



# CRAFT IN AMERICA

## EDUCATION GUIDE

### David and Roberta Williamson: Subjective Objects



*"It's like a dance, really, of our hands as we manipulate the vocabulary that we use."*

- Roberta Williamson

#### LESSON OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students will explore the collaborative work of Roberta and Dave Williamson. Through examples of the Williamsons' found object jewelry, three concepts are explored: collaboration, juxtaposition and personal adornment. After participating in investigations dealing with associations and meanings of objects, students will create a piece of jewelry combining a number of found objects that evoke a story or emotion.

**Grade Level:** 8-12

**Estimated Time:** Eight to ten 45-minute class periods

**Craft In America Theme/Episode:** *PROCESS*

#### Background Information

The Williamsons believe that objects have the power to evoke stories and memories. It is in the bringing together, or the juxtaposition, of a number of objects that a story is solidified. Working as true partners in the process, Dave brings the technical skills that complement Roberta's creative combinations of art and design. Part of their own lives goes into each of these works. They believe that the story they tell is then interpreted and re-invented by the wearer. Through classes they teach locally, students are encouraged to "find their own stories" and build a piece of jewelry that captures and envelops an emotional moment or memory dear to their own lives.



## Key Concepts

- Found objects can open dialogue and evoke stories.
- Juxtaposition of two or more objects can alter the original meanings of the objects.
- Given the physical context, use, prior knowledge of the viewer and social climate, the meaning of an object can change.
- Collaboration is the blend of two or more individual's ideas and abilities.
- Personal adornment has many functions in society.

## Critical Questions

- What is juxtaposition?
- How can juxtaposition change the meaning of an object?
- How do objects evoke stories?
- What does the viewer bring to an object when interpreting its meaning?
- What is collaboration?
- How does collaboration impact the creative process?
- What functions or purposes do personal adornment serve in society?



## Objectives

Students will:

- Explore the concept of personal adornment.
- Examine the work and collaborative process of Roberta and Dave Williamson.
- Develop an awareness of how the meanings of objects can change.
- Work in collaborative mode and with two objects to explore the concept of juxtaposition.
- Use found objects to create a piece of jewelry or accessory that holds personal meaning.

## Vocabulary

Juxtaposition, jewelry findings, cold connections, found object

## Interdisciplinary Connections

Language Arts

## National Standards for Visual Arts Education

1. Understanding and applying media, techniques and processes
2. Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols and ideas

## Resources and Materials for Teaching

### Resources:

- Craft in America DVD, *PROCESS*. Also viewable online at [www.craftinamerica.org/episodes/process](http://www.craftinamerica.org/episodes/process)
- Craft in America website: [www.craftinamerica.org](http://www.craftinamerica.org)

### Worksheet:

- *Juxtaposition and Collaboration: Object Swap Map*
- *Finding and Making Connections: Design*
- *Connecting the Dots: Found Object Jewelry*

### Materials for teaching Investigation #1

- Multiples of one small found object to accommodate class size
- A variety of colors and sizes of paper and cardboard
- Natural objects such as sticks, leaves, shells, etc.
- Found materials such as small boxes, fabric wires, cotton balls, etc.
- Glue
- Scissors

### Materials for teaching Investigation #2

- Small to medium sized found objects such as shoes, trinkets, toys,
- Small to medium size natural objects such as eggs, fruit, feathers
- Pencils
- *Juxtaposition and Collaboration: Object Swap Map*
- Scissors



### Materials for teaching Investigation #3

- Craft in America DVD *PROCESS*
- Access to internet or hard copy images of additional found object jewelry

### Materials for Studio Production

- Joanna Gollberg's *Making Metal Jewelry: Projects, Techniques, Inspiration*, Lark Books, 2003 or Susan Lenart Kazmer's *Making Connections: A Handbook of Cold Joins for Jewelers and Mixed Media Artists*, Loveland, CO: Interweave Press; 2nd ed., 2008.
- Craft in America online clip of the Williamsons at an antique market
- *Finding and Making Connections: Design*
- *Connecting the Dots: Found Object Jewelry*

