

Shoebox Exchange

Take the shoebox developed in the previous activity and exchange it with a similarly prepared box from a class living in a very different area, with a different population. It might be helpful to number or catalogue the objects to make it easier to refer to them in future correspondence.

When you receive your shoebox, institute an inquiry into the objects it contains.

First describe each object and notice all that you can about it. This can be done as a whole class first with one object and then in teams.

Speculate about the objects:

- How would you describe the objects?
- What are they made of?
- What do you think they are used for?
- Where might they be used and by whom?
- Why do you think they are significant to the people who chose them?
- What value do the objects have?
- What do these objects tell us about the people who chose them, both individually and as a group?

You can ask the same kinds of questions you asked about the objects your group chose:

- The group could be asked to make a list of as many reasons as possible why a certain object would be special enough to be included in the box, or begin to imagine who could own these objects
- Examining the properties of the objects included in the box. How could you sort them according to color, material, shape, size? What do the objects have in common, and what is different about them?
- Are any of these objects similar to things you have at home, or things you value?

Do some research about the area where these students live. What does this information suggest about the answers to your questions?

After doing all of this, pose questions for the students who sent the objects. They will also pose questions for your group to answer about their objects.

After receiving the answers, each group can write about what they learned about the other through this activity.