Mondays with MoMA
Step 1
Look closely

Questions
1. Look at the image on the first page. What do you imagine is in the box?
2. Look at the image on the second page (see more detailed images here). How would you describe what you see?

Step 2
Learn more

The artist Alison Knowles used ordinary things such as books, beans, shoes, and strings to engage her audience’s senses.

She often used dried beans in her art, putting them in different containers like tea tins, big pipes used as rain sticks, and large boxes where a person could lie down in the beans. She also wrote poetry inspired by the sound of beans. This work, Sea Bean, consists of a cardboard box containing a bean in a plastic container and printed instructions that read:

empty out the bean
put cylinder to the ear
hear the sea.

Knowles said there was no grand symbolism in beans, “During the war years, especially if one didn’t have a lot of money, beans were a staple. I knew how to cook all different types of beans and feed sometimes large groups of people. ... The thing I like, too, is that I can go over the world, and there’d always be beans. There might not be meat, there might not be whiskey, but there’ll be beans.”

Step 3
Activity: Imagined activity for an everyday object

Materials: found objects, small containers, paper, pencil or pen

1. Find a box or container.
2. Select an everyday object and place it inside the box.
3. On a piece of paper, write a poem or a set of instructions that describes the object and gives ideas about how to engage with it.
4. Either place the paper inside the box with the object or affix it to the outside.

Step 4
Share!

Share your box with a friend or classmate and see how they react to it. Or you can email it to us at MoMA:
schoolprograms@moma.org.