

Museum Practices for Students

Objectives:

Grades Pre-K to 2: Students will be able to use artifacts and documents to gather information about the past.

Grades 3 to 4: Students will be able to make connections between and among events in their personal lives and those occurring in the community.

Students will be able to identify changes occurring in their daily lives and compare these to changes in daily life during a specific historic era.

Standards:

Grades Pre-K to 2: History/Historical Inquiry, Analysis and Interpretation, #1

Grades 3 to 4: History/Historical Inquiry, Analysis and Interpretation, #1
History/Historical Knowledge, Concepts and Patterns, #1

Materials:

Worksheets: How long do things last?
Survival Story
Drinking glass
Art Supplies

Activity: To Touch or Not To Touch

Touching objects is one of the most satisfying ways to interact with our material world. However, as any museum professional can tell you, touching is a sure road to ruin for objects in the collection. Students need to know that the reason not to touch is usually **not** because the object might break (although that is sometimes true). More important, however, is the fact that the oils and skin chemistry of the hands can erode the object. Light and temperature are other dangers to fragile objects.

Part One: Pass a glass around the class, and ask each student to feel the rim, both inside and outside. When everyone has had a turn, ask for a volunteer to drink a small amount of water out of the glass. Yep, no takers! Students will know that fingerprints while invisible are

still there. (You can also do this exercise with a pair of eyeglasses, and then have a student try them on at the end. What do they see?)

Homework: Worksheets: How long do things last? Survival Story.

Part Two: Place a sheet of white paper near the door to your classroom. For one week, every time a person comes in or out of the door, they should touch the paper. After a week, the paper will definitely show signs of wear. What has happened to the paper? How many times do you think it has been touched? How long would things in the museum last if every visitor touched them?

Activity: To Touch, Perhaps to Break

Give each student in the class an object, and tell them to imagine that the object is very fragile and precious. Using art supplies, each student should design packaging for the object and explain to the class the principle behind the protection.

Activity: A Picture Paints A Thousand Words

Objects that tell a story about a family, an individual, an event or a place are all candidates for preservation at a museum. The more information an object conveys the more valuable it is to a historian.

Homework: Ask students to bring something that is important to them to class with them the next day.

Collect the items before class, so that students do not have the opportunity to see one another's objects. Have the class "read" each object. What kind of a person owns the object (boy or girl)? What is it used for? What does it tell you about the person(s)? How old is it? Once the students have read all the objects have them claim the object they brought. Which class member does it belong to? Where did it come from? Did the classes' interpretation match the reality?