

Create Your Own Exhibition

GRADES 6-12



Overview

This activity is geared toward participants in grades 6-12. The estimated amount of time to deliver this lesson is 45 minutes.

This program engages participants in historical interpretation and allows them to examine and read objects which are not necessarily text-based. Participants will then create their own “exhibit” and write a text justifying their choices in the story they tell through their exhibit.



Materials

- Pencils
- Pictures or objects with contextual information (can be selected from documents from curriculum guide)
- Paper
- Poster board/cardstock
- Scissors
- Glue sticks or tape



Objective

Participants will be able to identify considerations curators make when creating an exhibition out of objects from a museum’s collections.



Set Up

Create object packet for each object with all of the following information:

Name of Artifact:	Photograph of Artifact:
Material:	Dates Associated with Artifact:
Where and How Artifact was Used:	If applicable: Information about Historic Owner:



Inquiry

Ask participants how they decorate their room or locker and how they decide what to display.

- What objects do you display in your room?
- How do you decide what decorations to use?
- How has that changed over time?

Make the connection that everyone is a curator of their own life and the work that takes place in museums.



Investigation

Explore an exhibition in a museum space, whether that be a restored space, exhibit case or gallery. Talk to participants about how only a small percentage of a museum's collection is on display.

- Who decides what to display/what story to tell (curators? public? former crew members?)?
- Why/How do they determine what to put on display?
- What might need to be kept in mind in preserving these items so that we can display them?



Activity

Create an Exhibition

Let participants know that they will be creating their own exhibition. Have participants work in groups and provide pictures of objects and images to be cut out. Give participants a few minutes to interpret the images of the objects on their own. When necessary or applicable, facilitate object-based discovery discussion about the images.

This process will allow participants to identify objects of interest without getting overwhelmed by the information in the object packets. After several minutes provide participants with information corresponding to their object packet.

Participants will use the images and information to curate an exhibit, grouping objects together to display. Each group must have 4-6 objects. Arrange chosen objects on cardstock and glue in place. Include object labels with relevant information near each object. Participants must create a text panel/document explaining their display/exhibit and justifying why they grouped objects in the way they chose (what story are they trying to tell)?

Groups present their exhibits by pairing with another group and discussing, then sharing out.

- What is challenging about this process?
- What could potential next steps be as a curator?

To Explore Further: Change the Interpretation

Objects often get swapped out of museum exhibitions. After participants present their original exhibition, have them swap one or two objects out of the exhibition and change the theme and/or interpretation of the objects.



Lesson Connection

See our lesson, **Creating a Secondary Source**, to have participants further explore considerations one might need to take when extracting information from primary sources to create a secondary source.



Background

Museums collect artifacts, papers, photos and other items for a number of reasons. One reason is preservation. Museums ensure that the materials in their care are housed safely so that they will survive for generations. Museums also use their collections for research, exhibitions, education programs and other initiatives.

An exhibition typically relates to a particular topic. It has themes and main ideas that can be explored by the objects or media displayed. Labels explain how the objects relate to the topics, themes and main ideas. Curators and collections staff decide what items are on display, and

consider which artifacts help illustrate a particular topic. Museum staff also think about the condition of an item. They might create reproductions of fragile materials, like papers or photographs, to protect the original while still allowing visitors to learn from it.



Additional Resources/References

For access to primary source documents:

<http://docsteach.org/>

<https://www.fold3.com/>

<http://dp.la/>



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EXHIBIT LABEL TEMPLATE

Exhibition Title:	Exhibit Description: <i>How were objects used? How are they connected? Why are they important? What makes them unique?</i>
Object: Date and Place of Creation: Material(s):	
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