

Table of Contents:

Introduction

[Learning Standards](#)

[Lesson 1: An Introduction to Museums](#)

[Lesson 2: Objects Can Tell a Story](#)

[Lesson 3: Finishing the Museum](#)

[Resources](#)

[Vocabulary](#)

[Sample Press Release](#)

[Exhibition Samples](#)

[“Who Works in the Museum?” Handout](#)

[Object Loan Form Worksheet](#)

[Observing Objects Worksheet](#)

Introduction:

Overview:

Museums use objects, pictures and words to tell a story. They offer varied experiences for visitors, and require the expertise of staff members with different skills. Students in this unit will become curators, educators, and directors, and use the creation of a museum exhibition as a framework for investigating a given topic.

Grade level: May be adapted to all grade levels.

Prior Knowledge:

This unit may be used as an aid to focus study of a variety of topics, and can easily be incorporated into Social Studies, Science, or Language Arts curriculum.

Objectives:

Students will participate in the creation of a museum exhibition in the roles of curators, educators, and directors.

Students will use critical thinking skills to investigate a topic and present it to an audience through the use of objects, images, and words.

Need Help Getting Started?:

CCHS educators are available for in-school programming to introduce or teach entire units to your students. We also offer professional development to help incorporate elements of these lessons into your classroom. Interested in setting up an in-school visit, or have a question? Contact us by e-mail (educator@cchsny.org) or phone (518-758-9265).

Learning Standards:

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts

Reading Standards for Informational Text

Key Ideas and Details

3. Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.

Craft and Structure

5. Describe the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, and problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in a text or part of a text.

6. Compare and contrast a firsthand and secondhand account of the same event or topic; describe the differences in focus and the information provided.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. Interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively (e.g., in charts, graphs, diagrams, timelines, animations, or interactive elements on Web pages) and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text in which it appears.

Writing Standard

Production and Distribution of Writing

4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

5. With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

7. Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

8. Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; take notes and categorize information, and provide a list of sources.

Responding to text

11. Create and present a poem, narrative, play, art work, or literary review in response to a particular author or theme studied in class.

Speaking & Listening

1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade level topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
 - a. Come to discussions prepared having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion.
 - b. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions and carry out assigned roles.
 - c. Pose and respond to specific questions to clarify or follow up on information, and make comments that contribute to the discussion and link to the remarks of others.
 - d. Review the key ideas expressed and explain their own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion.
 - e. Seek to understand and communicate with individuals from different perspectives and cultural backgrounds.

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

4. Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience in an organized manner, using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.
5. Add audio recordings and visual displays to presentation when appropriate to enhance the development of main ideas or themes.

Language Standards

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

6. Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, including those that signal precise actions, emotions, or states of being (e.g., *quizzed*, *whined*, *stammered*) and that are basic to a particular topic (e.g., *wildlife*, *conservation*, and *endangered* when discussing animal preservation).

Lesson 1: An Introduction to Museums [\(Back to the Top\)](#)

- Introduction of project - We will be creating a museum
 - What is a museum?
 - A museum is a place where objects are displayed in exhibitions.
 - It is a place to explore and learn, by viewing the exhibitions, taking a tour, listening to a lecture, or attending a class or workshop.
 - Your school/class will host a museum, and each participating class will create their own exhibition. What is an exhibition?
 - An exhibition allows you to tell a story using objects, pictures, and words
 - Each exhibition will have a theme. Can anyone tell me what a theme is?
 - The theme is the subject to which the objects relate.
- Think about a museum that you have visited.
 - What were the exhibitions?
 - What were the themes?
- Present theme for your class' exhibition
- Mission Statement: All museums need a statement that explains their purpose. In fact, companies and school districts also have mission statements.
 - Provide an example of a mission statement. (school district mission statement)
 - What does mission statement tell us?
 - It explains the purpose of the place, what the school or museum hopes to achieve.
 - Develop a mission statement for the class' exhibition
 - Think again about an enjoyable museum you've visited.
 - What did you really like?
 - What made it a fun place to visit?
 - Are these types of things that you would like to happen at your museum?
- Optional Extension: Students may take on the role of various museum staff members for the remainder of the project. Students will apply to the director (teacher) for a job by writing a persuasive letter. In the body of the letter, they must convince the director of their qualifications. Students should include rationale for a second choice job as well.
 - Director—the teacher
 - Designers
 - Builders
 - Curators
 - Publicist
 - Museum Educators

