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| **How to read an object.**  You are about to do an activity that will assist you in reading an object. The questions are based on a methodology outlined by Jules Prown (1982) and Ingrid Mida and Alexandra Kim (2015).  Prown (1982) believed that objects were the raw data for the study of material culture and suggested approaching the object in three stages – description, deduction and hypothesis. Mida and Kim (2015) took this further by applying Prown’s ideas to fashion garments.  This is not a definitive list of questions but it should provide a helpful framework for your questioning. Do not worry if you cannot answer all of the questions – it takes a while to research the history and provenance of an object.  In the first instance it is useful to write down what you see and what you already know about the object. |

**Description and observations - you have 7 minutes to answer the questions below.**

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| **General area of questioning** | **Specific questions you can think about asking (not all of these will be relevant)** | **Notes** |
| Initial thoughts | What is it?  How big is it? How heavy is it? What is its texture?  What colour is it? Has the colour changed over time?  What condition is it in? Has it been damaged?  Does it smell?  Does it make a noise?  What language is it in? |  |
| Construction | Was it made by hand, machine or a combination of both?  Is it decorated?  Has it been altered or adapted? Does it have its original binding or has it been rebound? |  |
| Identifying markings | Does it have a date, ISBN, ISSN?  Does it have a creator’s and/or owner’s mark?  Are there any labels? If so, is it consistent with the creator’s other works?  Does the label offer clues as to seasons, care, sizing? |  |
| Materials | What is it made of? What is the dominant material?  Is it natural or man-made?  Has it been subject to a finishing process e.g. bleaching, pressing?  Is there any form of applied decoration? Are there signs that decoration has been removed? |  |
| Supporting Material | Does it have any accompanying material?  Are there any manufacturer, store tags or original packaging?  How much was it? Is there a price tag? |  |

**Deduction - you have 8 minutes to answer the questions below.**

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| **General area of questioning** | **Specific questions you can think about asking (not all of these will be relevant)** | **Notes** |
| Personal reactions | How does it make you feel?  How would it feel on your body (if applicable)?  Would you wear it (if applicable)?  Can you identify any personal biases when looking at the object?  Can you identify with the creator of the object? If so, how? |  |
| Purpose and function | What is it used for?  Does it have one use or several uses?  Has its use changed over time? |  |
| Context and history | Who made it?  Where and when was it made?  Who was it created for?  Who owned it or used it? |  |
| Cultural value | Did the object have a value for the person who used, owned or commissioned it?  Does it conform to dominant ideas of [taste](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/taste) and cultural value? Are these ideas [Eurocentric](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/Eurocentric)?  Has its meaning or value changed over time? |  |
| Spiritual and artistic significance | Does the object have spiritual or religious significance?  Was it intended to be a work of art?  Is it stylistically consistent with or divergent from the period in which it was created?  What does it tell you about the technical skills of the creator? Are they using new techniques? |  |

**Hypothesis - you have 20 minutes to answer the questions below.**

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| **General area of questioning** | **Specific questions you can think about asking (not all of these will be relevant)** | **Notes** |
| Creator’s, user’s or owner’s context | What does the object tell you about the creator, the people who used it, or the people who commissioned or paid for it? What does it tell you about their identity (e.g. [gender](https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/glossary-terms#g), [sexual orientation](https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/glossary-terms#s), [race or ethnicity](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/study-guides/sociology/race-and-ethnicity/race-and-ethnicity-defined), [social class](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/social_class), faith or religion, [disability](https://www.gov.uk/definition-of-disability-under-equality-act-2010))? |  |
| Social and cultural context | What does this object tell you about the society or culture in which it was made?  Does it maintain, replicate or challenge dominant, social, cultural, political or historical ideas? If so how?  How does it maintain, replicate or challenge stereotypes? |  |
| Fashion context | What does the object tell you about the fashion industry and:   |  |  | | --- | --- | | * [Gender expression](https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/glossary-terms#g)? | * [Heteronormativity](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/heteronormative)? | | * [LGBTQIA+](https://www.glaad.org/reference/lgbtq) inclusion? Or does it engage in [homophobia](https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/glossary-terms#h), [biphobia](https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/glossary-terms#b) or [transphobia](https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/glossary-terms#t)? | * [Racism](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/racism)? * Faith and religion? | | * [Ableism](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/ableism)? | * [Social class](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/social_class)? | |  |
| UAL and academic context | Why do you think the object is in LCF Special Collections?  What does it say about UAL? From your own experience does it reflect any [institutional biases](http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100005347)?  Are there similar objects held by UAL Special Collections?  Is the object subject to other research? Are there images of it or similar objects elsewhere e.g. in books, magazines, museum collections or online?  Can you recommend similar objects not held in LCF Special Collections? |  |

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| **Glossary**  **Ableism** – discrimination favouring able-bodied people; ableism discriminates against someone with an impairment or disability (Oxford Living Dictionaries, 2018).  **Biphobia** – fear, dislike and discrimination against someone who identifies as under the bi umbrella (Stonewall, 2017).  **Disability** – the Equality Act 2010 defines disability as “a physical or mental impairment that has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities” (GOV.UK, 2018).  **Ethnicity** – a method of ordering people within a society based upon shared social, cultural and historical practices and perspectives. This includes shared national and regional backgrounds (CliffNotes, 2016).  **Eurocentric** – also referred to as **western centric**; focusing on European or Anglo-American history, cultural values and experience to interpret the world; European or Anglo-American culture is seen as dominant and excludes other world views (Oxford Living Dictionaries, 2018).  **Gender** – used to describe physical, social and cultural traits associated with masculinity and femininity (Stonewall, 2017).  **Gender expression** – how someone outwardly expresses their gender; gender expression happens in the context of wider social expectations around gender (Stonewall, 2017).  **Heteronormativity** – the belief that only heterosexual relationships are normal and that men and women have different roles within these relationships (Cambridge Dictionary, 2018).  **Homophobia** – fear, dislike and discrimination against someone who identifies as gay or lesbian (Stonewall, 2017).  **Institutional bias** – how an institution’s procedures, policies and practices favour or advantage certain groups and devalue or disadvantage other groups (Oxford Reference, 2018).  **LGBTQIA+** – acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual or allied (GLAAD, 2016).  **Race** – a method of ordering people within a society based upon shared biological traits (i.e. skin colour, facial features, height) that are deemed to be socially significant (CliffNotes, 2016).  **Racism** – discrimination against someone of a different race or ethnicity based on the belief that one race or ethnicity is dominant (Oxford Living Dictionaries, 2018).  **Sexual orientation** – emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to another person (Stonewall, 2017). | **Social class** – a method of ordering people within a society based upon their individual social and economic status (Oxford Living Dictionaries, 2018).  **Taste** – used to describe an individual’s preferences, judgements and patterns of choice with relation to aesthetics, culture and behaviour (Cambridge Dictionary, 2018).  **Transphobia** – fear, dislike and discrimination against someone who identifies as under the trans umbrella (Stonewall, 2017).  **References**  Cambridge Dictionary (2018) *Cambridge dictionary.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [online]. Available from: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/> (accessed 7th May 2018).  CliffNotes (2016) ‘Race and ethnicity defined’, *Race and ethnicity*. Boston, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt [online]. Available from: <https://www.cliffsnotes.com/study-guides/sociology/race-and-ethnicity/race-and-ethnicity-defined> (accessed 7th May 2018).  GLAAD (2016) ‘Glossary of terms – lesbian/gay/bisexual/queer’, *GLAAD media reference guide.* 10th ed., New York and California, GLAAD. [online]. Available from: <https://www.glaad.org/reference/lgbtq> (accessed 7th May 2018).  GOV.UK (2018) *Definition of disability under the Equality Act 2010.* [online]. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/definition-of-disability-under-equality-act-2010> (accessed 7th May 2018).  Higgs, L. and Lelkes, J. (2017) *How to read an object*. London: University of the Arts London.  Mida, I. and Kim, A (2015) *The dress detective: a practical guide to object-based research in fashion.* London: Bloomsbury.  Oxford Living Dictionaries (2018) *English Oxford living dictionaries.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. [online]. Available from: <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/> (accessed 7th May 2018).  Oxford Reference (2018) ‘Institutional bias’ in: Candler, D. and Munday, R. (2011) *A dictionary of media and communication.* Oxford: Oxford University Press*.* [online]. Available from: <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100005347> (accessed 7th May 2018).  Prown, J. D. (1982) ‘Mind in matter: an introduction to material culture theory and method’, *Winterthur Portfolio,* 17(1), pp. 1-19. [online]. Available from: <http://ciuhct.fc.ul.pt/textos/Prown_1982.pdf> (accessed 11th March 2018).  Stonewall (2017) *Glossary of terms.* [online]. Available from: <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/glossary-terms> (accessed 7th May 2018).  Willcocks, J. (2014) *How to read an object.* London: University of the Arts London. |