

# Museum Education 101: Interacting with Primary Sources



**SHAKER  
VILLAGE**

— *of Pleasant Hill* —



# Draw or Represent Education



(Shakertown Inn, ca. 1920s. Credit: Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill)

# Educational Theory and Strategies

- *Pedagogy*

- The art or science of being a teacher; Teaching.
- Usually refers to children

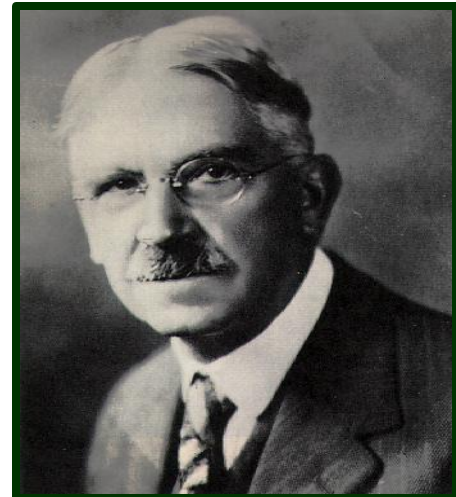
- *Andragogy*

- The process of engaging adult learners in the structure of the learning experience

# Educational Theorists

*John Dewey* (1859-1952)

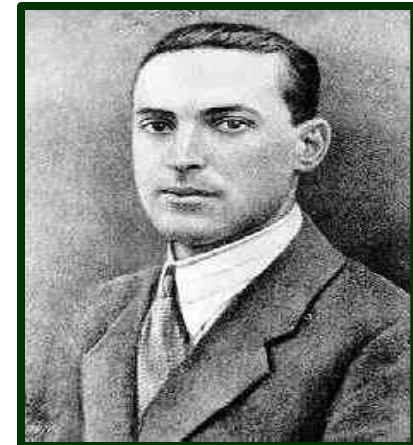
- Dewey is best known for his belief in experience as a way of learning and knowing.
- The phrase *learning by doing* is often associated with Dewey and suggests that knowledge is gained through active engagement rather than passivity.



# Educational Theorists

## *Lev Vygotsky* (1896-1934)

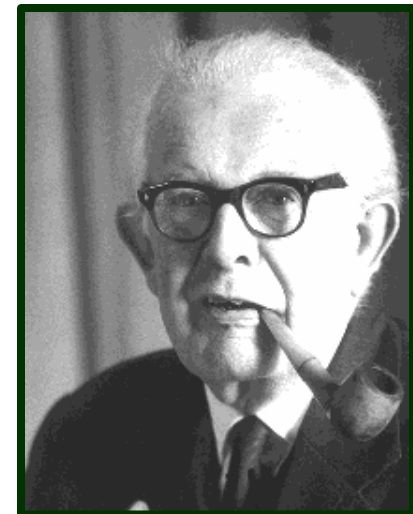
- Suggested all learning is contextually and socially mediated.
- Believed intellectual development is the result of interaction with the environment .
- Social interaction with adults or more knowledgeable peers influences the level of performance exhibited by an individual.
- Scaffolding



# Educational Theorists

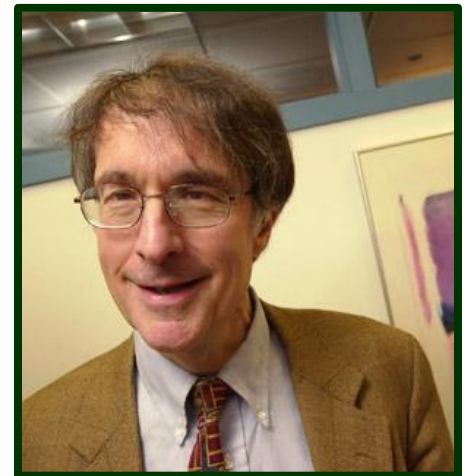
## *Jean Piaget* (1896-1980)

- Learning as a constructivist activity.
- The notion that children often perceive their world in a way that is qualitatively different from adults.
- Developmental stages of Piaget are sometimes controversial but important.
- He believed that at specific ages children are developing in certain ways.



# Educational Theorists

- *Howard Gardner* (1943- )
  - Theory of Multiple Intelligences.
  - Multiple ways of knowing and processing information.
  - Education should celebrate and embrace diverse learners by respecting the different ways of accessing and processing information.
  - Verbal-Linguistic, Logical-Mathematical, Visual-Spatial, Body-Kinesthetic, Musical-Rhythmic, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Naturalist, and existential.





