
- How are we a unique class? How are we different from another class of the same grade?

After each group has come up with a list, illustrated their objects, and titled their collections, the class should come back together and share their classroom collections. Each group should present, and the teacher should conclude with a debrief. Teachers can display student work from this lesson in the classroom or other location to share with the school community.

An optional in-class extension will challenge students to create museum exhibition-style labels that explain the objects. An outline for labels is listed below.

- Identify the object: you might also want to state when it was created, if you know this information.
- List the materials of your object (i.e. metal, paper, wood, etc.)
- State who owns the object: you can also include why the object is important to the owner or to other people.
- Point out any particular parts that the viewer should pay attention to and explain why they matter.
- Keep your label short: remember that exhibition visitors don't want to spend all their time reading.

Optional Take-Home Activity

The optional take-home activity is an extension of what students learned in class and will reinforce the concept of collecting and sharing a collection with others. The classroom collection and take-home activities could be shared with the school community (on bulletin boards, newsletters, presentations, etc.) to demonstrate student work and comprehension.

Differentiated Instruction

Students will work in small groups to select, illustrate, and explain the objects they selected to create a classroom collection. Teachers can support student learning by matching groups as needed. This activity can be scaffolded by creating a group that works with an adult or can challenge students by working individually. To support reflection during the debrief, the teacher can ask that each group have a representative share their collection, or require each group member to speak. The in-class activity is flexible enough to allow the teacher to adapt to individual student needs.

Other options that meet the learning objectives of 1) understanding what a collection is, 2) asking questions about what a collection says about its collector, and 3) reflecting on the type of collection one might choose to display either as a class or as an individual include:

- a journal entry
- a creative writing piece on a classroom museum exhibit
- a visual or oral report on what a collection says about a collector

This is not an exhaustive list of options. The lesson plan is designed to be flexible enough to meet the needs of ELL and 504/IEP students, as well as challenge students who've mastered the content.

Materials Needed for Lesson Plan

Joseph Allen Skinner: The Collector Slide Presentation

Educators' Guide to Slide Presentation

In-Class Learning Activity (student handout)

Optional Take-Home Activity (student handout)

Paper + pencils (colored pencils/markers/crayons optional)

Common Core and MA HSS Standards:

These activities meet the following Common Core and MA HSS Standards:

Common Core

Speaking and Listening

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.1 Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.5 Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.6 Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

Writing

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.8 Recall information from experiences or gather information from print and digital sources; take brief notes on sources and sort evidence into provided categories.

MA History and Social Science Curriculum Standards

History and Geography

Observe and describe local or regional historic artifacts and sites and generate questions about their function, construction, and significance.