

## **Mystery Objects**

**Aim of the activity:** To explore some 'mystery objects' from the past, and discuss ways that the meaning of objects changes, or can get lost over time.

For this activity you will need access to some 'mystery objects' from the past. Local museums often offer loan services, where such objects can be borrowed, so contact your local museum for details. You may also be able to find suitable objects in local second hand shops, yard sales or antique shops.

Possible items to use in this activity include:

- Crimping Iron
- Candle Wick Scissors
- Old fashioned iron
- Curling tongs
- Jelly mold
- Feather duster
- Carpet beater
- Shaving brush
- Pie funnel
- Food covers
- Honey dipper

Everyday items that are no longer seen in homes (or look different from the modern day versions) work well for this activity.

Try to have enough items for learners to work in small groups of 4-6, with one object per group.

Divide learners into small groups, and present each group with an object, which is hidden inside a bag (pillow cases work well for this). No one is allowed to look inside the bag yet.

One member of each group is allowed to put their hand in the bag and describe what they can feel. The other members of the group should ask questions and try to guess what the object is.

Invite the groups to remove their object from the bag and have a look at it.

Questions to ask:

- What is it made of?
- What does it do?
- Does it have any moving parts?
- Was it cheap or expensive, special occasion or everyday?

- How old do you think it is?
- Does it remind you of any modern day objects?

Encourage learners to explore the object using all their senses. Learners can think about using sight, smell, touch and sound.

Each group should try to work out what their object is.

After a few minutes, ask each group to give feedback to the others on what they found, and then reveal the true purpose of each object.

Discussion questions:

- Are there objects that do a similar job in modern homes today?
- What clues did you use to try to work out what your object was?
- Who do you think owned this object?
- What was life like at the time this object was in use?
- Does this object tell us anything about life in the past?
- Does this object have a story to tell?
- What questions do you have about this object?
- Do you think it is important that this object is looked after for future generations? Why?

For a history class, an adaptation of this activity might be to focus on objects from a particular historical period.