

**Pre-Visit
Lesson Plan**



Mini-Museum



Autry National Center

Introduction

Artifacts can be used to tell a story about a person, time, or event. Museums are a great source for artifacts and other primary sources. They help people learn about civilizations, societies, and people through the objects they created and left behind.

Objectives

Students will:

- Learn about primary sources
- Examine objects to learn about the people who used them
- Learn about the role of museums
- Create their own exhibition

Learners

This lesson is designed for upper-elementary-grade students, but it can easily be adjusted for younger and older students, based on the amount of writing and designs elements assigned to the project. The main themes are anchored in critical thinking skills. Themes also relate to history and social science, language arts, and writing. This lesson also touches on museums and exhibit design.

Materials

- "Community Stories Outreach Kit" from the Museum of the American West or documents, photographs and objects from another source
- *Learning About Museums* worksheet
- *Primary or Secondary Source?* worksheet
- *Looking at Objects* worksheet
- *Writing Exhibition Labels* worksheet
- *Museum Exhibitions* worksheet
- Cardboard boxes and cloth

Content Standards

History-Social Science

2.1.1 — Trace the history of a family through the use of primary and secondary sources, including artifacts, photographs, interviews, and documents.

Visual and Performing Arts

2.0 — Creative Expression

3.0 — Historical and Cultural Context

Curriculum Frameworks

Historical Research, Evidence, and Point of View

- Students differentiate between primary and secondary sources.
- Students pose relevant questions about events they encounter in historical documents, eyewitness accounts, oral histories, letters, diaries, artifacts, photographs, maps, artworks, and architecture.

Procedure

Ask students to list different types of museums and write them on a board. Put a star next to types of museums your students have visited. For students who have never been to a museum, have them pick which one they would like to visit. Begin a discussion about museums in general.

Questions might include:

- *Why do people create museums?*
- *What do they do?*
- *Why are they important?*
- *What can you learn from visiting a museum?*

Hand out the *Learning about Museums* worksheet and have your students read the worksheet. If certain students need help reading, create groups that can work on reading the passage together.

After giving students enough time to read the selection have a discussion about what they learned using a KWL chart.

- K — *What did they already know?*
- W — *What was new information?*
- L — *What else would they like to learn that wasn't included?*

Next, move into a discussion of primary sources. Ask your students if they have heard of primary sources. Can they name an example? If they do not know about primary sources give them a few examples of primary sources and then see if they can come up with a definition. At this point have out the worksheet, *Primary or Secondary Source?*

Continue the discussion:

- *Why are primary sources important?*
- *What can we learn from them?*
- *What can they tell us that a history book can't?*
- *How can you tell if a source is reliable?*
- *What questions should you ask yourself when using a primary sources?*

Create a list of benefits and pitfalls of working with primary sources.

Activity

1. Rent a "Community Stories Outreach Kit" from the Museum of the American West or other cultural center close to your home or school; provide artifacts from your own collection for your classroom; choose objects from your school; or have students bring in objects from home.
 2. At the front of the classroom, lay out the objects that you have chosen to use in this exercise. Do not include any explanation as to what the objects are. Explain the need to handle objects carefully.
 3. Hand out the *Looking at Objects* worksheet to each group. You can have each student work on one worksheet, or have the group work together to complete one worksheet.
 4. Have the group choose one representative. This representative will come to the front of the classroom and choose one object for the group to work on.
 5. Have students fill out the *Looking at Objects* worksheet and discuss the object as a group. Tell students that they should be using complete sentences and descriptive adjectives when filling out their worksheets. Everyone in the group should have a chance to hold the object and participate in the discussion.
 6. Have a spokesperson talk about what the group learned by looking at the object. Each group should consider these questions for their presentation: what has the group learned about the purpose of the object, who might have used it, and when it was made.
- If you are using a "Community Stories Outreach Kit," talk about what you can learn about people just by looking at their things.
7. Next, have each group brainstorm themes that relate to the object they have chosen. For example, if they have a baseball, the theme could be sports, things that are round, things that are thrown, etc. If they have a bottle of perfume, themes could range from things that smell to things that people think make them beautiful to objects in a home.

8. Have students write down as many themes as they can think of and then work with each group to narrow it down to one selection. Once a theme has been chosen, the group should send two representatives to pick out at least two more objects from the front that strengthens their theme, or ask the students to bring in objects from home.

