

The Elaboration Game: Gaining sensitivity to design by examining objects

(Adapted from the Artful Thinking framework)

Goal: To deepen students' sensitivity to design, through drawing, observing, questioning and collaborating.

What you will need:

- 3 objects (or 2 sets of 3, depending on the number of students). If possible, objects should relate to curriculum you are working on now or are going to be introducing
- Large paper for each table
- 3 different color markers for each round
- Pencils or pens and 8.5 x 11 paper for each student to sketch

The Elaboration Game

1. Have students sit in groups of 4 around the object: Ask them not to touch or move the object at first. Have each student quickly do a rough sketch of the object from his or her vantage point.
2. Now allow them to pick up the object, turn it around, move parts, etc.
3. Ask each student to take quick notes of two things they notice about the object and one question they have.
4. Then have students share those with the group. Tell the students that if someone else mentions what you noticed, try to elaborate on that thing, for example, by pointing out a new aspect of it or by describing a specific feature of it in more detail. Have a note taker at the table mark down each student's observations and questions on the large paper in one color maker.
5. Then have them move to the next table with a new object and repeat the same steps (paper stays with the object; students can choose whether or not to leave their drawings with the object). After they make a quick sketch from their individual vantage points, they'll share their observations and questions and add them to the large paper in another color marker.
6. Do a third round (with a third maker color)
7. Have students return to their original object and give them time to read all three sets of observations and questions.
8. Have each group prepare a brief 1-minute 'infomercial' that describes their object. The infomercial should include some questions and observations that came up from the carousel conversations.
9. Discuss the process with students: What was difficult, interesting, revealing, when looking at objects this way?



Adaptation: The Elaboration Game in a large group

For younger students, or done as a model for an older group a day before they do the carousel.

1. Display an object and have everyone look at it quietly for a moment. Explain that students will take a turn sharing one thing they notice about the object (an observation), and one question they have about it. Students should try not to repeat exactly what someone else has observed, but they can elaborate on an observation if they want to. For example, one student might notice that the object has a screw in it. Another student might notice that the screw is shiny, or has a slot on top of it.
2. Have each student share one observation and one question while the teacher scribes. See the *scaffolding tips* below for suggestions about how to help students come up with observations and questions.
3. After everyone has had a turn, ask students what new or surprising thing they learned from their classmates' observations and questions, and what they notice now that they didn't notice before.

Scaffolding tips:

If students are struggling to come up with new observations, you may encourage them to consider noticing specific parts, or noticing through the senses. You can also encourage them to elaborate on someone else's observation by adding details

If students are struggling to come up with new questions, you may provide or suggest a list of question starts:

Why...?

What are the reasons...?

What if...?

What is the purpose of...?

How would it be different if...?

Suppose that...?

Who might use...?

A person who uses this might need/like/not like...?

What if we knew...?

What would change if...?

