



OBJECTS OF JOY

EXHIBITION

This exhibition by the English Conversation class was inspired by a visit to the Immigration Museum to see an exhibition there called Joy.

Over a few weeks, class members who chose to, brought an object to class to show and talk about. All the objects have special memories, associations or meanings for the people they belong to which they shared with the class. We asked questions about the object and saw and learnt many interesting things.

After showing the object to the group class members wrote a paragraph about their object and included some of the things we talked about in class. Some added extra research. Other class members chose to write about what brings them joy.

During the classes there was lots of joy, smiles of delight, laughter – sometimes tears – and conversation as we heard many lovely stories from class members. Thanks to all for sharing.

Jen, May 2025.



With thanks to Chris, Rachel, Paul, Tania, Emma and especially Craig for their support. And thanks to Adele for beautiful catalogue design and printing.

“Time flies so fast, and I have mixed feelings – wanting to smile and cry at the same time.”



FUSAKO

NAME OF OBJECT

Son's clothes

Newborn outfit and Hanbok
(traditional Korean dress)

MATERIALS

Newborn outfit: cotton

Hanbok: silk

I've had these clothes for more than 10 years. They were gifts from my parents-in-law. The baby clothes are special because when I was pregnant my mother-in-law and I went shopping for newborn baby clothes. We bought four outfits and this was one of them. At first, I thought it was too small for him, but after my son was born, it actually turned out to be a little big. Since we only had those four outfits, my mother-in-law washed them by hand every day – even in the middle of winter!

Honestly, while staying with her I sometimes felt overwhelmed because we had different opinions about how to raise my son. But now, looking back on that time, I truly appreciate her warmth

and kindness. Every time I see these tiny clothes they remind me of how much my son has grown – how small he used to be compared to now. He's in high school now. Time flies so fast, and I have mixed feelings – wanting to smile and cry at the same time.

The traditional Korean dress is called a hanbok. “Han” means Korea, and “bok” means clothing in English.

Hanbok is often worn in historical dramas and during cultural celebrations like weddings or New Years. This particular hanbok was a gift from my parents-in-law to wear during Lunar New Year. At the time, it was summer in Australia so my son didn't want to wear it – it was just too hot for him. I felt a bit sad he didn't wear it, but overall, it's a fond memory now.

SURY

NAME OF OBJECT

Olmec head

MATERIALS

Possibly gypsum

I have had this object for two years. I bought it on a trip to Mexico, wanting to have a bit of Mexico in Australia.

This sculpture is a representation of the great Olmec Heads. The Olmecs are considered the 'mother culture' of Mesoamerica, as their influence is seen in the art, architecture and culture of later civilisations such as the Maya, Zapotec and Teotihuacan. The Olmec civilisation flourished in Mesoamerica from roughly 1600 to 400 BCE. They thrived in the Gulf Coast region of present-day Mexico, specifically in the states of Veracruz and Tabasco. Colossal heads can reach up to 3 meters in height and weight several tons.

Lo compre en un viaje pensando en tener algo de Mexico en Australia. Esta escultura es una representación de las grandes Cabezas Olmecas. Los olmecas son considerados la "cultura madre" de Mesoamérica, ya que su influencia se ve en el arte, la arquitectura y la cultura de civilizaciones posteriores como la maya, la zapoteca y la teotihuacana. La civilización olmeca, que floreció en Mesoamérica aproximadamente desde el 1600 hasta el 400 a.C. Prosperaron en la región de la Costa del Golfo de lo que hoy es México, específicamente en los estados de Veracruz y Tabasco. Las cabezas colosales pueden alcanzar hasta 3 metros de altura y pesar varias toneladas.



"I bought it on a trip to Mexico, wanting to have a bit of Mexico in Australia."

BISALAKSHMI (BISHAL)

NAME OF OBJECT

Hand-fan

MATERIALS

Dried palm leaves, bamboo

I bought this fan five years ago and it holds a special place in my heart as it reminds me of my home in India, which I left behind. It not only keeps me cool during my travels but also serves as a cherished memory of my homeland. I got it from an Indian town named Shantiniketan. This town is a major centre for Bengali art, music, and handicrafts in West Bengal. The town is famous for its association with Rabindrath Tagore, the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913 for his collection of poems, Gitanjali. The hand fan is a traditional craft of this place.

Uses of this palm Hand Fan include: personal cooling in hot climates, religious rituals in temples and ceremonies, traditional home décor or

“It not only keeps me cool during my travels but also serves as a cherished memory of my homeland.”



handicraft souvenirs. It is an eco-friendly alternative to plastic fans and provides excellent ventilation.