# Educational Theory

- **Constructivism**  
Student centered in which the learners construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through experience and reflection. Developmentally-appropriate facilitator-supported learning that is initiated and directed by the learner.
- **Behaviorism (Didactic/Expository)**  
Teacher centered with a PASSIVE student. Memorization acts as a tool to build knowledge in a hierarchical manner.
- **Discovery based**  
Student centered as they build upon experiences by discovery, focusing on the task and not the subject.



# Educational Strategies

- Object-Based Learning
- Inquiry-Based Learning
- Visual Thinking Strategies

# Educational Strategies

## Object-Based Learning

- Look directly at an object, i.e. a sculpture or painting, artifact or advertisement, primary document or ritual object.
- Use a myriad of questions to discover its role and importance in our world - past, present and future.
- Objects are used to initiate discussion, as well as make connections to the learner's own experiences.

# Object-Based Learning

Why is it beneficial?

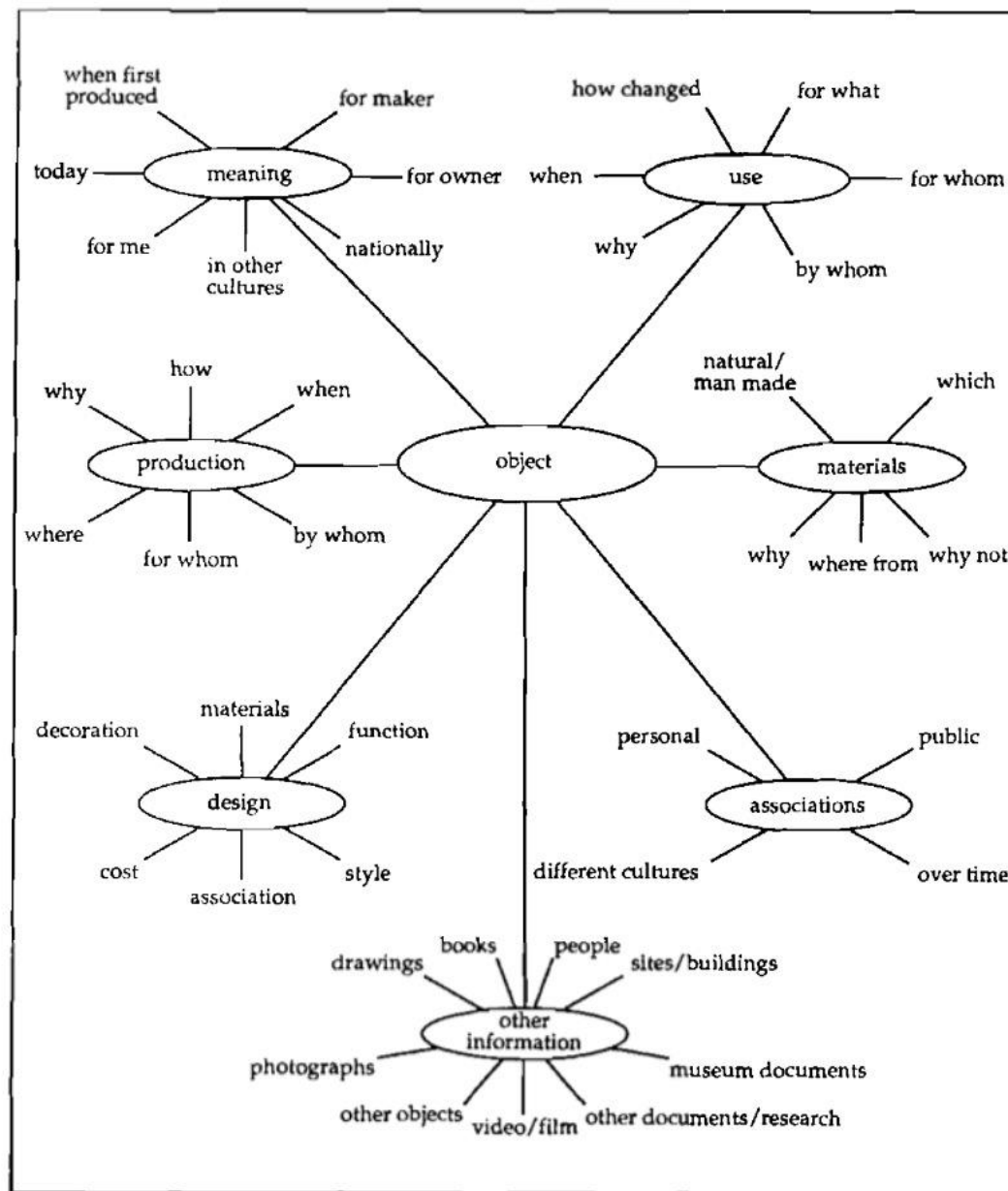
What are the advantages over lecture format?



