



The
Amateur
Ancestor
Project

Object-based Storytelling Prompt Cards

1 – A Unique Journey

→ Following the physical journey of the object and its materials (adapt questions for natural specimens)

- How old is it? How did it come into your possession? How long will it last?
- What materials is it made of? How have they been processed and transformed?
- When was it last used, and what for? How many hands have touched it?
- How has the place this object comes from changed through time? And the place its materials come from?

2 – Common Origins

→ Looking at knowledge and how it travels across time and place

- What skills and tools were required to make or obtain this? How long have we held such capabilities, and who developed them through time?
- How many people, creatures and beings, were involved in its making and who are they?
- How long have people been creating such things? Where did it all start? (if it's a natural specimen, how long have we known about such creatures or materials?)
- What are the descendants of your object? What has come after it

3 – Feeling your way

→ Intuitive knowledge, free associations, imagination

- How does it feel in your hand?
- Does the shape/smell/texture/colour remind you of anything or anyone else?
- Does it evoke any feelings in you? Do any stories come to mind?

4 – More-than-human perspectives

→ Repositioning humans within the web of life

- Try and assess this object from the perspective of an animal of your choice, whether furry mammal, sea creature or insect whizzing by. What would they make of it? How would they interact with it? How would it impact them?
- And what about a blade of grass, an ancient oak tree or young sapling?
- What is this object to the soil beneath your feet?

5 – Twisting Timelines

→ Playing with time travel

- What might people from 2050 think of this object? (consider their location and living conditions)
- What might someone from when the oldest person you know was born think of it?
- Is there another timeframe that would be worth considering in relation to your place of work/life?
- How might this object be used in scarce or abundant futures?

6 – Creating Connections

→ Putting 2 or more objects together

- Would these normally find themselves together? If not, why?
- What links can you draw between these objects? Consider their date, materials, use and place of origin.
- If you were to put those objects together in a display case in a museum, what would the caption say?

How to use this toolkit?

This toolkit is made available to Amateur Ancestor workshop participants under a [Creative Commons Licence](#) (Attribution/Non-Commercial/Share Alike)

If you'd like to work together, please get in touch!

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About the Amateur Ancestor Project

What if the key to flourishing futures was hiding in our heritage?

The Amateur Ancestor Project is a programme of workshops, alternative museum guided tours and storytelling events that take a long view on the urgent problems we face. I help cultural organisations and businesses delve deep into the root causes of our current predicaments, and use their imagination to better illuminate the way forward.

Placing heritage and museum collections at the heart of climate action, each experience is designed to expand your understanding of time and regain your sense of agency. So here's to being good ancestors!

About Justine Boussard

I am a curator and storyteller with over 15 years' experience working in the heritage, public art and creative education sectors, including for the Design Museum, Crafts Council and British Council.

Clients and partners include the Natural History Museum, Sunderland Culture, B Local North East and North East Museums.

I am a fellow of the RSA, a graduate from the MA V&A/RCA in History of Design, and a member of Climate Museum UK. I guest curated UP Projects' 'Bodies of Water Symposium' on Regenerative Art Practice (Liverpool Biennial 2025).

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