### "Art Room Antique Mart" Suggested Supplies

- Old jewelry pieces that can be mined for parts
- Large objects that are made of many small pieces that can be taken apart (chandeliers, computer keyboards, wind chimes made of shells, old board games and pieces, etc.)
- Paper images (post cards, greeting cards, trading cards, magazines, etc.)
- Ribbons, fabric swatches, various strings, wires
- Buttons, beads, charms
- Old key chains and other items with clips, rings, or fasteners
- Holiday ornaments, bric-a-brac
- Packaging materials

### Supply list for found object jewelry making

- Jewelry findings
- Polyester casting resin
- Acrylic medium
- Classroom safe epoxies and strong glues
- Tin snips
- Various pliers, needle nose, etc.
- Various gauge wires
- Heavy duty sewing needles
- Vice, to hold materials in place while working
- Steel wool, sandpaper



## INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

### Investigation #1: In the eyes of the beholder...

(one 45 minute class period)

What contributes to the meaning of an object? How can the meaning of an object be changed? If we take an object out of its normal context and place it in a new context does the meaning change? Does it stay the same?

For this investigation provide each student with the same found object. This object can be anything that the teacher can find in multiples to accommodate the size of the class; for example, soda cans, keys, feathers, or coins. Distribute objects and have the students consider the following and record their thoughts on paper. What associations do you have with this object? What are you reminded of? What emotions does the object evoke? What ideas or meanings does it convey? Explain that they are to keep these associations, emotions and ideas in mind as they move into the next activity.

Using the materials provided, as listed in the Teaching Materials heading under Investigation #1, as well as the physical space of the art room, instruct students that they are to quickly create a place for this object to reside. To help them imagine different environments for their object, present the following prompts: Will the object be placed in nature? Will the object be held in reverence, placed on an altar of some kind? Will the object be contained? Will the object be stacked or attached to something? Will the object be wrapped or altered in some way? Will the object be on display? Will the object be conspicuous or inconspicuous? Then provide students with 20 minutes to accomplish this task.

Initiate a conversation about the created environments with the students. Allow the students to explain what kind of meaning they wanted to give the object. Allow students to share the meanings they find in other students' solutions. Have students note the many different solutions. Were there different interpretations of one kind of solution? What does this tell us about the meaning of objects? (We all bring different ideas to objects.) What does this tell us about individuals when looking at objects? (Our perspectives differ.) What do you think affects a person's association with an object? On a blackboard, overhead or chart paper "map" student contributions. Encourage students to consider such things as family background, personal experience with an object, cultural or ethnic background, knowledge of history, age, geographic location.

Inform students that the next investigation will involve interpreting meanings of two objects. While objects will be provided in the classroom, they might like to bring in an object or two of their own. They will need to bring the items the next time class meets.





## **Investigation #2: Object Swap Activity: A way to understand juxtaposition**

(one 45 minute class period)

In this investigation students choose two objects that they believe create a new or larger meaning when they are placed together, juxtaposed. The objects can be brought in by the student or provided in the classroom. Suggestions for objects are listed in the Teaching Materials section under Investigation #2. Students will first work independently then partner with another student. The purpose of this investigation is to give the students a chance to understand how the meaning of an object can change when juxtaposed with other objects.

Distribute Juxtaposition and Collaboration: Object Swap Map and Instructions. Have students follow the directions and start the worksheet individually. When prompted, students will pair up and complete the worksheet in a collaborative mode by trading objects and creating new meanings for the juxtaposed objects.

## **Investigation #3: Collaboration and Juxtaposition**

(one 45 minute class period)

View the segment on Roberta and Dave Williamson on the Craft in America PROCESS DVD or online at [www.craftinamerica.org/shorts/dave-roberta-williamson-segment](http://www.craftinamerica.org/shorts/dave-roberta-williamson-segment)

Discuss the video. What kinds of objects do the Williamsons use? Can you identify imagery or words found on some of the objects they use? What questions do you have about their work or techniques? How does their collaborative process contribute to their work?

Do a web search for images of found object jewelry or provide hard copy images of found object jewelry for students to consider and discuss. What similarities or difference do you see compared to the jewelry created by Roberta and Dave Williamson? In what ways are you surprised? For example, are there objects you are surprised to see in found object jewelry?



## Studio Production

(five to seven 45-minute class periods)

### Finding and Making Connections

Throughout time and across cultures people have used personal adornment for many reasons. Have students consider the functions of and reasons behind personal adornment. What forms of personal adornment can students identify? How have students used personal adornment to express themselves in social situations?

