

MOHAI Introductions to Primary Source Analysis are a great way to introduce students to the different ways they can use primary sources (objects, documents, photos, or other materials from the time period you are studying) when learning about history. By looking closely at things people make and/or use, we can learn all sorts of information about their lives and the past. Our Artifact Analysis Worksheet is a helpful tool for looking at historical objects. It encourages close looking and historical thinking by asking questions about what you see, think, and wonder about an object. Here is how you could use the Artifact Analysis Worksheet to explore objects in the MOHAI online collection.

Introducing "Hairshirt: I Love Dick's," by Dorothy Rissman, 2008



Property of Museum of History & Industry

<https://digitalcollections.lib.washington.edu/digital/collection/imismohai/id/15050/rec/199>

We've been thinking a lot about the measures restaurants have been taking to stay safe and stay in business right now, including switching to take-out only, so we chose one of our favorite items that was on display in the MOHAI exhibit *Edible City* to practice with. There are many different kinds of objects that can be looked at as an artifact, including works of art!

After taking a first look, use the starter questions in the Artifact Analysis Worksheet to make detailed observations. For example:

- What materials is this made out of? burger wrappers (foil) and cowhide, maybe thread.
- What is its shape, size? It is shaped like a jacket, with lapels, and looks adult-sized.
- What colors do you see? Brown and white on the fur, with orange and copper foil.

Next, what questions do your observations inspire? Come up with as many as you can!

Maybe you have questions about what you see:

- What is interesting or unusual about how this item was put together?
- What are the containers at the bottom of the picture?
- The description mentions it is made of French fries, where are they?

Maybe you have questions about its design as a garment:

- How would it feel to wear this item? Would it be comfortable?
- Would you wear this if you could? Is the style appealing to you?
- Do you think this item was ever worn?

What questions do you have about it as a work of art?

- How did the artist acquire all of these wrappers?
- Why is it titled “Hair Shirt”?
- Is there any kind of emotion that this item makes you feel? Do the colors or patterns suggest a certain mood?
- What are other works this artist has made? Where can I find images of them?
- How have other artists used recycled materials or trash?

What Seattle history questions does it inspire?

- What was going on at the time/place this work of art was made?
- How long has Dick’s been around?
- When were drive through and fast food restaurants invented? Why?

What does it make you want to know about the world around you?

- How much trash does Seattle produce? Where does it go?
- What do your family members think or feel about eating meat or fast food?

Suggested extension activities

Once you’ve made as many observations and asked as many questions, what to do next?

- Try to research some of the questions you can’t figure out by observation alone! What other resources can you use to find answers?

- Use these questions to look at something your family has chosen to keep or preserve. What parts of this object's story can you figure out through observation? Who can you ask to find out more about where this object came from? Why is it important to them?
- Use the same questions with a random household item as if you are an alien archaeologist who has never encountered this item before! What can this object tell you about the people who created or used it?
- Make your own creative fashion statement! Create a garment out of something you don't usually use for clothing, or wear clothing in a new way. Put on a fashion show!
- Find some materials in your home that are unused or will be thrown away. Look at them carefully, hold and move them, and imagine what other purposes they could serve. What new creations can you make out of these household materials?
- Write a thank-you letter to local food service workers!