

Museum in a Classroom

This lesson is a brief introduction to museum process and object analysis. Students make a collection of personal objects, study them closely and mount an exhibition.

Objectives:

- Students engage in the basic museum processes of **collecting, preserving, studying** and **informing** as they develop an exhibition
- Students learn how to carefully study an object

Age level:

With appropriate modifications, this activity has successfully introduced object-based learning to groups from Year One to university.

Time:

1½ hours - can be condensed for a brief introduction if students are confident writers, or can be split into segments and expanded for more detailed study.

Introduction:

What do museum workers do?

Brainstorm ideas and make a list. Refer to items on this list as they fit in to the following steps of collecting, preserving, studying and informing.

Collecting:

What do museums collect?

Discuss the sort of objects a museum would collect and possible reasons for accepting or rejecting an item.

Let's make a collection. What objects are important to us at school?

Ask students to select the most important or interesting object that they have in their bag, pocket or desk. Encourage a diverse collection with minimal duplication. If students select similar objects, ask them to try to find alternatives; as a last resort, play "scissors, paper, rock" to decide who has to change.

Preserving:

How do museums look after things? How long do they keep them? Which things would be difficult to preserve?

Discuss the issues involved in preserving objects that are fragile, precious or decaying.

How will we protect our collection of objects?

Discuss and plan strategies to protect objects from loss, theft or damage during the exhibition.

Studying:

What sort of research is done at a museum?

Discuss some of the topics that that would be investigated at a major museum.

What can we find out by looking closely at our objects?

Use one of the Object Analysis worksheets from the Museum Magnet Schools [website](#) ([Object Analysis - Artefacts](#), [Object Analysis - Junior](#), [Three Step Object Analysis](#)) or adapt one to suit your class.

Informing:

How do museums share their knowledge?

Ask students what they know about how museums present information. Discuss exhibitions, publications, school programs.

How can we present our objects and information about them?

Have students condense the information from their object analysis into a brief label. It needs a title and about 25 words of description (see [Writing your object label](#) on the [MMS website](#)).

Clear desks and have students arrange their objects and labels for display. Discuss a title for their exhibition eg. "What's important to school kids?" or "Twenty-first Century Student Artefacts"

Then all leave the room. Explain that when we re-enter, it will be a museum. Discuss appropriate museum behaviour for preserving objects and for learning about exhibits. Perhaps invite a neighbouring class to join you as you explore the exhibition.

Conclusion:

Review the process and the content covered. Ask students how they would improve their exhibition if they had more time and resources. How would a museum do it? Discuss possible topics for future exhibitions related to curriculum themes.

Extension:

Create a website by having students type their labels and take digital photos of their artefacts. See a simple example at www.mms.qld.edu.au/5h-artefacts

Resources and Further Reading:

Museum Magnet Schools – includes education resources and showcase of examples:

<http://www.mms.qld.edu.au/>

Creating a Classroom Exhibit – how the Smithsonian Museum Magnet Schools integrate museum process into their teaching:

<http://www.mms.qld.edu.au/docs/Creating-a-classroom-exhibit.pdf>

David Fittell, [Museum Magnet Schools](#), Queensland Museum & Education Queensland, 2004