

**An Example of a Written Lesson Plan for a Five-Minute Object Lesson**  
**Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens**  
**2026 Mansion Docent Training**

Audience: intelligent, curious adults with little to no knowledge of the subject of the lesson

Object & Location: Cup & Saucer with Portrait of Benjamin Franklin (24.151.1-2) in French porcelain room

Objectives: After participating in this lesson, visitors will be better able to:

- 1) describe how closely looking at and discussing decorative art objects reveal what was on the minds of people living long ago when the objects were made; and
  - 2) describe how commemorating events on decorative art objects is still practiced today.
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Introduction: Hook Question: **A show of hands – do we have any tea drinkers here?**

Introduction: Advance Organizer: Today we are going to spend a couple of minutes looking at one French tea cup and its saucer. We are going to focus on its decoration and explore what the object meant in the past, and see if it ties to us today.

The Body of the Conversation

(Style) **Who is on this tea cup?** (point to it) Benjamin Franklin

I'd like a volunteer to help us do some close looking for the group (small space, small objects). May I ask you to be that volunteer? Please look at the saucer. **What do you see?**

Shield with three fleurs-de-lis (shield: protection; fleurs-de-lis: France); banner with *Amerique* – so France & America together. Spears (conflict); branches of laurel leaves (victory) – so we'll fight together until we have victory!

Background: When this cup was made in 1779, America was fighting its war for independence from England. We needed an ally...France. We send Benjamin Franklin as an envoy to Versailles. He was instrumental in securing an alliance between France and America which proves to be a very important one.

(Function) This cup was made to honor that Franco-American alliance. Imagine you're a wealthy French aristocrat in 1779: **Why would you buy a teacup with Ben's face on it?** (to show worldliness; support a cause; conversation piece; connect to an important moment in time)

(Production) You might buy one because you want to be tied to Ben Franklin – he becomes a symbol of liberty and he is mobbed wherever he went in Paris. His likeness appeared on all kinds of memorabilia. Franklin wrote to his daughter: that these likenesses "have made your father's face as well known as the moon." Sèvres, the porcelain manufactory that made the tea cup, made a number of different commemorative pieces to be used as memorabilia.

Conclusion

We've examined the decoration on this tea cup in the context of when it was made in the 1770s, now let's think about today. Interestingly, we still use (even almost 250 years after these pieces) porcelain to commemorate moments in time. **What are some examples you can think of?** (plates/cups, etc. for presidential inaugurations, royal weddings in England, graduations, anniversaries of historic events)

Conclusion: Question assessing visitors' take aways: **What is one important idea will you take away/remember from our discussion?**

Resources consulted: Entry 69 in *A Taste for Splendor*, p. 56 *Sèvres Porcelain at Hillwood*, online object catalog, online *Encyclopedia Britannica* "Franco-American Alliance"