

Activity sheet: Questioning objects

Source: Anra Kennedy

Look at a mobile telephone and have a think about these questions. As you answer them try to be aware of the different levels of thinking and analysis they require.

For instance, are you being asked for straightforward observations or facts? Does the answer require any prior knowledge? Does the answer require wider research? Are you being asked for a personal opinion? Are you being asked to use your imagination perhaps?

An alternative or follow-on activity would be to take the headings of each category and frame your own questions around an object of your choice.

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| <i>Materials</i> What colour is it? What is it made of? How big is it? Is it heavy or light? What shape is it? Does it feel hard or soft, rough or smooth? Does it feel warm or cold? Does it make a noise? | |
| <i>Production</i> Who made it? When was it made? Where was it made? Why might it have been designed in the first place? | |

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| <p><i>Use</i></p> <p>What is it for?</p> <p>Who might use it?</p> <p>Why might they use it?</p> <p>When might they use it?</p> <p>Where might they use it?</p> <p>What can it actually do?</p> <p>Who owns this particular phone?</p> <p>Why might that person own a mobile phone?</p> <p>Do you ever use a mobile phone?</p> | |
| <p><i>Aesthetic value</i></p> <p>Do you like the way it looks?</p> <p>Do you like the way it feels?</p> <p>How could it be improved, aesthetically?</p> | |
| <p><i>Environmental relevance</i></p> <p>How might the use of this phone impact on the environment?</p> <p>Have you heard of any health risks associated with mobile phones?</p> <p>If it was up to you, would you ban the use of mobiles anywhere?</p> <p>What will happen to this when its no longer wanted?</p> <p>Would you want a mobile phone mast in your backyard?</p> | |
| <p><i>History of object</i></p> <p>Do you know this phone's personal history?</p> <p>When was the first mobile phone invented?</p> <p>Have mobile phones always looked like this?</p> <p>Do you remember the first mobile phones?</p> | |

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| <p><i>Complementary information</i></p> <p>Have you ever used a mobile phone to get you out of trouble?</p> <p>When might a mobile phone be used as a safety measure?</p> <p>Does it worry you that mobile phones can be used to track your whereabouts?</p> <p>How would you like to see mobile phones developing over the next five years?</p> | |
| <p><i>Value</i></p> <p>How much do you think this phone is worth in monetary terms?</p> <p>Do you think that's a bargain?</p> <p>Will this phone become more or less valuable over time?</p> | |
| <p><i>Relationship to other objects</i></p> <p>Does the phone have any accessories?</p> <p>Does the phone interact with any other pieces of technology?</p> <p>How does this phone's owner carry it about?</p> | |
| <p><i>Social implications</i></p> <p>What impact might this phone have had on its owner's social life?</p> <p>Which age group do you think might use mobile phones the most?</p> <p>Do mobile phones play a role in your working life?</p> <p>Have mobile phones affected your family life in any way?</p> <p>Has the use of a mobile phone affected your budget?</p> <p>Do you think young children should have their own mobile phones?</p> <p>Do you think the use of mobile phones has impacted on the way teenagers interact with each other?</p> | |

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| <p><i>Historical implications</i></p> <p>Do you think text messaging has impacted on the English language at all?</p> <p>Do you think mobile phones have impacted upon the political landscape of developed countries at all?</p> <p>How might mobile phones have developed in ten years time?</p> | |
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Based upon the categories on page 11 of Learning through culture, The DfES Museums and Galleries Education Programme: a guide to good practice, RCMG, Feb 2002.