Before Lesson 2:

If students are applying for jobs, they should submit their persuasive letters. Teachers will make staffing appointments.

Students should begin to think about what types of objects might be included in their exhibition that will tell the story of their theme.

Lesson 2: Objects Can Tell a Story

[\(Back to the Top\)](#)

- Review Exhibition Theme and Mission Statement
- As a class, develop a list of primary sources and a list of secondary sources.
 - Primary Sources: Artifacts or documents created during the time you are studying. Made by someone who was there.
 - Interviews
 - Letters
 - Diary Entries
 - Newspaper Articles written at the time
 - Objects!- furniture, art, tools, clothing, jewelry, etc.—these are the main primary source found in museum exhibitions
 - Secondary Sources: Reference primary sources, but include information from multiple sources, and analyze the information.
 - Textbooks
 - Books in the Library
 - Magazines
 - Newspaper articles about historical topics (ex. “History Happened Here” column in the *Register Star*)
 - Your exhibition itself will be a type of secondary source—a compilation of primary sources, along with information and observations about them.
- Choose an object to study as a class, and fill out the “Observing Objects Worksheet” together. Students will each complete one of the worksheets later on their individual object for the exhibition.
- Discuss the students’ ideas for what types of objects should be included in their exhibition.
 - Can they be found in the school? In their home? Do they need to be built for the exhibition?
 - Develop an object list—each student should be responsible for loaning/creating at least one object.

Lesson 3: Finishing the Museum [\(Back to the Top\)](#)

Depending on the size/scale of your museum, this lesson should be broken down into a number of work sessions, where students break into groups depending on the museum jobs they were assigned. Periodically, the director (teacher) should hold staff meetings, to encourage groups to communicate—for example, it is important for the designers to be aware of the activities planned by the educators, as well as to know what objects the curators will be including. If the class has not been assigned specific museum jobs, assignments can be divided up as they come up, or can be completed as a whole-class activity (for example, designing the exhibition). Each student's individual components can be completed as homework over a period of time.

Individual Components:

- After the class creates an object list for the exhibition, each student may be responsible for one artifact. Depending on your topic, this may be something found or borrowed (especially for history topics) or something made (like a diorama or model or artwork). Your exhibition may contain a mix of both types of objects.
- Each student should be responsible for filling out one “Object Observation Worksheet.” Especially if object made by the students are being used, they will learn more from the exercise if they pair up and fill out the worksheet for their partner's object.
- Based on research and their “Object Observation Worksheet,” each student should write the rough draft of an object label for their artifact. Labels should be relatively brief, to keep the visitor's attention. If you desire to have the students write a longer piece on their object, assign them to write a paper, in addition to the label.

Designers/Builders:

- Review their job descriptions (design and build the exhibition)
- Measure the museum space
 - Transfer their measurements to graph paper (Set scale: every square is a square on the floor or each square represents 1ft, etc.)
 - Sketch design ideas that allow space for education activities and the objects that need to be displayed.
- Will create a list of materials needed to complete the design
- Will write a letter to parents requesting donation of necessary materials
 - Optional Extension Activity: Older students may be required to create a budget for the project.