NAME OF OBJECT Sari

MATERIALS Indian silk with
Aari embroidery work

I have had this sari for thirty years. My husband gifted it to me in India. This is a Bishnupuri silk sari from India, a treasured piece of my collection. Women from Kolkata skillfully weave intricate designs on these saris, using a blend of vibrant threads to create stunning patterns. This particular sari is adorned with a beautiful depiction of Lord KRISHNA and ARJUNA in a chariot in the battlefield of KURUKHETRA making it even more special.

My husband gifted me this sari 30 years ago, in 1995. It

holds deep sentimental value, reminding me of him and the love we shared before he passed away from cancer in 2016. Wearing this sari brings back cherished memories of my home in India, the place I left behind.

This sari is part of my identity and I love wearing it during festivals and special gatherings – it fills me with joy and a profound sense of connection to my roots.

Although I now live happily in Australia with my son, I deeply appreciate the warmth and companionship of Jen, Chris, and my other friends from our English conversation class.

HELEN

NAME OF OBJECT

Bouklo, water bottle

MATERIALS

Wood

I have had this bouklo for 32 years. I bought in a place called Flotina in Greece. A long time ago people in Greece used a bouklo to put water in when they travel. There are many different sizes – larger than this and very small. The very small ones are used to for alcohol.



“I like this bouklo because it reminds me of my homeland, Greece.”



SRI

NAME OF OBJECT

Blangkon headdress

MATERIAL

Batik material

I have had this Blangkon for four years. The Blangkon is from Indonesia.

It is believed the blangkon may be as old as Javanese script and inspired by the legendary story of Aji Saka. In the story, Aji Saka defeated Dewata Cengkar, a giant who owned the land of Java, by spreading a giant piece of headdress that could cover the entire land of Java. Aji Saka was also believed to be the founder of the Javanese calendar.

“This blangkon is special to me because it reminds me of Indonesia.”

Another theory is that the use of blangkon was adopted by the Javanese due to the combined influence of local Hindu and Islamic culture. The Muslim traders who entered Java were people from various places, including mainland Arab and Gujarati region and the blangkon is sometimes believed to be adapted from turbans. This is unlikely, however, because the story of Aji Saka itself predates the arrival of Islam in Java.

This blangkon is special to me because it reminds me of Indonesia.



NGOAN

NAME OF OBJECT

Placemats, vintage set

MATERIALS

Cork backing

I have had these placemats for a long time. I bought them from Vinnies shop in Lalor.

One placemat has a picture of the Swan Grassmere Old English Inn. The building dates back to 1165 and was originally a guesthouse for Blanchland Abbey. It later became a place for lead miners to gather and is now a hotel.

The other placemat depicts the Lord Crew Arms in Blanchland County Durham. The Lord Crew Arms has historical significance. It was originally an abbott's lodge dating back to 1165. It has special architectural features: ancient flags, inglenook fireplace and fortress walls. It has 26 rooms including doubles, suites and a family room. It also has two restaurants and a Crypt Bar serving local ale.

The Lord Crew Arms is situated in the village of Blanchland within the North Pennine Moors. It is reputedly haunted by the ghost of Dorothy Foster.

The placements are part of a vintage set so I don't use them every day. I keep them for good and display them on a bookshelf. I like the pictures of old buildings that have a history. When I first saw them they were special to me and I love to have them.

NAME OF OBJECT

Side Plate,

Fragonard Courting Couple

MATERIALS

Porcelain

I have had this plate for five years. My best friend gave it to me on my birthday. The Fragonard courting couple motif is inspired by the work of the French artist, Jean Honore Fragonard (1732 – 1806).

I love the gold rim on the plate and I keep it on a gold stand. I also like the couple sitting on the stone step. They are wearing gorgeous old-style clothes and the gentleman is giving flowers to the pretty woman.

It's special to me because my friend gave it to me on the day of my birthday. I don't use the side plate. I put it in the window cupboard in the dining room so I can see it every day.

REZWANA

NAME OF OBJECT

Afghani Gand,
traditional Afghani dress

MATERIALS

Gold and silver embroidery,
beads, mirror working, velvet,
silk, leather

I have been wearing traditional Afghani clothes since childhood. This dress comes from Afghanistan. The story of Afghani dresses is deeply tied to Afghanistan's rich culture and historical tapestry.

Each traditional dress tells a story of its region, ethnicity and heritage. Its colours symbolise peace, ethnicities and recognition. The colours of Afghan clothing were formerly red and green because the Afghan flag is red and green. The dress is special to me because it is traditional clothing and is a symbol of our country.

***“Each
traditional
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“My grandmother wore a scarf ... she rolled it up and put it on her head, then put the water jar on it to keep it steady.”



MARIA

NAME OF OBJECT

Souvenir water jar

MATERIALS

Wood

This is a souvenir water jar I bought a long time ago in a town in Italy.

