

**Guidelines for Developing a Five Minute Object Lesson**  
**2019 Garden Docent Training**  
**Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens**

Follow these steps when developing a five minute object lesson.

**1. Identify the audience.**

- a. For training purposes, it is helpful to think about the audience as a group of typical Hillwood visitors, i.e. intelligent, curious adults with little to no knowledge of the lesson's subject.
- b. Review the "Learners and Learning" handout and "The Visitors' Bill of Rights" to think about the audiences' needs.

**2. Choose the object and identify its location in the garden.**

- a. Please choose an object in a room that is on the tour and is one we have already covered in class. Those rooms include: motor court, French parterre, Japanese-style garden, Friendship Walk/Overlook, putting green, Lunar Lawn, and rose garden.
- b. You will present this lesson outdoors in the garden room, before darkness falls.
- c. Think about location—is there enough/convenient space for a small group to gather? How well can the object be seen?
- d. Consider the strength of the story the object has to tell when choosing an object. There is no list of required or approved objects provided by Hillwood.
- e. Many choose objects that they believe they will include on their tour.
- f. It is fine if several docents-in-training present lessons about the same object. Take the pressure off yourself to find a "unique" object.

**3. "Read" the object.**

- a. Brainstorm what you see and what you know about the object.
- b. A good framework to help you brainstorm is the "Garden Object-Based Learning Model: Using Visual Evidence to "Read" a Garden Object, or Feature" worksheet. You have a completed worksheets for the French parterre's boxwood, and for the feature you chose for your homework.
- c. Do the research you need to do. Research should pull strongly from the training resources like the readings, lectures, handouts, and class notes.

**4. Distill the brainstorm down to the big ideas about its design, function, and relationship to Marjorie Post and the museum's mission in caring and preserving the object today.**

**5. Write your objective(s)—what you want your audience to be able to do better at the end of the lesson.**

- a. Your objectives should be written like the ones on each training class's agenda or "above the line" on the example lesson plan for Diana.
  - i. Begin the list of objectives with this phrase: "As a result of participating in this lesson, participants will be better able to:...."
- b. Objectives should be clear, defined, and use active verbs.
- c. They should describe observable behaviors will take place and indicate that learning has happened.

**6. Develop and then refine a list of questions** that will move the lesson forward: the "body" of the conversation.

- a. You can see examples of questions in the example lesson plan for Diana.

**7. Develop an introduction with two parts.**

- a. The first part of the introduction is the advance organizer. It does three things:
  - i. finds out a bit of what the audience knows (Like asking, “Who has been here before?”)
  - ii. it gives them a brief overview of what they will be doing (you can consider this your theme)
  - iii. arouses their curiosity or challenges them to think (often, hook questions do this!)
- b. The second part of the introduction is a good “hook” question—one that grabs their attention; it can be before or after your advance organizer.
- c. You can see an example of an introduction and its two parts in the lesson plan for Diana.

**8. Write a solid conclusion with two parts.**

- a. First summarize succinctly the experience, referencing the objective(s).
- b. Second ask a question that assesses what the visitors will take away from your lesson. Their answers will help you understand how well the objectives were met.
  - i. This may feel superfluous now with such a short lesson, but will become more helpful asking after a sixty minute tour.
  - ii. A good question can be: What is one important idea you will take away from this discussion?
- c. You can see an example of a conclusion and its two parts in the lesson plan for Diana.

**9. Write a lesson plan for your object lesson putting all these steps together.** This written lesson plan will be submitted to Lisa and Audra.

- a. Follow the structure of the written lesson plan for Diana as an example, as well as reference the template document distributed at the object lesson workshop class.
- b. Choose a style for your lesson plan: script-like (like Diana), bullet points, or outline format.
- c. A written lesson plan will include these sections, which should be labeled:
  - i. Description of the audience
  - ii. Basic object information and its location
  - iii. Objectives (As a result of participating in this lesson, visitors will be better able to:....) that are clear, defined, and use active verbs
  - iv. An two-part introduction with an advance organizer and hook question
  - v. The sequence of questions (and distilled answers) in “the body”
  - vi. Big ideas about design, function, and relationship to Marjorie Post and the museum’s mission in caring and preserving the object today
  - vii. A two-part conclusion with a summary and evaluative question

**10. Practice, practice, practice.** Time the lesson so that it doesn’t exceed the time requirement. Tips include: practice out loud, in front of a mirror, record yourself and watch the recording, leave time for answers.

**11. After the lesson plan is presented, assess how it went.** A Self-Assessment Worksheet will be provided for this purpose. Determine how those assessments influence your next lesson plan (for your room demonstration).