



## Engaging with objects

### A Piece of the Past

The word artefact is derived from the Latin terms *ars* or *artis* meaning skilled in joining, and *factum* meaning to make or do. Thus an artefact can be considered to mean any physical entity that is formed by human beings; from a nail to the building it is in.

— Chris Capel, *Objects: Reluctant Witnesses to the Past*

Think of three additional objects that can also tell 'the story of Australia'. Choose one that relates to the theme of **Land**, one for **People**, and one for **Nation**.

Focus on one particular artefact. What draws you to this object? What qualities make it so compelling?

How and when was this object made?

**Draw a Map, Devise a Timeline.** Can you chart the journey of your chosen object over space and time?

### Whose History?

If you want told the history of the whole world, a history that does not unduly privilege one part of humanity, you cannot do it through texts alone, because only some of the world has ever had texts, while most of the world, most of the time, has not.

— Neil McGregor, *A History of the World in 100 Objects*



Does the object you have chosen tell a story in a way written words cannot?

Who originally owned it and who does it belong to now?  
Can anyone make a special claim to ownership of this object today?

**Make a 'Meaning Mosaic'.** Objects have a shape, they serve a purpose and convey certain meanings. How has the shape, purpose or meaning of your chosen object changed over time?

## Patterns in the Past

Objects have the power to connect us to the others' lived experience, to collapse time and space and invite us in to glimpse others' dreams and ambitions and the shape, feel and character of their worlds.  
— Mat Trinca, *Landmarks: A History of Australia in 33 Places*

How does this object bring you into touch with the experience of past generations?

How might your view of this object differ from that of its creator?

**Situate Your Object and Reshape it Altogether.** How might the meanings of this particular object alter with the way it is presented? Would your object look different in its own time and context, in a museum today, to a time traveller a thousand years from now?