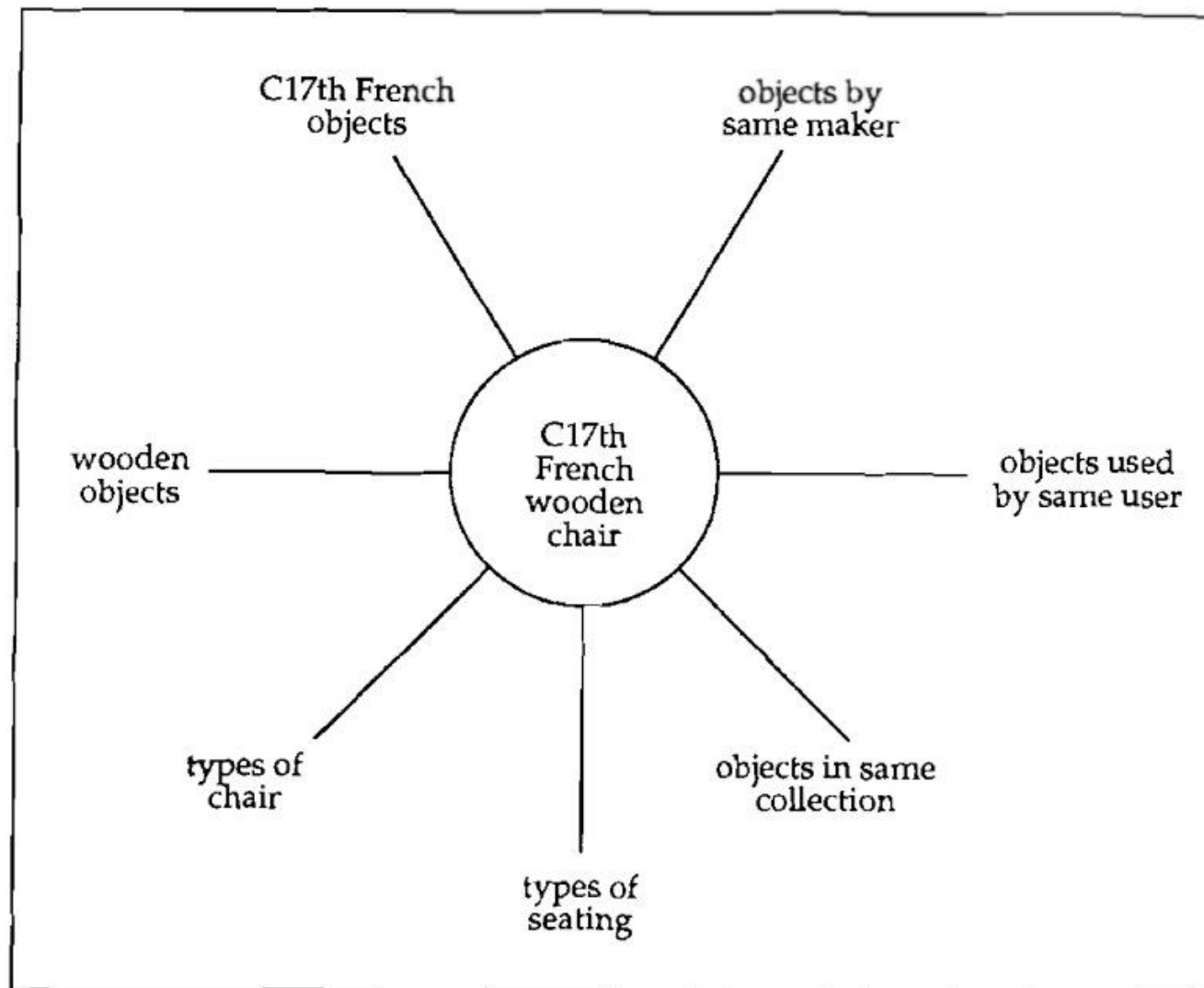
# Object-Based Learning

- Objects can have more than one meaning
- Study of objects enables relationships to be made between **culture, technology, people, social structures, the past, present and future**





**Figure 11.3** Analysis, discussion and research, combined with sensory data, can be used to explore the object in depth.