In this studio students will create a piece of jewelry or accessory from found objects that evokes a story or emotion. To further challenge students, the assignment can be elevated to create a piece of jewelry that captures and envelops an emotional moment or memory dear to their own lives.

To begin, have students watch the video clip of the Williamsons at the antique mart.

[www.craftinamerica.org/shorts/jewelers-dave-roberta-williamson-take-their-students-to-the-antique-mart](http://www.craftinamerica.org/shorts/jewelers-dave-roberta-williamson-take-their-students-to-the-antique-mart)

### Subject Matter: Finding Connections

(one 45-minute class period)

Create an “art room antique mart” for students to investigate and collect objects they will use in this studio art-making experience. This provides students the opportunity to investigate objects, initiate peer-to-peer dialogue, and practice collaborative problem solving as the students are challenged to “connect” these objects, both mentally and physically, into a piece of personal adornment.

In creating an “art room antique mart,” take the time to purposefully set up the objects listed in the Teaching Materials section under Studio Production. Some items can be laid out and considered “precious;” other items can be stacked or bundled giving students a chance to “dig.” Students may bring in personal items such as ticket stubs, parts of letters or cards, trading cards, small toys, sea glass, shells, souvenirs, personal trinkets, photographs, etc. Tell students that original photographs or other one-of-a-kind images can be preserved or reduced in size by scanning or photocopying. Paper objects can be made durable by placing them behind polyester casting resin (a clear liquid that hardens when dry) or covered with an acrylic polymer sealant.

Once students have selected a number of objects and have begun to formulate a way to translate these objects into a plausible piece of jewelry, distribute the *Finding and Making Connections: Design Worksheet*. As students sketch out ideas, remind them that how the individual pieces are set up in relationship to one another will impact the story or meaning.

### Technique: Making Connections

Teach students about cold-connection techniques. Cold metal work involves the connecting of metal fragments without the use of heat. Students can connect found metal objects and metal hardware items by wrapping them with wire, joining, tying, riveting, etc. Gather materials found under Teaching Materials for Studio Production. For more detailed information on cold-connecting techniques, see Joanna Gollberg’s *Making Metal Jewelry: Projects, Techniques, Inspiration*, Lark Books, 2003 or Susan Lenart Kazer’s *Making Connections: A Handbook of Cold Joins for Jewelers and Mixed Media Artists*, Loveland, CO: Interweave Press; 2nd ed., 2008.

## CLOSING STRATEGIES

### Reflection

Engage students in a discussion or have students write in their sketchbooks about their results. Are they pleased with how they turned out? What surprised them? What was harder or easier—making the physical “connections” or making the mental “connections” between objects? Will they wear what they have made? If it was designed as a gift, for whom did they create it and how did knowledge of the person influence their artistic decisions?

### Assessment

Give each student a copy of the *Connecting the Dots: Found Object Jewelry* worksheet. When completing this worksheet they should respond to another student’s jewelry piece, justify the story with the meaning in the objects and the meanings created when those objects are merged. By the lesson’s end students should be able to:

- Describe the work of Roberta and Dave Williamson.
- Understand why some artists choose to collaborate.
- Articulate an understanding of the term “juxtaposition.”
- Explain how juxtaposition can change the meaning of objects.
- Manipulate found objects into meaningful jewelry pieces.

### Additional Resources

- “Using a jewelry saw” video: [youtu.be/FUpQKibjIRE](https://youtu.be/FUpQKibjIRE)

### Extensions

A further exploration of many of the ideas found in this lesson can be found in the Craft in America Education Guide: *MEMORY: Fragments*. [www.craftinamerica.org/guides/memory-fragments](http://www.craftinamerica.org/guides/memory-fragments)

### Authors

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## Worksheet: Juxtaposition and Collaboration: Object Swap Map

### OBJECT #1

List thoughts, memories, and functions associated with Object #1

### OBJECT #2

List thoughts, memories, and functions associated with Object #2

Consider what Object #1 and Object #2 mean when they are juxtaposed. What stories of moods do they evoke together?

When instructed by your teacher, you will pair up with a classmate. Collaborate and give suggestions to each other about functions, implications, or other ideas associated with your objects.

