

**“The Best Possible Visitor Experience”
2026 Mansion Docent Education Training
Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens**

January 26 Object-based Learning, Critical Thinking, and Inquiry

Objectives

After completing this session of the training program, participants will be better able to:

1. Communicate a refined understanding of object-based learning, including the use of frameworks;
2. Demonstrate their understanding of the connection between object-based learning and critical thinking;
3. Describe the inquiry method and discuss how to use it to facilitate conversations with visitors in the museum.

I. Introduction

- A. The overall topic for tonight – skills and methods (on Venn Diagram)
 1. Review of object-based learning (OBL)
 2. Current docent practice
 3. How can we make the visitor’s experience less passive?

II. Review the readings...distillation points

- A. Gartenhaus
- B. Marsh
- C. Shuh

III. Interlocking Frameworks

- A. Discussion of the steps involved in OBL
 1. Perception
 2. Description
 3. Analysis
 4. Interpretation
- B. Connections to a second framework: style, function, production – Hillwood’s material culture perspective

IV. The Critical Thinking Connection

- A. Discussion of the steps
 1. Knowledge
 2. Analysis
 3. Synthesis

V. Inquiry

- A. Definition
- B. Kinds of questions
- C. Inquiry activity
- D. Beyond questions

VI. Demonstration

VII. Step Back

- A. What are the key pieces you will take away from tonight’s session?
- B. Did we meet the objectives?

VIII. Next class Monday, February 2 onsite