

# Garden Object-based Learning Model: Using Visual Evidence to “Read” a Garden Object, or Feature

## 2019 Garden Docent Training

### Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens

This framework, taken from material culture studies, is designed to organize garden object-specific information. (Material culture studies uses objects to understand people.) Each section of the framework answers certain questions. These questions aim to get at the main points you want to convey to your audience about your garden object, also known as a feature. The questions use visual evidence (what you can see) to illustrate your points. Make sure your visitors can see what you are describing, and use visual language to focus your visitors’ attention. Use this framework to capture and organize your observations and ideas.

This framework is versatile, and can also be used to analyze a garden room, as rooms can be “read” as an object. To use the framework in this way, simply substitute the word feature for garden in the questions below.

Name of Feature\* \_\_\_\_\_

\*plant, stones, water feature, statuary, hardscaping, furniture, vista, etc.

Location of Feature \_\_\_\_\_

Year or Time Period Created \_\_\_\_\_

**Look carefully at this feature, or garden object. Describe the physical aspects that you see.**

Think about what you can detect with your senses: sight, sound, smell, and touch in particular. Think about what you can tell about its color, shape, stillness/movement, pattern, texture, line (curvy, straight, etc.), materials it is made from, and symmetry/asymmetry.

**What emotions, moods, or ideas does this feature convey? How are those emotions, moods, or ideas conveyed by the feature?**

**For plant features only: what do its physical aspects suggest to you about this plant?** Think about its desirability in this garden, its native habitat, or its biology.

**For plant features only: what function do the physical aspects of this plant serve?** Think about functions such as protection, reproduction, nutrition gathering, or ornamentation.

**Why did the designer and/or Marjorie Post use this feature in the garden?** Think about the influence of the designer/owner’s intent and the social/cultural context of the garden feature or the garden’s function, design, and meaning.

**What statement was Marjorie Post or is the museum making by maintaining or collecting this feature?** Think about the choice of style, and its relationship to other gardens and the Mansion. **Is this statement intentional?**

**What personal meaning or contemporary relevance do you find in this feature?**