### OBJECT #3

List your collaborator's associations with Object #3, as well as any others you would like to add. It is important to include and consider your collaborator's list.

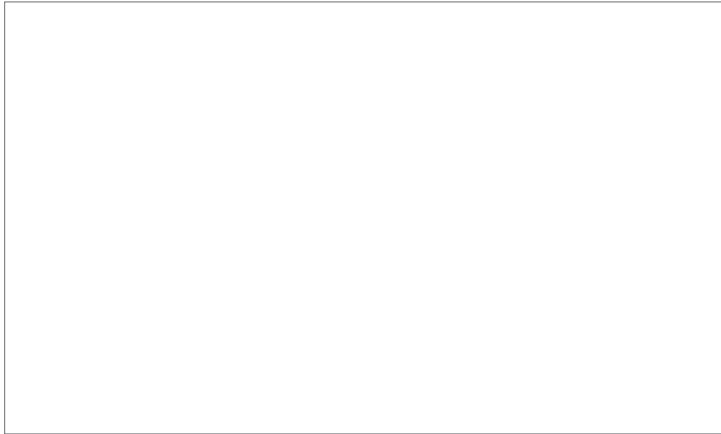
Create new meanings or plausible stories when Object #1 is juxtaposed with Object #3. Continue to collaborate with your partner for ideas.

Create new meanings or plausible stories when Object #2 is juxtaposed with Object #3. Continue to collaborate with your partner for ideas.

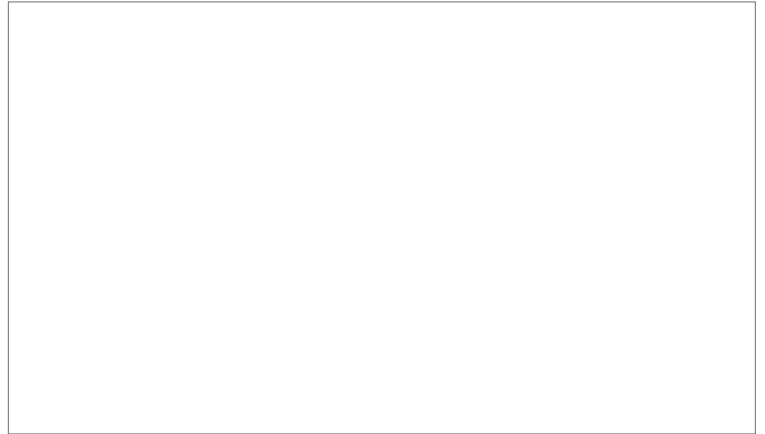


## Worksheet: Finding and Making Connections

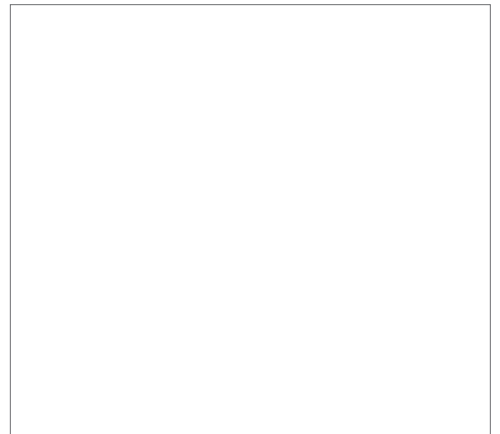
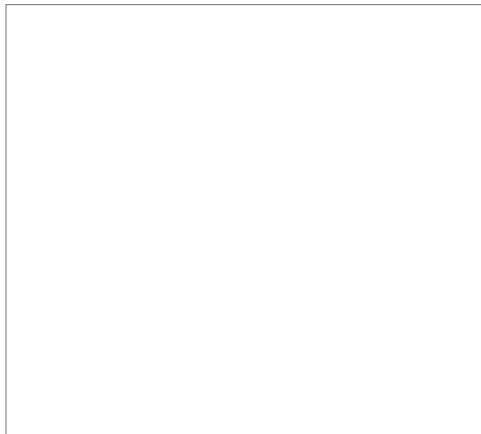
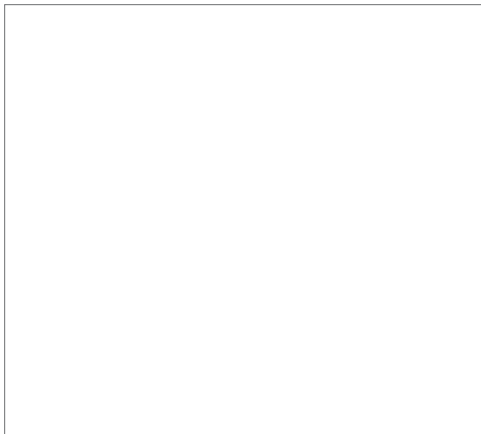
List the objects you have chosen.



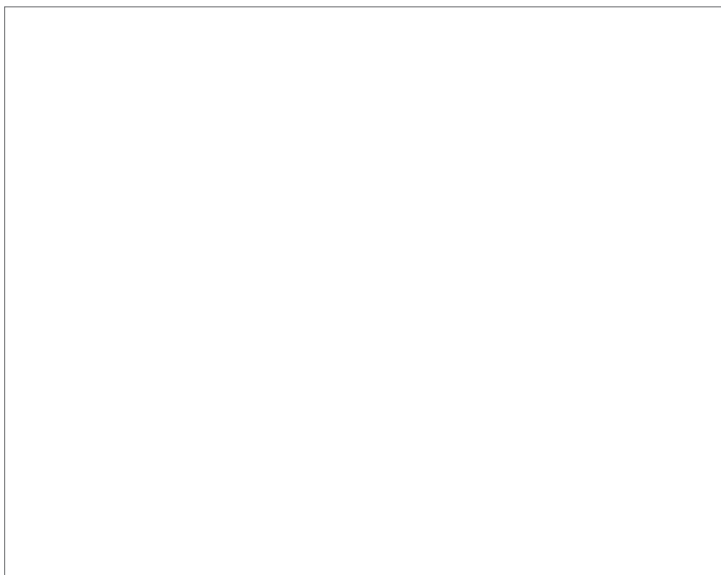
List the associations you have with these objects.



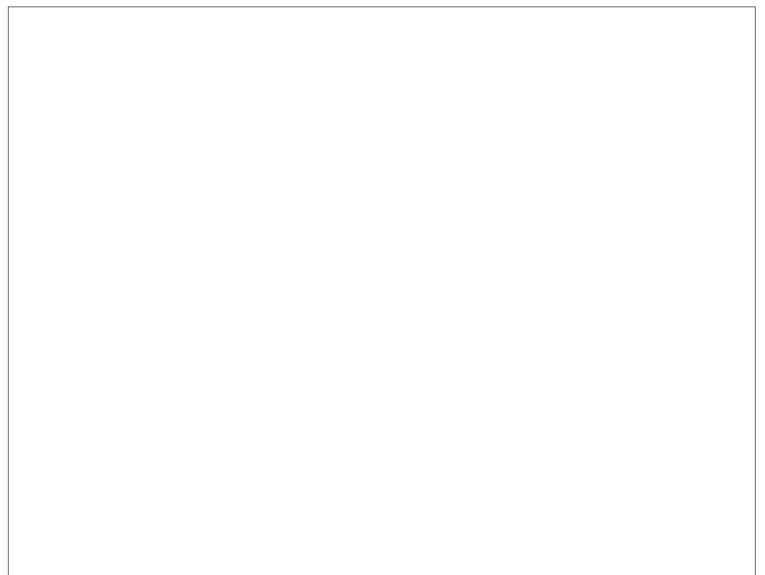
Use the boxes below for thumbnail sketches or details of connections. If you are creating this as a gift, please note this and explain your relationship to that person.



Sketch



Describe the overall concept or story when these objects are juxtaposed with one another.



## **Worksheet: Connecting the Dots: Found Object Jewelry Peer Review**

Roberta and David Williamson anticipate and value the viewer's re-interpretation of the stories contained in their found object jewelry. For this final review of what you have experienced, pair up with a partner and become the *wearer* of your partner's artwork. Answer the following from your perspective.

Describe the "whole" and the "parts" of this artwork.

List associations you have with the objects, images or text found in this artwork.

What emotions, memories or stories are evoked by the juxtaposition of these objects?

Inspect the piece for technical processes. What cold connection techniques can you identify? Are there technical aspects you think are done very well? Are there parts you feel should be improved?

Artwork by:

Reviewed by: