

### **Writing About Artifacts**

Prior to the session, ask students to bring in an artifact that is meaningful to them in their lives outside of school.

Engage them in a series of five-minute free writes, using the following prompts (some groups may do better with fewer prompts) :

1. Describe the artifact objectively so that someone who could not see it would get a good visual picture of it. Your aim is to be very objective and precise in your description.
2. What questions could you ask about this artifact? (These should be genuine questions.)
3. Describe the artifact in use, in context. What stories does it remind you of?
4. Write about the significance of the artifact to you now as you look back on the time or the relationship or the activity or whatever it represents.
5. Free associate, using the artifact as a base and coming back to it. You might return to describing the artifact if you run out of things to write until another idea occurs to you.
6. Tell a story about the artifact.

Use these writings as the basis for a paper.

### **Critical Stances Related to Artifacts**

These questions can lead to thinking about artifacts in terms of their place in the global economy. They can help students to consider artifacts critically.

- a. Value—reconsidering types of value—What is the value of this object? What kinds of value could we look at?
- b. Timescale—historical and personal—where does this object fit into our cultural history? Into our personal history
- c. Space—what spaces has it occupied? Where has it traveled?
- d. Production—who made it or found it and under what conditions?
- e. Mode—How could we describe its feel, shape, dimensions, etc.?
- f. Relations to institutions of power—How does this object relate to global or local institutions of power? Who controls the artifact and its attendant communities?