9. Using the *Writing Exhibition Labels* worksheet, students will work with the objects to create labels, listing the name, approximate time period, material, and a few sentences about what the object is and how it is used. Depending on how much time you have in the classroom, you can assign additional research to culminate in a report on the object. All labels should be written in complete sentences.

10. Explain to the class that they will be creating their own exhibits. Review what students remember from their experiences in museums.

- *Can you remember anything about how the exhibits looked?*
- *What do you think will make a successful exhibit?*
- *What colors are good to use?*
- *What makes a label interesting?*
- *Are more or less objects better?*

11. Have the students work together to curate, or organize, an exhibition. The *Museum Exhibitions* worksheet has a few exhibit design hints. Allow students to use props in the classroom to create an exciting exhibit. Fabric over books and boxes works very well. Have students curate their objects and print out labels.

Evaluation

After a title for the exhibition has been created, have a museum day in your class. Allow the students to visit other exhibits. Have spokespeople act as museum educators, and highlight their objects and theme.

Adaptation

This lesson can be adapted for lower or higher grades based on the amount of research you require students to do in order to create their labels. Also, if you have more time for this lesson, you can have students create much more elaborate exhibitions that could be displayed in a public place within the school or local library.

Primary or Secondary Source?

Primary sources come from people who actually saw or participated in an event and recorded that event or their reactions to it immediately after the event create primary sources.

Primary sources can include:

- Diaries, journals, speeches, interviews, letters, memos, manuscripts and other papers in which individuals describe events in which they were participants or observers;
- Memoirs and autobiographies;
- Records of organizations and agencies of government;
- Published materials written at the time of the event;
- Photographs, audio recordings, moving pictures, video recordings documenting what happened;
- Artifacts of all kinds; and;
- Research reports in the sciences and social sciences.

Most primary sources reflect the author's particular point of view. It is very important to understand who wrote the primary source and why. As a reader, you need to be aware of the author's perspective and to avoid taking the source at face value. You must often examine more than one primary source from the time period to get a well-rounded view of the event.

Secondary sources are accounts of the past created by people who were not present when the event happened or removed by time from the event.

A secondary source is a work that interprets or analyzes the past. For example, your history textbook is a secondary source. Someone wrote most of your textbook long after historical events took place. Your textbook may include some primary sources, such as direct quotes from people living in the past or excerpts from historical documents.

Learning about Museums

A museum is a place where objects are collected, protected, and displayed so that people can learn from them. Museums are everywhere, from big cities to small towns. There are over 16,000 museums in the United States alone. Is there a museum close to your home? Have you been? If you have visited a museum, you are not alone; about 865 million people visit museums in the United States every year. That is a lot of people.

Museums collect letters, diaries, posters, stamps, records, videos, baseballs, planes, stagecoaches, dinosaur bones, photographs, and about a million other objects. There is even a museum dedicated to collecting toilet paper.

Usually collectors, the people who gather items, are interested in a theme and collect a lot of the same kind of object. Do you have a collection? Maybe you can start a museum one day. Some collectors are very rich and spend their money to build big collections and museums. J. Paul Getty, who owned an oil company, was a famous art collector who created his own museum in Los Angeles. Other collectors find something that they like, coins for example, and collect as many as they can. Sometime people donate their collections to museums. Why do you think they do that?

