**Lesson Plan for Cynthia Kok’s “Agneta Block’s Pineapple: Colonial Botany and the Europeanization of Knowledge”**

**Subject/Theme/Figure/Book:** Agneta Block, pineapple, natural history, colonialism

**Sources used to create lesson plan:** <https://jhiblog.org/2020/02/07/agneta-blocks-pineapple-colonial-botany-and-the-europeanization-of-knowledge/>

**Age of students (7th-12th grade):** 9th-10th grade

**Learning Objectives**

1. Main learning objective: To use paintings/artworks as primary source documents
2. Secondary learning objective: to become aware of how history is always told from a specific perspective
3. Skill students will have learned and practiced: analyzing images, building a persuasive argument

**Discussion Questions**

Specific Comprehension Questions

1. What was the significance of Agneta Block’s pineapple (and would you consider it “her” pineapple)? How is the pineapple in Jan Weenix’s painting different from pineapples you are familiar with?
2. How did Block use art? What does she leave out in depicting the pineapple and other exotic plants? Who, besides Block, is involved in the creation of her garden and the artwork that depicts her and her garden?
3. Define Londa Schiebinger’s term “green gold.” Why was botany so important in Agneta Block’s time period? Consider the context. What other historical events were taking place in Europe and in the world at this time?

Analytical Questions

1. What do we consider primary sources? List a few examples. If you were to tell your own personal history, what objects and documents would you use? What would those things say about you and why would they be important in writing your history? What are the shortcomings of those sources and what might they leave out?
2. Although we can find pineapples in most groceries stores now, they—and other things from the Americas—were very rare in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Who in Agneta’s time could experience a pineapple? Who might see her painting or other images of the pineapple, such as in illustrated encyclopedias? How do most people today get their information or see images of rare things? How might the broader public in the seventeeth century learn about America?
3. Think about the foods and things you encounter in your daily life. Where do they come from? How do you have access to them?

Activities:

1. Spend some time looking at Jan Weenix’s painting. In small groups, make observations. Start by trying to be as neutral as possible in your observations (ex: “I see a book”). Next, discuss your personal interpretations of what you have observed (ex: “I think the book represents knowledge”). The class can then discuss what these components of the painting tell us about its subject, Agneta Block. What did you discover from the painting that you might not learn elsewhere?
2. Write a short story from the pineapple’s perspective, starting from its origin in the Americas to its journey across the Atlantic to its life at a European dinner table or in a hothouse. How might its life in America differ from its life in Europe? How did it travel? What else might travel with it?
3. Working in small groups, pretend you are curating an exhibition (either with a set of study objects or with images online). Choose 5-10 objects and think of an organizing principle for your exhibition. What history will you tell using your objects?

**To Fellow Educators**

1. The suggested method for Activity 1 is taken from Jules Prown’s methodology for treating objects and artefacts as primary data. Consider using this Image Analysis Worksheet, taken from the National Archives Educators’ Resources: <https://teachingpals.files.wordpress.com/2017/02/photo_analysis_worksheet-old-version.pdf>