**Figure 11.1** The various themes and meanings stimulated by one specific object can be manipulated and controlled by the other things with which it is grouped.

# Object-Based Learning: Building the Story

- Avoid an early end to the lesson
- What's that?

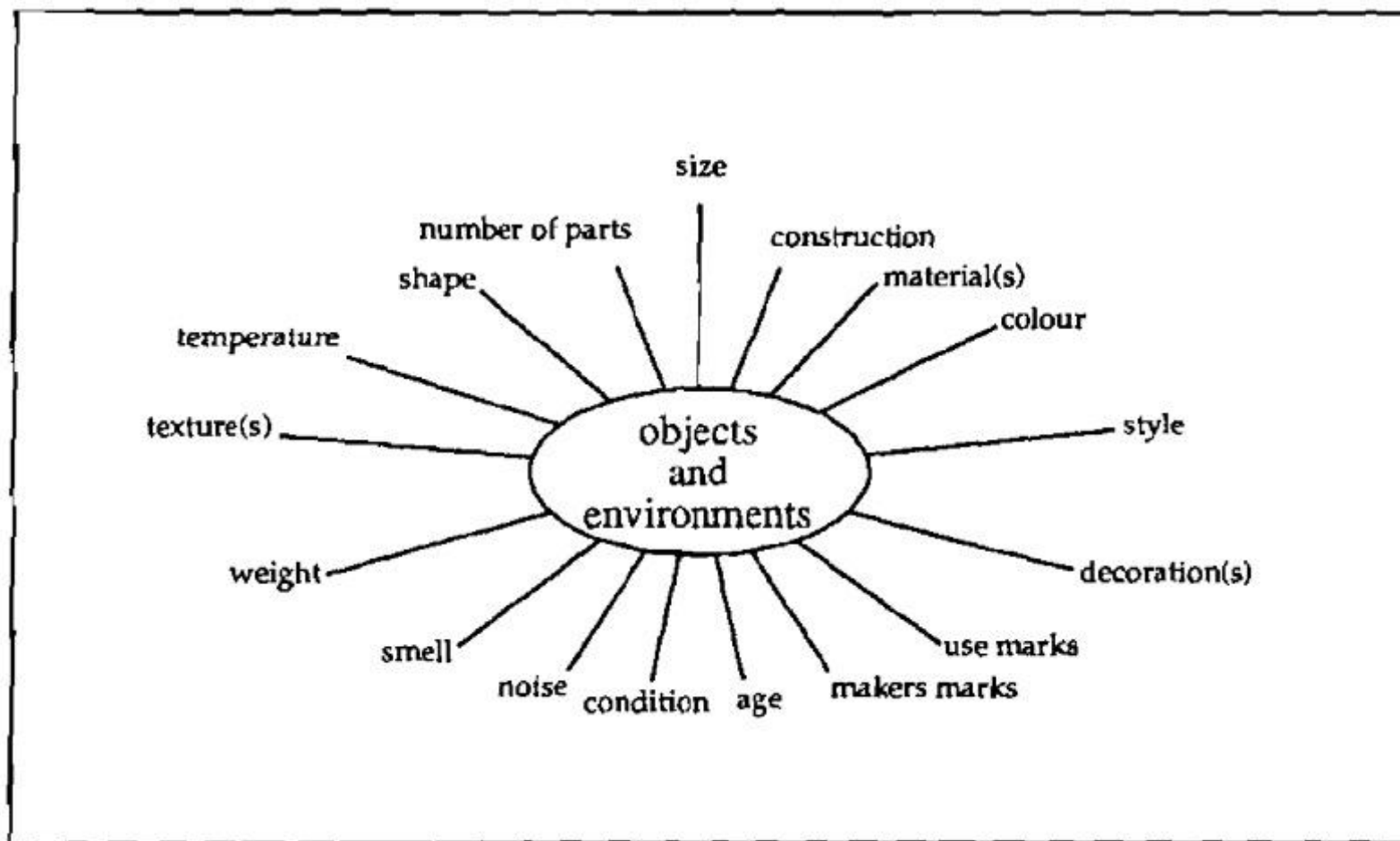


# Object-Based Learning: Suggested Questions

- How many parts does the object have?
- Who made it and why?
- What has happened to this object since then?