Publicists:

- Review their job descriptions (inform the public about the exhibition and museum as soon as possible. Work with the curators to create an exhibition catalog.)
- Make a list of how the museum will be publicized
 - How?
 - Where?
 - Who needs to know?
- Begin writing text for posters and flyers. Make sure that it includes the W's: what, when, where, why, who!
- Use computers to work on publicity flyers, invitations, posters, and press releases, using text (created in previous meeting) that has been approved by the Director
- Make a distribution list—where will flyers be posted, how many are needed
- Make a request for copies of all paper goods, based on the distribution list

Educators:

- Review their job description (create activities for visitors)
- Generate a list of possible activities
 - Think about your target audience
 - How can you make the exhibition a learning experience for different groups of visitors- they should consider friends their age, adults, young children who cannot read, etc.
- Choose one activity for each group (adults, non-readers, children)
- Decide among themselves which students are responsible for each activity
- How and where will visitors receive/participate in the activities? How do the activities fit into the rest of the exhibition?

Curators:

- Review their job description (to care for and keep track of the objects. To create an exhibition catalog.)
- Curators should review their classmates' "Observing Objects Worksheets," and create "Object Loan Forms" for each of the objects that will be in their care
- Make sure that the loan forms are alphabetized, clipped together, and completed as far as possible. This will make it easier if there is a problem with something, and when it is time to return objects.
- Make sure there are artifact labels for each student's object

Host an opening! Invite family, friends, students, and teachers to enjoy your work.

Resources: ([Back to the Top](#))

- “About Museums” from the American Association of Museums. Includes a description of “What is a Museum?” and a museum directory. Most appropriate for high school level students.
<http://aam-us.org/aboutmuseums/>
- *Fancy Nancy at the Museum*, by Jane O’Connor, Harper Collins, 2008.

Vocabulary: ([Back to the Top](#))

- Curator: The person in charge of the objects in a museum. The curator studies the museum’s collections and carefully chooses the objects that tell a story for an exhibition.
- Director: Oversees the entire museum staff, and makes sure the curators, educators, and designers all work together to follow the mission statement
- Educator: Creates activities to help all different age groups and types of learners enjoy and learn from their museum visit.
- Exhibition: A collection of objects, pictures, and words that are put together to tell a story
- Museum Collections: Objects, often of historic, artistic, or scientific value, and are owned by a museum because they help tell the story in that museum’s mission statement. For example, the Columbia County Historical Society collections objects that were made or used in Columbia County, that help us tell the story of the people who lived and worked here.
- Primary Source: Artifacts or documents created during the time you are studying. Made by someone who was there.
- Secondary Source: Reference primary sources, but include information from multiple sources, and analyze the information.

Sample Press Release: [\(Back to the Top\)](#)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Ann-Eliza Lewis
2010

518-758-9265
director@cchsny.org

Date: April 19,

Inked Over: Our Printed World opens Saturday April 24, 2010!

The Columbia County Historical Society (CCHS) is pleased to announce the opening of *Inked Over: Our Printed World* at the Society's Museum on 5 Albany Avenue and at the James Vanderpoel House at 16 Broad Street, both in historic Kinderhook Village. The opening will be celebrated at both locations on April 24th with a special reception from 4 to 6:00pm. This event is free.

The Columbia County Historical Society Museum and Library is open Sunday noon to 4pm and Monday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday 10:00am to 4:00pm. Admission to the museum is \$5 and includes both locations. Admission is free for all CCHS members, seniors 65+, and children 12 and under.

The exhibit illustrates how the ability to print economically on all manner of surfaces transformed our world in the 18th – 20th centuries. With new affordable technologies, our surroundings became brightly colored and patterned, and suddenly we could communicate in many different mediums. Imagine for example, the spare interior of an early 18th-century house, such as the Luykas Van Alen House in Kinderhook. Now think about a home of the Victorian era or even the 1960s: color, clutter, and pattern abound. The difference is due largely to the development of print technology, which transformed commercial products of all types. *Inked Over* explores this transformation of American life in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries.

For more information about the Society please call 518-758-9265 or email cchs@cchsny.org; www.cchsny.org.

