

# India Lesson 1

## *Here's What I See*

### The Basics

**Objective:** To introduce participants to objects from India.

**Performance of Skill Expectations/Enduring Understandings:** The participants will continue developing observational skills through a discussion of new artifacts.

**Prerequisite Lessons:** *Introductory Lesson 1: The Key to Understanding Artifacts and India Lesson 1: A Spicy Story that Sells.* You may also want to view a video of this activity modeled on the Spurlock Museum's website at <https://www.spurlock.illinois.edu/educators/borrow-objects/profiles/aas-india.html>

**Estimated Materials Preparation Time:** 5 minutes.

**Duration:** Instructor discretion.

**Materials Provided in the Box:** One *masala dabba*, one *thali* set, Artifact Information Sheets, and How to Spot a Fake Artifact Sheet.

**Materials to be Provided by the Instructor:** a smartboard, chalkboard, or easel pad, and associated writing materials.

**Other Notes:** All of the instructions for *Here's What I See* lessons are nearly identical. Differences will be found in vocabulary, development, and the artifacts used. The full instructions are repeated each time as a refresher for returning educators or a full lesson for educators new to the program.

### Concepts/Vocabulary

- Masala dabba: a container for spices
- Thali set: a traditional dishware set for a thali meal.

### Procedure

**Preparation:** Have the artifacts to be discussed out of the box and ready for showing. You may wish to place a small amount of one of the spices in the box in one of the masala dabba containers.

**Introduction/Instruction:** Explain to the participants that when historians/archaeologists/anthropologists look at artifacts, they look for patterns: characteristics that are common among all artifacts of a certain type for a certain group of people. They examine how and why those patterns may vary among the different places where those people live or how the patterns have evolved over time.

Explain that for this lesson, they will be playing a game called “Here’s What I See.” As you walk around the room with an artifact, the participants will look at it then raise their hands when they have an observation to make about it. The observation is stated as “Here’s what I see. I see a \_\_\_\_\_.” Observations are things they actually see—facts—not assumptions or conclusions they have made from what they see. They are looking for aspects of the artifact, the things that are recognizable and can be compared among artifacts. An easy example to model before looking at the ancient artifacts is a watch. Good observations for a watch might be (depending on the watch):

- “I see numbers.”
- “I see a word.”
- “I see moving parts.”
- “I see a buckle.”
- “I see metal.”

Tell the participants not to worry about stating an observation that seems obvious. Sometimes the obvious thing is a very important thing (e.g., you may get 10 observations about a statue, but no one will say that it is a male or female figure portrayed).

Before taking observations, suggest that the participants speak loudly enough for all to hear, because you want to see how many observations they give before you get a repeat.

### **Development:**

1. For the India lesson, the objects are a masala dabba and a thali set. These objects can be observed individually or together, as they both are related to food. Write down the answers (or have a helper do this). This helps reduce the number of repeated answers. It also can serve as an aid in discussion of what kinds of observations the participants are making. Once you have a nice list of observations, see what types of observations have already occurred and which ones you may need to prompt. For example, the participants may talk a lot about the shape of an artifact, but not give their observations on the type of material it is made from. They may have their thoughts on the material, but not mention size or color. Ask the participants for specific observations on the aspects of an artifact that they haven’t mentioned yet.
2. If you have placed a bit of one of the spices in the masala dabba, see how long it takes for one of the participants to mention the aroma coming from the artifact. Hold a short discussion on how different senses can be utilized in observing an artifact. Ask the participants to come up with artifacts that could be observed using other senses. Here are a couple of examples you could bring up during the discussion:
  - When trying to assess if an African mask was actually worn or made only to be sold to tourists, a scholar will usually feel along the inside of the mask. If it is rough and splintery, it would be uncomfortable to wear, so it’s probably made for a tourist to buy and hang on a wall.
  - Imagine the scents that may linger in an old make-up set, perfume bottle, or cigar box.

Collector Louis McWhinnie has created a page on his website called "How to Spot a Fake." Some of the text is included in the materials in this binder. There are wonderful examples of how experts use all of their senses to spot fakes and how the people who create the fakes make their pieces look authentic. It's interesting information to read and to share.

**Closure:** Once the artifacts have been shown and the observations made, ask the participants to give their guesses on what the artifacts are. If the artifacts are guessed correctly, have the participants tell you what they already know about them. Use the information from the Artifact Information Sheets to give the participants any information they may not have given during the discussion. Here are a few key facts:

Masala dabba:

- This is used to hold a variety of frequently used spices.
- Only a small amount of the spice is put in the container, as it will only stay fresh for a week or two.

Thali set:

- This set is used for serving a traditional style of Indian meal.
- Each of the bowls would hold a different part of the meal.

**Reflection:** Generate a short discussion with these questions:

If this is the first time the game is played:

- What was the most fun about this activity?
- Why is it important to learn about the skill of observation when studying other cultures?
- What observation surprised you the most?

If the game has been played once before:

- What was easier about playing the game this time? Do you think your observation skills have improved? If so, how?

If the game has been played twice before:

- What aspects of the artifacts/types of observations do you find you are making with every artifact? Why do you think these are important?
- What aspects of the artifacts do you plan on concentrating on next time?

**Assessment:** This game will be played multiple times over the school year if all loan kits are used. Use the game to assess how well the participants' observation and description skills develop over time.