**Figure 11.2** Touching, looking, listening, smelling, and (occasionally) tasting can be used in the preliminary exploration of objects and environments.

# Object-Based Learning: Video

Video - National Museum of American History,  
Smithsonian Institution

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zOE7u\\_QVxFo&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zOE7u_QVxFo&feature=youtu.be)

# Object-Based Learning: Activity

- Break into groups (one object per table)
- Complete your group's object study sheet.
- Then discuss the following as a group:
  - What can we learn from this object?
  - What themes can be explored?
  - What else can be paired with your group's object to tell a story?

# Educational Strategies

## Inquiry-Based Learning

- An instructional method developed during the discovery learning movement of the 1960s.
- It was developed in response to a perceived failure of more traditional forms of instruction.
- Inquiry learning is a form of active learning.
- Progress is assessed by how well students develop experimental and analytical skills rather than how much knowledge they possess.



# Inquiry-Based Learning

- A student-centered, active learning approach focusing on questioning, critical thinking and problem solving.
- “Tell me and I forget, show me and I remember, involve me and I understand”
- Changing the focus from “what we know” to an emphasis on “how we come to know”

# Inquiry-Based Learning

- Employing the Constructivist theory
- Students have pre-existing knowledge
- By allowing students to express that pre-existing knowledge through questioning, they effectively build upon previous knowledge to gain understanding
- Students can form their own foundation

# Inquiry-Based Learning

- Who here has visited this historic site? Who here has visited any historic site? What do you think we will see?
- Where are we? How was this place used, how do you know, and why is it important?



# Inquiry-Based Learning in the Classroom

- Approach or introduce specific topics with open-ended questions
- Refer back to student responses as a way to keep them connected to the material

# Educational Strategies

## Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS)

The Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) is a teaching method and school curriculum that centers on open-ended yet highly-structured discussions of visual art, significantly increasing students' critical thinking, language and literacy skills along the way.

- VTS is the result of more than 15 years of collaboration between cognitive psychologist Abigail Housen, and veteran museum educator Philip Yenawine.

# Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS)

VTS is a student-centered curriculum in which students examine and discuss works of art, prompted by questions selected to support careful, evidentiary looking.

VTS Questions:

1. What's going on in this picture?
2. What do you see that makes you say that?
3. What more can we find?



# Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS)

During VTS Lessons:

- All Students must have ample opportunity to point out what they see in the art they examine and express their opinions about it.
- Students must know that their thoughts are heard, understood, and valued.
- Students must provide evidence to explain their interpretive comments.
- Students must see that each comment contributes to the group process of mining the art for multiple meanings.



# Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS)

*“Sometimes when we do VTS it feels like the class is teaching ourselves.”*

– Elementary Student (quote from the VTS homepage)

Video - “A Discussion with Fourth Grade Students”

<https://vimeo.com/9678839>

# Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS)

- What was the facilitator doing during this VTS session?
- What did you notice about the group?
- What stood out to you during this session?

# VTS Practice Session



(Credit: Hamilton College Library)

# VTS Practice Session

Image Caption:

Mount Lebanon Laundry

Mount Lebanon Shaker Community, New York

The Shaker Collection, Hamilton College Library



## VTS Practice Session 2



# VTs Practice Session

Image Caption:

Shaker Meeting House

Photographer, Lester Jones

August 24, 1940

Historic American Buildings Survey,

Library of Congress

# Additional Resources

- <http://picturingamerica.neh.gov/>
- <http://www.loc.gov/teachers>
- <http://www.vtshome.org/>





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## Contact Information

Maggie McAdams

Assistant Program Manager

[mmcadams@shakervillageky.org](mailto:mmcadams@shakervillageky.org)

Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill

3501 Lexington Road

Harrodsburg, KY 40330

(859) 734-5411

[www.shakervillageky.org](http://www.shakervillageky.org)