



How to Write Museum Labels

WAGOLL (n.): “What a good one looks like”. An example used to guide students’ work in both style and substance.

Museum label (n): the label that describes an artifact in an exhibit and explains its significance to the exhibit as a whole

Task: Use the questions in Part 1 below to analyze a museum label created by the Valentine Museum’s curatorial staff. This label will serve as a mentor text to guide you in writing your own museum label for your architectural landmark. Then, use the graphic organizers in Part 2 to write a museum label for an artifact you have researched.





Part 1:
Study a WAGOLL

Answer the questions about the museum label below from the exhibit *West by Water* in [The Valentine Museum](#).

Model of the #2 Canal Lock at Byrd Park
around 1970

V.88.40.19 Gift of Theodore Haxall

Between 1880 and 1884, City Engineer Wilfred Cutshaw oversaw the construction of a new pump house and feeder canal to take water from the James River to the new reservoir in Byrd Park. Cruising up the canal to the new park was also a leisure activity for Richmonders with the "veritable fairy land of shrubs, green grass, trees and lounging areas" upon arrival.

Write down 3-5 things that you notice in the content/ structure/ techniques of the museum label.

(An example of a "noticing" has been included for you.)

Highlight/circle each instance that the author uses a date, name, or location. How do these details help the reader better understand the artifact described in the label?

What might you include in your museum label that isn't in this example?

- *The first sentence establishes what the museum label is about.*





Part 2:

Write a Museum Label

Prepare to Write

Artifact:			
Why/when was the artifact created?	What dates, names, and/or locations do you need to include in your museum label about this artifact?	What is the historical significance of this artifact?	Why did you choose this artifact? Or, how does this artifact answer your exhibit's central question?

Write!

Using the label you studied as a guide & the answers you prepared above, write a museum label for this artifact.
Artifact: Date Created: Author/Creator/or Who is Featured (if a photograph): Museum Label Text:

