

March of the Museums 2021 – BCK Video 1 Shoe Stories Learning from Objects

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c1EsgHmKvrc&t=87s>

Hi everyone, I'm Karla, Program Coordinator with Beyond Classrooms Kingston, and I'm really excited to talk to you today about learning from objects. Our other video, *Step Into Sketching*, will show you techniques on how to get started with drawing. But in this video, I'm going to show you how to slow down, look closely, and write about objects. These are really important skills that anyone can learn with time and practice.

Beyond Classrooms Kingston—or BCK, as we call it—gives elementary students a chance to spend a full week in a museum. They spend a week meeting experts and have lots of opportunities to explore the museum or gallery. Museums and galleries are great places to learn in our community. Did you know that Kingston has over 35 museums, galleries, and historic sites? Have you had a chance to visit them?

If you have been to a museum, you may have noticed that they have collections of art objects or artifacts. Why do you think museums collect objects and artifacts? Why are they important? Well, objects are an important part of museums because they're like windows into the past. They can connect us to a moment in time or to a life of a person who lived long ago. But objects cannot tell us who used them, how old they are, or why they are important. That's up to people to figure out.

We can use our skills to try to find out the stories behind the artifacts though, and that's what we're going to practice doing today. We're going to use an example of a shoe and show you how you can get started at looking closely, finding evidence, and asking questions so that you can start to understand the stories behind the objects.

After this video, you will have a chance to practice your skills. Use our activity guide and complete the activities to sketch and write about some mysterious shoes from local museums. One of the ways students journal during BCK is using the "See, Think, Wonder" method, and that's what I'm going to show you today using this shoe.

Let's get started with "see." Can you use your sense—in this case, your sight—to describe what you see? Make as many observations as you can. Imagine you had to describe this shoe to someone who couldn't see it. What would you say?

You might want to pause the video and jot down some of your observations. Look closely. Can you tell me about the color of the shoe? How about the size—how big is it?

Can you tell me about the shape? What about the material—what's it made from, or materials if there's more than one?

How about the design or the pattern? Do you see any symbols or lines?

And really importantly, can you tell me if there's any signs of damage or wear? Is it worn down in any way?

Finally, do you see any maker's marks or any writing that might give you clues on who made it? You might want to write your observations around your sketch or add them as labels. The key is to describe the object so someone can really imagine what you are seeing.

You'll notice the longer that you look at the object, the more that you see. So, take your time. I see blue and gray and black on this shoe, with some yellow designs. If I look at the label, I can see it is 26 and a half centimetres long—or a size 10.

And for shape, it's long and kind of oval, in the shape of a foot.

It looks to be made of canvas, with rubber, leather on it as well, and some rope material for the lace.

See, it has a crisscross design or pattern with blue and black lines. And it looks to be very worn, with lots of signs of damage.

The bottom is very smooth, with the grips worn right down, and there are pieces of material on top that are peeling.

And for writing or maker's mark, I do see some writing here. It says DuoMax on the heel, and look here—it's very worn, but I can see the word Asics written on the bottom. And, there's a symbol of an "A" here as well.

Great job looking closely to jot down what you see.

Next, I want you to put on your thinking caps, and like a detective, I want you to think about the shoe.

We made some great observations—now let's use them and our knowledge and past experience to try to figure out some of the "W" questions.

So—who made or used this shoe? What was it used for? Where is it from? When was it used? And why is it important?

It's also great to say how you might connect to this object. Why did you choose this shoe? What does it remind you of? Have you seen anything like it before? Do you have any connections to the shoe?

Now here are some of my guesses based on what I see and some of my connections.

I think an adult might have used this shoe based on the size of the shoe. And I think that maker's mark tells me that the shoe was made by a company called Asics.

I don't know exactly what it was used for, but I'm gonna guess that it was used outdoors based on how worn it is. And, if I look closely, I can see there's dirt in the grooves, and so maybe it was used for running or sports or even work outdoors.

I'm not sure where it's from, but I have a connection. I've seen a lot of Asics shoes sold in stores here in Ontario, so it's possible it's from here—but it is also possible it's from somewhere outside of Ontario, as Asics sell shoes everywhere. And actually, if I look closely at this label here, I see that the shoe was made in China.

We're really lucky to have a label on this object. Many mystery objects, like older artifacts, don't have that information.

I don't see any dates that show me when the shoe was made, but I can tell just from looking at the style—it's similar to shoes that I've seen in the last 10 years or so. So that's just based on my connection to other running shoes.

Now that final question—why is it important?

Well, I think that this shoe was really important to the person that wore it. It protected their feet and perhaps allowed them to do important chores or work outside. And perhaps it allowed them to run or walk many kilometers—that would give them really good exercise or get them from one place to another. So, it kept their feet warm and dry and protected them from rocks. So, I know how important my shoes are to me as well.

I don't know that this shoe belonged to anyone famous, but it can tell us something about the culture and time it's from. It doesn't look like it's from long ago, so you might not think it's very unique or interesting right now—but imagine it's 100 years from now, and it's the only shoe of its kind left.

What would someone in the future learn from today by studying this shoe? It could show what materials were available, how shoes were manufactured or made—whether it was a factory or handmade. It could show style, and even what climate or weather conditions were required for someone to wear this kind of protective footwear. It could maybe show what sports or activities that people participated in at this time. So, an object like a shoe can teach us so much about a period in time—including culture, attitude, and values.

Did you know there's an entire museum dedicated to the history of shoes? The Bata Shoe Museum houses the world's largest collection of shoes, with over 14,000 artifacts spanning over 4,500 years of history.

Okay everyone, you've done a great job listing your observations and thinking about the shoe.

Now for the last part—it's time to wonder. What questions do you have about the shoe? If you could ask any question to the person who owned or made the shoe, what would you ask them? Try to have at least two questions—but I'm sure you're going to have more.

Your questions and wonders are a really important part of figuring out the story behind things and helping you to learn more. Don't underestimate the power of a great question.

There are so many questions you might have for someone who owned an object like a shoe. An interesting project in the UK called the Empathy Museum created art installations and a podcast called *A Mile in My Shoes*. So here, visitors can exchange their shoes temporarily for a pair in the museum's collections. So, you can walk around the museum and listen to a story on headphones of the person who owned the shoes. You could learn all about their life—how cool is that?

Now back to your questions—I challenge you to think of your next steps to finding out more for those questions. This is an important part of the inquiry process. For example, if I could ask the person who owned this shoe any question, it would be:

How long did you wear this shoe for? I'm curious because it looks really well worn to me—but maybe that's just because of the way the shoe was made or the activities that happened in the shoe. I might be able to ask the person who gave me the shoe that question. But if I couldn't, maybe I can do some research to find out when the shoe was made.

Remember—I have some good clues from the label here.

And I could maybe research the Asics website, or check the shoe museum, or even ask someone at a shoe store to find out more. Asking experts and research is a big part of BCK.

That brings me to the end of the See, Think, Wonder approach to learning about objects. Now it's up to you to apply the skills you've learned when looking at another object.

Check out our activity guide to find three pairs of mystery shoes from local museums.

What can you observe about these shoes? And what questions do you have? They all have interesting stories to tell. Remember, everyone can get started with sketching and observing objects—so relax and have fun. The reason we study objects is to slow down, look closely, and remember.

To learn more about BCK, check out our website: **beyondclassrooms.ca**. Thanks so much for joining us.