# Seminar activity: ‘Significance’, Dr Richard (Rick) Evans, Lecturer in Criminology

[Start transcript]

**[Rick]**

I’m going to get you all in pairs, and get you all to examine what in, archaeology, history, or social studies, you would call material culture. It’s based on an old parlour game; they used to play this back in Victorian times. It’s called ‘Significance’. I’m going to give you something, for example, a battered old water bottle, and you and your partner have to agree on its significance. That’s it.

[Rick distributes items to the class—water bottle, receipt, golf ball, CD].

[Discussion in pairs]

Okay, stop, please. That is the sound I love more than anything else. When I set an activity, and at first there’s puzzlement, then there’s a bit of a bubble, then a laugh or two, and when I ask people to stop, it takes awhile, because people have just got going. Now, the exercise, and it’s a very simple one—this is the stuff in my car basically. The point about that, is that when you are asked, you get some enquiring minds together—not always, but hopefully most of our students have enquiring minds—and you just get them talking to each other with a question, especially an open-ended question, and they start to peel back beneath the surface of things.

I heard my empty bottle of water being referred to as a symbol of globalisation, and so it is, absolutely. There is enormous significance in this humble object. And were you’re talking about modern economics and the environment, globalisation, and crime and environment, which is one things that I’ve taught, it would be a very good conversation starter.

If there’s one thing—okay, there’s a couple of things—but if there’s something I want you to take away from this, which I find an absolute rocket to my teaching, it is that: prepare ahead, find something stimulating and open, and then get people to engage themselves. And they will learn, recall, get much more from that, than from a great deal of being spoken at.

[End transcript]