I like it because when I was a child, I remember seeing my mother and aunty carry water jars on their head. The water jars were made of copper and much bigger. Some water jars held 20 litres of water.

People had to walk to get water, sometimes a long way and they used jars to collect the water. My grandmother wore a scarf on her head and she rolled it up and put it on her head, then put the water jar on it to keep it steady.

You don't see these water jars anymore and you don't see souvenirs like this anymore. The water jar reminds me of my grandmother, mother and aunty.

NAME OF OBJECT

Borraccia, water bottle

MATERIALS

Suede, skin, leather

This is a souvenir borraccia that was used in the north of Italy, closer to Germany. Borraccias were used to carry water or grappa. In the north, they drink a lot of grappa.

Grappa is made of fermented grapes. It is a very strong drink – 70 – 75% alcohol. You might have grappa with coffee or in winter if you're cold or before you eat. It can be used in cooking too.

I bought this in Pisa in 2001 when I went on a visit to Italy. Borraccias are not used any more.

AU

NAME OF OBJECT

Picture of Vietnam, Republic of
Vietnam scarves, cap & badges

MATERIALS

Picture: stamps, watercolour
Scarves: cotton, voile
Badges: enamel
Hat: cotton

These objects are special to me because they are of my homeland. Every year when 30th April comes I feel very sad because in my mind, it seems like yesterday. I remember when the last president of my country went to the broadcast station and told us we were falling to North Vietnam hands. We were shocked.

My city was in chaos. I couldn't leave my family when I saw my father sitting on the sofa, his head bowed, his eyes looking in the distance. He kept silent and my mother was devastated. My siblings were too young to understand. I cried a lot. I knew my future had stopped that day.

Soon after, the northern people came to all cities of my country. They forced us out of our house, they took over our factories, houses, farms and everything we had. My mum was so



distressed she died. They took the men to an education camp but let the women, children and old people live outside. The northern people took control of us and bossed us around. They wouldn't let us have any freedom. We weren't allowed to have an education, there was not much food, privacy and no civil liberties. That was the reason I left my home, not because I wanted to but because I was forced out. I LOST MY COUNTRY.

After I left Vietnam to go to Malaysia I had to choose a new language to learn. I lost my identity. I also lost my family, my friends, my language and my spirit.

In the bottom of my heart I hope that I will one day be able to return to my right homeland. I still find it hard to express my feelings because of language barriers.

This is a poem written by an American soldier called *Last Man Out* that I like very much:

LAST MAN OUT

Do not stand by my grave and weep
I'm not there. I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow
I am the diamond's glint on snow
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.
When you awake in the morning's hush
I am the swift uplifting crush
Of quiet birds in circle flight.
Do not stand by my grave and cry.
I am not there. I did not die.



I like the last line of the poem. It comforts me.

CHANH

"Joy exploded when two tiny hands of my grandkids wrapped around my neck and I felt their soft lips on my cheek."

FRANK

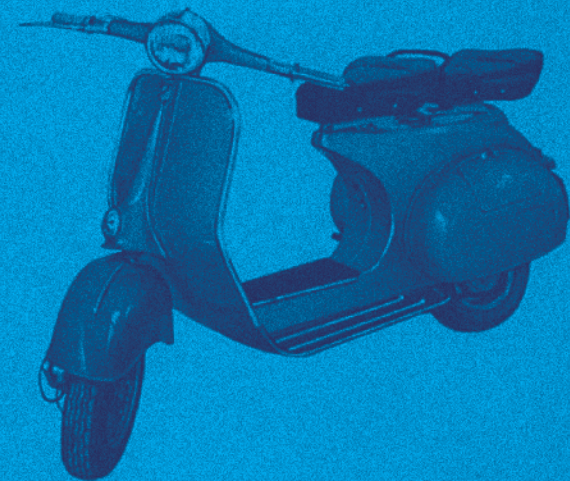
My Vespa is my pride and joy. Its colour is a stunning midnight blue.

I enjoy my vegetable garden. In the winter I plant cauliflower and broccoli. In the summer I like to plant tomatoes and capsicum.

I have seven beautiful grandchildren. I enjoy spending time with them, especially sharing meals.

"I have seven beautiful grandchildren. I enjoy spending time with them, especially sharing meals."

Vespa



KIMMY

NAME OF OBJECT

Áo dài, traditional
Vietnamese dress

MATERIALS

Velvet, beads, patterning,
lace, silk



*“Joy for me is
Vietnamese Áo
dài. I bought this
five years ago
when I travelled
to Vietnam,
where I come
from.”*

Áo dài is traditional dress and is worn for ceremonies such as weddings, Lunar New Year and other special events. Áo dài is part of the long-standing

culture of Vietnamese people. The dress is made of velvet with splits on the side and silk trousers worn underneath.