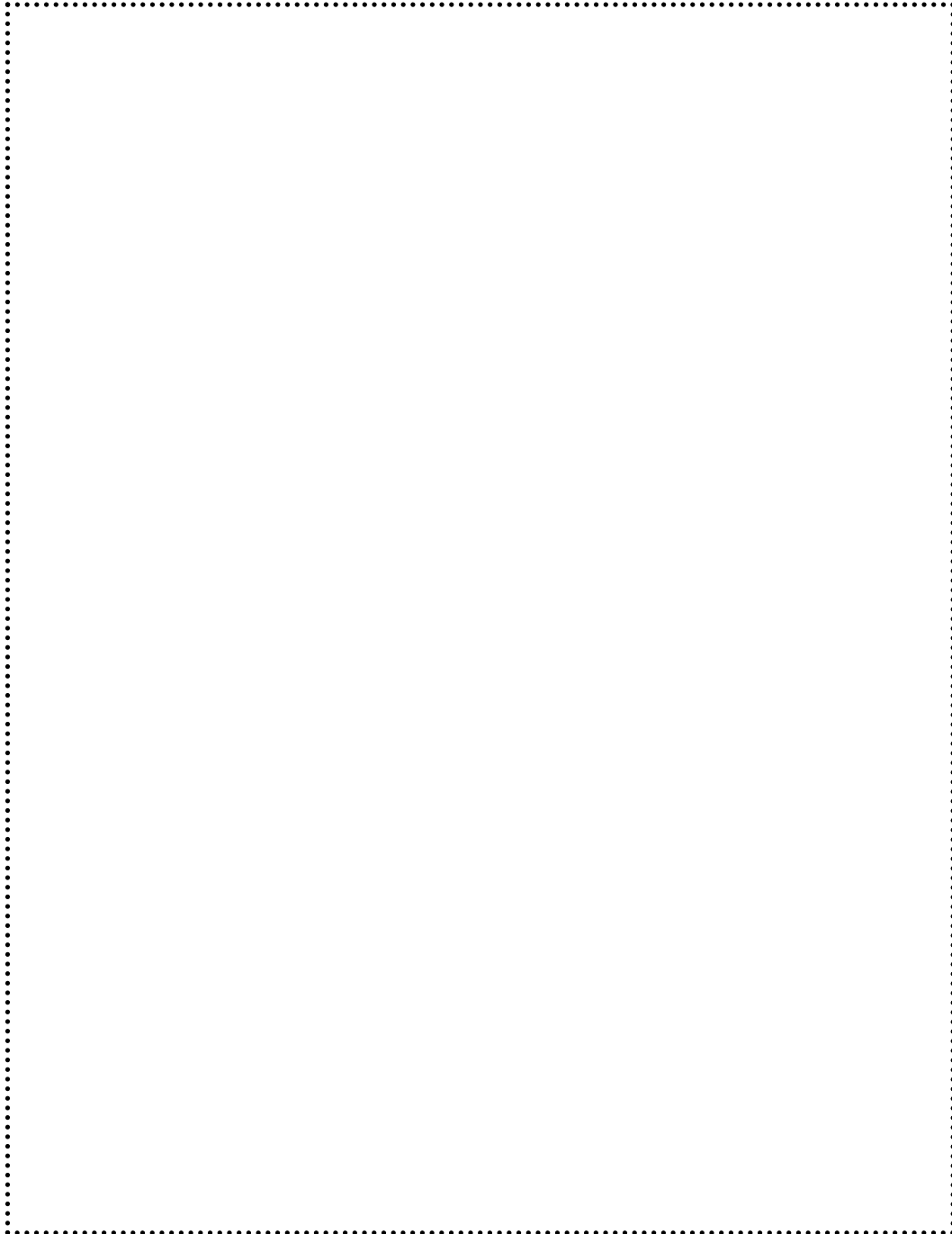
There are many kinds of museums. Can you name a few? There are art museums; science museums; museum that collect cars, planes and trains; museum about space; natural history museums; history museums; museums about dolls; kids' museums; aquariums and zoos; and many others.

When museums put their objects on display they are telling stories. Museum can help you learn about people and their culture, about famous inventions, and about the many things people create. Objects can teach you about the past, the present, and even the future. Sometimes you have to look real hard at an object to know what it is, other times you might know a lot about the collection. Either way, you are always learning!

Looking at Objects

Name:

Draw your object in the box.

A large rectangular box with a dotted border, intended for drawing an object.

Looking at Objects

Name:

Describe the object. How does it feel? What do you think it is made of? What colors do you see?

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How do you think this object is used?

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Have you ever seen an object like this? How is this object similar? How is it different?

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Writing Exhibition Labels

What information do you put on an exhibit label?
Use the following questions to help you get started.

Name of artifact:

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Name of person who created the object (if known):

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Date the object was created:

Sometimes people don't know the exact date an object was made, so they estimate a time period. For example, you could say the late 20th-century, or the 1950s.

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What is the object made of?

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Write a few sentences about why your artifact is important?

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Does it relate to other objects in the exhibit?
What do the objects have in common?

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Museum Exhibitions

Museums create exhibitions to show their artifacts and to share information with people. Usually exhibitions have a common theme that connects the objects. Labels give visitors important information about the objects on display. One of the most important parts of an exhibition is how it looks. If people think it looks boring, they won't stay to read all of the good information.

Here are some tricks of the trade when designing your exhibition.

- Place smaller objects in the front and larger objects in the back.
- Put some objects higher up than others.
- Place labels where they can be easily read and make sure the words are big enough for people to see from far away.
- Open books so that visitors can read the words.
- Use different colors and props to help direct people's attention.