-END-

Examples of Exhibitions Installed: [\(Back to the Top\)](#)



From Inked Over: Our Printed World
at the Columbia County Historical Society, 2010-2011



From Inked Over: Our Printed World
at the Columbia County Historical Society, 2010-2011



From Inked Over: Our Printed World
at the Columbia County Historical Society, 2010-2011



From *Columbia County in the Civil War: Home and Away*, at the Vanderpoel House of History, Columbia County Historical Society, 2011-2012



From *Columbia County in the Civil War: Home and Away*, at the Vanderpoel House of History, Columbia County Historical Society, 2011-2012



From *Columbia County in the Civil War: Home and Away*, at the Vanderpoel House of History, Columbia County Historical Society, 2011-2011

Who works in the museum?

Which museum job best fits you?

Designers are visionaries. They see possibilities and decide how the exhibition will look.

A good designer is usually also a good artist and mathematician. They:

1. Measure the space exactly.
2. Measure doors, windows, and other stationary objects.
3. Transfer measurements to graph paper.
4. They choose colors, decide traffic flow, how to display each of the objects.
5. Create at least two scale plans for the staff to review.
6. Once the plan is finalized, they create a scale plan for the builders to follow.

Builders are practical and able to figure out how to make the design work. They implement the design. They:

1. Decide how to build the design. Will it be made of wood or cardboard boxes of various sizes? Will they need large sheets of paper or plastic tablecloths for the walls, ceilings? Will they need covers for the floor?
2. Begin to gather materials, designate a storage area.

Curators are organized and like to take care of things. They are responsible for the objects in the museum and their safety. They:

1. Safely store all objects.
2. Make sure the objects are safe while on display.
3. Have lenders sign a loan form for each object.
4. Write a description of each object on the loan form.
5. Have each lender write his/her own description, for labels.

Publicists are creative and possess good writing skills. They are also artistic. They are responsible for promoting the museum. This means that they make the public aware of what is going on. They:

1. Create flyers, posters and invitations.
2. Write press releases
3. Contact television, radio, newspapers to see if they will send reporter and photographer.
4. Create a logo.
5. Take photos.
6. Work with curators to create a catalog.

Educators like to teach others. They design creative activities for exhibition visitors.

They:

1. Decide who is the target audience. This means they decide who their visitors will be, and who they want to visit.
2. Create an activity for each identified group

Directors are good listeners and are able to get along with people. They:

1. Make sure everything stays on schedule.
2. Conduct each staff meeting.
3. Write and give a gallery talk at the museum opening.
together with the board of directors, have final say in all decisions.

Name: _____

Object Loan Form

Title of the Exhibition: _____

Dates of the Loan: _____
(when did the object come to the museum – when will the object return to the lender):

Lender: _____
(name of the person who owns the object)

Lender's Address: _____

Lender's Phone Number: _____

Description of Object(s): _____ Object(s) Condition: _____

Signature of the Lender: _____

Date: _____

Signature of the Curator: _____

Date: _____

Name: _____

Worksheet: Observing Objects

Objects can be great primary sources when you are researching the past. This worksheet will help you look closely at an object, like a detective, to see what you can learn from it.

Observe

Look closely at the object. Make sure to look at the front, back, top, bottom, and sides!

Sketch

Draw your object here. You may choose to draw several different views, or draw the whole object and a detail.

Think

You may not be able to answer all of the questions, and some questions may require more research to find the answers.

What is the object? Does it have a name? (Hint: you may need to answer this question last!)

How big is the object?

Is there any writing on the object (in museums, we call this “markings”)? Does the writing give you any clues about the object?

What is the object made of?

How was the object made? (by machine, by hand, on a loom, etc.)

Who made the object?

What would the object have been used for?

Can you tell by looking at the object that it has been used? (Is it dirty? Does it have wear marks?)

Who might have used the object?

When was this object used?