



# museum without walls

MANDURAH COMMUNITY MUSEUM

## What is a Museum?

### Education

#### Teacher Ideas

##### Overview:

These activities are designed to get students thinking about what museums are and what they do.

##### Objectives:

Students will be able to name 3 responsibilities museums have.

Students will be able to analyse a physical object and interpret its use- a critical task done at nearly every museum.

##### Questions:

What's a museum? Why do museums exist? What do they do?

## Activity 1: What do we know?

Find out what your students already know about museums. Then lead a brainstorming discussion on what museums do.

### Procedure:

Begin by asking your students if they've ever been to a museum. Which ones? Did they go there with family or maybe on a school excursion?

Remind your students that museums come in many forms, including:

- Botanical gardens
- Art museums
- Maritime museums
- Aquariums
- Battlefields
- Historic homes
- History museums
- Science and nature museums

Write your students' responses on the board.

### What do these places have in common?

They are all places where people can **learn**. That's the first thing all museums have in common. Museums teach and people learn. This process is called **interpretation** by people who work in museums. A tour guide leading a class through a historic house, for example, is interpreting the house for the visitors.

### What else to these places have in common?

All museums also **collect** objects. Collecting objects is the second characteristic that most museums have in common. An aquarium collects rare fish, a botanical garden collects different kinds of plants, a history museum collects old things made by people long ago. What do the museums named by your students collect?

Now ask your students if they collect anything. Why? Where do they keep their collections? Why do people try to take good care of their collections?

Museums also must take good care of their collections. This is the third thing all museums have in common: they work hard to **preserve** their collections. This is why many objects at museums are in glass cases.

So, all museums have three things in common:

1. They **teach** people through interpretation.
2. They **collect** objects.
3. They **preserve** the objects they collect.

Next, your class will try interpreting an object themselves.

## **Activity 2: What can I learn from looking?**

Divide your class into small groups. Hand a worksheet (attached) to each group. Have each group use an object from their pocket or from their desk to interpret. It can be a coin, a book, a pencil, a calculator-anything! Have each group try to learn from their object just by looking at it closely, using their visual skills to answer the questions on the worksheet.

## **Assessment: Wrapping up**

Once your students have finished their worksheets, congratulate them! By interpreting a physical object, they've just completed an activity that museum staff do every day.

You might ask your students how the objects in a museum differ from the one they just interpreted. Museum objects tend to be old, rare, and therefore, valuable. Many have amazing stories to tell. It's up to museum staff to develop the skills needed to learn from historic objects, known as **artefacts**, which may be hundreds of years old.

Finish by going over the worksheets. Put creative answers and observations on the board.

## **Activity 3: Create your own museum**

Museums collect objects so that future generations of people will be able to understand the past and to learn from it. The objects we choose to preserve say a great deal about our society and how we choose to be remembered. How would you like to be remembered?

Have each student bring a favourite object from home into the classroom and create a museum label for it using the (attached) template. Remind students to bring an object that is meaningful to them. Combine the objects your class brings into a temporary museum **exhibition** of your own!

## Objects from the past

What can you learn by looking?

Pick an object from your pocket or from your desk. It can be anything, a coin, a pencil, even a book!

Look closely at your object. Then try to answer the questions below. People who work in museums must be able to learn from objects, and then must pass on their knowledge to museum visitors.

What **colour** is it?

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What is it **made of**?

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**Who** made it?

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**Where** was it made?

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**When** was it made?

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What was it **used for**?

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**Who** would have **used it**?

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Do we **still use** objects like this?

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How would a **new one** be different? Why?

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What does this object tell you about how life has **changed** since it was made?

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**Draw** a picture of it and label the parts:



### Make your own museum label!

Create your own museum label for the object you brought from home. Your label will tell other people about your object.

Name: -----.

My object is a -----.

It is made of -----.

It is -----years old.

Write three sentences that describe your object and what it says about you:

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Many museums display their objects in special rooms called **galleries**. Make your own gallery in your classroom.