

**Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens  
2022-2023 Mansion Docent Training  
Relating the “Estate-Collection-Collector” and “Style-Function-Production”  
Frameworks**

**What is an “interpretative framework”?**

*Interpretation* = an educational activity that aims to *reveal meanings and relationships* rather than simply to communicate factual information. (Tilden, 1977)

*Framework* = a network or outline that can be used to organize information, perceptions, and experiences.

**Why do we use a framework?**

Cognition, or the mental activities of thinking, understanding, learning, and remembering, is a process of forming logical structures for comprehending and analyzing experiences. (Piaget)

Information that fits into a system of organization is better understood, learned, and retained. (Ausubel, 1968; Anserdon and Bower, 1983; Rumelhart and Ortony, 1977)

The talks by the collections and interpretation staff about Hillwood’s collections and founder are resources, not models for tours. Using an interpretative framework gives you a structure for organizing and remembering information from these talks. In turn, interpretive frameworks are the structures of your object and room lessons and your tour, so that visitors have a way to organize the experience.

## Estate-Collection-Collector

This framework is designed to organize “big picture” information – entire tours and room treatments. In general, this framework provides an introduction (estate), body (collection), and conclusion (collector). This framework of intro-body-conclusion is one most of us instilled from our formal education.

## Style-Function-Production

This framework, taken from material culture studies, is designed to organize object-specific information. Material culture studies use objects to understand people. As illustrated below, the “Style-Function-Production” framework fits within the “Estate-Collection-Collector” framework.

### Estate

Marjorie Post and others who opened their houses as collector’s museums meant for their collections to be enjoyed and understood in the context of the rooms that contain them.

- The time to: transition from last room to this one; settle-in; and then focus on this new room.
- Introduce visitors to the room—its interior design and other pertinent information.
- When appropriate, integrate information about how Post used the room.

### Collection

Select one to three objects, or groups of objects, that best illustrate the room’s most important messages and the collection. Here is where you employ your skills at conducting object lessons, as practiced during your five-minute object lessons.

**Object 1:**     **Style...**  
                    **Function...**  
                    **Production...**

**Object 2:**     **Style...**  
                    **Function...**  
                    **Production...**

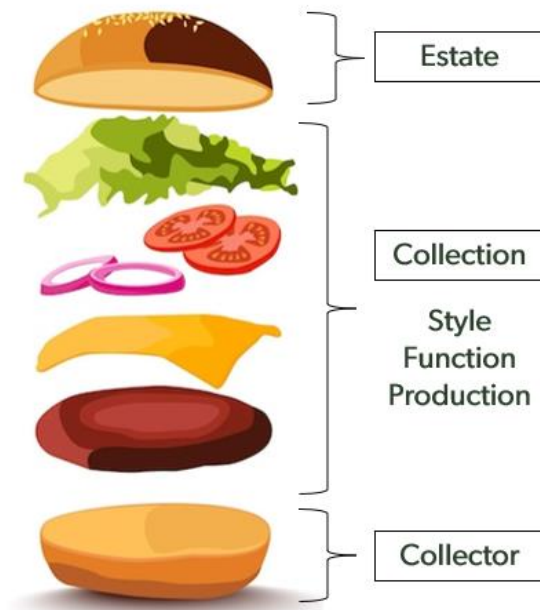
**Object 3:**     **Style...**  
                    **Function...**  
                    **Production...**

### Collector

Integrate information about Post as it relates to this room and the objects in it—especially those you just discussed.

- Could include narratives about Post as: collector, hostess, estate manager, businesswoman, engaged citizen, or philanthropist.
- If you introduced these narratives earlier in estate or collection moments, continue the story here.
- Serves as a nice transition from room to room.

## The “Style-Function-Production” Framework & How it Fits into the Larger Framework



### Style-Function-Production Framework

This framework is designed to organize object-specific information. Each section of the framework answers certain questions.

#### Style



- What can you say about the color, line, shape, materials, and texture of the object?
- What does this object’s appearance reveal about the people who owned and used it?
- What do you see that makes you say that?

#### Function



- What purpose did it serve? Literally? Symbolically?
- How might you use this object?
- Who might have used this object?
- What do you see that makes you say that?

#### Production



- What can you tell about the people who made it just by looking at it?
- How was it made? (skills, materials, systems of production)
- What do you think the designer/maker was trying to say through this object?
- What do you see that makes you say that?