

Gallery Talk #1
Open-Ended Questioning Techniques
December 2 and 9, 2015

For your first gallery talk you will lead a **7-minute** discussion during which you will use open-ended questions to engage your group in a dialogue about one object. You will present your object to a small group of classmates and a staff member on December 2 or December 9.

This talk will help you become aware of circumstances you will encounter in the galleries (placement of objects, group management, acoustics, distractions, etc.) and help you feel comfortable using questions to engage visitors in a meaningful discussion. Think of yourself as a group facilitator rather than a lecturer.

Once you have chosen an object, look for a way it connects to something in your life: a passion, a story, an incident, a special or ordinary object inspired by similar ideas/images. You may include one prop (actual item or photo) that makes a connection to your interest (but no works of art). After asking a few description and interpretation questions, use your connection to help viewers elicit similar associations in their lives.

Example #1: The Greek Hydria depicts a story from Greek mythology. What dish/vessel do you own that has a story to go with it? Show and tell us briefly. Ask your group if they own an object with a special story.

Example #2: The Roman Matron has a “seasoned” face with a youthful body. Have you had a photo touched up or taken a “glamour shot?” Ask your group if they’ve done something similar.

1. This assignment does not require doing a lot of research. Your focus for this first presentation should be on the process and techniques used in preparing and presenting works of art. You will be doing more complete research on objects as training progresses. Your second gallery talk and your check-out tour will require you to conduct research.

Instead, spend time in the gallery looking closely at this object and getting to know it visually. You will find you (and your audience) can discover a lot just by looking! You may want to try drawing the object. The process of sketching often reveals things you might not have noticed otherwise. Devote your time and energy to developing open-ended questions to be used with your object.

2. Use the label and website information to help you develop appropriate questions specific to the object. You may also integrate some of the key points from this information into your discussion of the object.
3. Develop 4-6 open-ended questions that will focus your group, provide opportunities for careful observation, and allow for interesting discussion. Refer to the materials provided in class for help with developing and sequencing questions (description, interpretation, association). You may want to “test” your questions on friends, family, or classmates as you develop them to see if they will produce a variety of responses.

You may not get to ask all your questions during your allotted time, but it is important to have backup questions ready in case you need them.

What about using pure VTS?

Because of the complexity, cultural/religious specificity and minimal narrative content of many of these objects, pure VTS (where no information is given unless the audience asks) is not the best strategy for this gallery talk. Audiences will have a hard time making an accurate reading of many of these objects using pure VTS. You will need to provide some contextual information (things that cannot be figured out just by looking) for your group to gain an accurate understanding of the object.

4. As you begin your presentation, focus your group by pointing out the object you will be discussing and by allowing them time to look before asking your first question. Don't be afraid of silence!
5. Be flexible and let the discussion take its natural course. When possible, ask follow-up questions that take into account your audience's interests and observations. Actively listen to your audience's comments and questions. Use pointing and other kinds of body language to show you are listening and understanding what each person is saying. Keep the dialogue going with new questions and by paraphrasing and linking ideas.
6. Judiciously integrate information about the object that is relevant to the ideas being raised by audience members in response to your open-ended questions. Take your cues from the things that interest them. Resist the temptation to tell everything you know about the object. You should not be the only one talking!
7. Do your best to keep track of time during your presentation. You will be given a 2-minute cue when that much time is remaining. If your talk exceeds seven minutes, you will be asked to finish up so we can complete all the scheduled talks.
8. Conclude your talk with a *brief* summary (one or two sentences) that reinforces some of the key ideas that emerged during the discussion.
9. Immediately following your talk, a staff member and audience members will offer feedback/coaching and give you a chance to ask questions and share discoveries.
10. Be creative and have fun with this! We are all here to support and encourage you!

Object list for December 2

Egypt, False Door, 52.22

Roman copy of a Greek original, Doryphoros,
86.6

China, Storage Jar, Majiayao type, 2003.103

Rome, Portrait Bust, 2008.28.1

Maya, Vase with Monkeys, 2000.195

Object list for December 9

Egypt, Coffin and Cartonnage of Lady Tashat,
16.414

Veracruz, Ballgame yoke, 41.72

Olmec Mask, 2002.127

Greece, Tiber Muse, 56.12

Syria, Elephant Attacking a Feline, 69.49.2

December 2, 2015
GALLERY TALK #1
OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES

SIGN UP FOR ONE OBJECT TO PRESENT

Egypt, False Door, 52.22

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Roman copy of Greek original, Doryphoros
86.6

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

China, Storage Jar, Majiayao type, 2003.103

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Rome, Portrait Bust, 2008.28.1

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Maya, Vase with Monkeys, 2000.195

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December 9, 2015
GALLERY TALK #1
OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES

SIGN UP FOR ONE OBJECT TO PRESENT

Egypt, Lady Tashat, 16.414

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Veracruz, Ballgame yoke, 41.72

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Olmec Mask, 2002.127

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Greece, Tiber Muse, 56.12

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Syria, Elephant Attacking a Feline, 69.49.2

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