



**Grade/s:** 10 – 12

**Enduring Idea:** Meaning and Objects

**Integrated Discipline:** ELA

**Unit Title:** The Object of My Abstraction

**Unit Designer:** Lane Laney

**Unit Description:** Artists often play off of the idea of intention and function. Through the abstraction, placement, and fusion of familiar objects, artists dare viewers to rethink ideas like meaning, value, and purpose. Within this unit, learners will explore the meaning of objects and how they change once they have been appropriated for art.

**Images:** "Arm chair," Wenzel Friedrich (1990.12)  
"Snail," "Fire," Yamaguchi Ryuun (2007.15.1; 2007.16.1)  
"Food, Clothing, Shelter," Laurie Simmons (1997.5.1-3)  
"#1A Gift Kodak Camera and Case," Walter Dorwin Teague (1996.7a-c)  
"Iron Maiden Teapot," Michael Sherrill (1995.12)

**Key Concept:** Objects as mediums for expression

**Essential Question:** Do objects have more meaning once they become art?

**CCSS Art:** VAH2-1.4 Apply materials, techniques, and processes with skill, confidence, techniques, and processes in works of visual art. and sensitivity sufficient to make his or her intentions observable in the artwork that he or she creates.  
VAH2-3.2 Analyze and describe the relationships among subject matter, symbols, and themes in communicating intended meaning in his or her artworks and the works of others.  
VAH2-3.3 Select and effectively use subject matter, symbols, and ideas to communicate meaning through his or her artworks.

**Integrated CCSS:** CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

**Learning Outcomes:** The learners will...

- discuss the ways in which an object's meaning is altered by placement and abstraction
- produce thumbnail sketches for at least five abstractions of a chosen object
- create an armature for their sculpture using wire/mesh, newspaper, tape, etc.
- skillfully apply plaster gauze to the armature to build a thoughtful abstraction of their chosen object
- Compose a reflection, explaining how their specific abstraction affected the meaning, value, or purpose of the object

**Motivator:** The teacher will display a photo of a toilet and ask the learners, "Is this art?" Following a brief discussion, the teacher will display "Soft Toilet." The learners will discuss how the materials used to create the sculpture affected its form and meaning. While looking at the other images from the CMA, the learners will explore how artists manipulate the meaning and function of everyday objects by changing their form, scale, and placement (i.e., in a museum).

**Day Breakdown:** Day 1 - Motivator (see above)

Day 2 - The learners will create a list of objects and briefly brainstorm the meaning, value, and purpose of each object. They will choose a single object and create at least five sketches of proposed abstractions (i.e., melting, crumbling, folding, morphing into another object, growing spikes or limbs, etc.).

Day 3 - The teacher will demonstrate how to build an armature for a sculpture using a variety of materials (Wire, wire mesh, newspaper, masking tapes, aluminum foil). It can be explained as the construction of a skeleton and muscular system so that when adding the plaster gauze, it's just as easy as wrapping the

"skin" around the body of the form. The learners will begin constructing their armatures using materials carefully and efficiently.

Day 4 - The teacher will demonstrate how to use plaster/plaster gauze. Warm water can be placed in buckets at tables. The plaster gauze can be cut to the best size and shape for covering specific areas or building up forms. Before application, the gauze should be submersed in warm water and smoothed between two fingers to soften and blend the plaster. The wet gauze is layered onto the armature and carefully BLENDED. Once the gauze is dry, regular plaster-of-paris can be mixed and blended over the gauze for a smoother appearance. When completely dry, the learners should wear a mask and sand the sculpture outside of the art room. Sanding is not necessary if roughness is part of the intended abstraction.

Days 5, 6, 7 - The learners will work on the form of their sculpture.

Days 8, 9 - The learners will use acrylic, tempera, or spray paint to add color to their sculpture. Simple substances and materials such as paper or sand can be added to the surface with acrylic gel medium for an added textural quality.

Day 10 - The class will participate in a formal critique. The learners will make any desired changes following the critique.

Day 11 - The learners will write a reflection on their concept and process. The reflection should include details about why they selected the object and how their abstraction affected the value, meaning, or purpose of the original object.

**Materials:** Armature materials (wire, wire mesh, masking tape, duct tape, aluminum foil, newspaper, etc.), wire cutters, pliers, plaster gauze, buckets, warm water,

scissors, plaster-of-paris, putty knives or palette knives for applying plaster-of-paris, masks, sandpaper, acrylic/tempera/or spray paint, clear coat or acrylic gel medium

**Resources:** "Soft Toilet," Claes Oldenburg

- <http://whitney.org/ForKids/Collection/ClaesOldenburg/7983aB>

<http://voices.yahoo.com/sculptor-claes-oldenburg-2240824.html> (Analysis)

**Assessment:** Participation in the motivator and the written reflection will be assessed using checklists. The final sculpture will be assessed using a rubric that analyzes planning and construction.