

RESOURCE LIBRARY | ACTIVITY : 50 MINS

The Importance of Preserving the Past

Students explore the National Museum of African American History and Culture and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice's Legacy Museum. Students learn about Standards for Museum Exhibits Dealing with Historical Subjects and design a mini-exhibit on slavery in preparation for a proposed design for a *Clotilda* exhibit.

GRADES

6, 7, 8

SUBJECTS

Anthropology, Archaeology, Sociology, Conservation, English Language Arts, Geography, Human Geography, Social Studies, Civics, U.S. History, World History, Storytelling

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2 PDFs, 3 Links

OVERVIEW

Students explore the National Museum of African American History and Culture and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice's Legacy Museum. Students learn about Standards for Museum Exhibits Dealing with Historical Subjects and design a mini-exhibit on slavery in preparation for a proposed design for a *Clotilda* exhibit.

For the complete activity with media resources, visit:

<http://www.nationalgeographic.org/activity/importance-preserving-past/>

DIRECTIONS

Sunken Slave Ship Unit Driving Question: *How do artifacts and their preservation impact communities?*

Uncovering the Past Lesson Driving Question: *How are artifacts and stories of past lives uncovered?*

1. Engage students in learning about the standards for creating historical museum exhibits and explore how exhibits are created to tell a story.

- Explain to students that they will be working toward creating a museum exhibit.
- Ask students:
 - *How many of you have been to a museum before?*
 - *What kind of museum was it?*
 - *How was the museum organized?*
 - *What kind of exhibits did you see?*
 - *What do you think goes into planning for a museum display or exhibit?*
- Tell students that there is a great deal of planning and consideration that goes into preparing a museum exhibit, especially when handling historical or fragile artifacts and objects. For example, when archaeologists excavated the wreck of a French explorer's ship, the *La Belle*, off the coast of Texas, the project took several years and millions of dollars. The wreck's remains were raised piece by piece and were taken to a lab to preserve those pieces. Museum technicians and archaeologists put the wreck back together at a museum, but the final product was too fragile to travel. However, particular pieces were preserved and were able to travel to other museums on loan and displayed as part of exhibitions.
- Have students read, individually or as a class, this article on [Standards for Museum Exhibits Dealing with Historical Subjects](#). If reading as a class, pause when encountering difficult language to support understanding and to make relevant connections.
- Ask: *Why is it important that historical exhibits have standards they must meet?*
- As a class, discuss how museums tend to group artifacts and exhibits by a theme, and even sub-themes within larger themes as an organizational tool and to tell a story through the collection.
- Provide students with an example by displaying an image of a museum map to the class, such as [the Metropolitan Museum of Art Map](#), noting how within each major area, such as Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, there are separate rooms that help to organize the art exhibits even more.

2. Students create their own mini-exhibit based on artifacts from the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

- Distribute the [Slavery Exhibit Planner](#) to each student.
- Display the [NMAAHC Collections artifact gallery](#).
- Have students browse the [Slavery and Freedom Exhibit](#) of the National Museum of African American History and Culture and select three artifacts that they feel would be grouped together under a particular theme for a mini-exhibit on slavery.
- If students need other artifacts, demonstrate how to browse the site by using the search feature and typing in “slavery” or selecting different topics within the filters. Click on a displayed artifact to show students how more information is revealed by selecting “view object.”
- Have students complete their *Slavery Exhibit Planner* based on the artifacts they have selected.

3. Direct students to use a rubric to self-evaluate their mini-exhibit to assess how it meets the American Historical Association's museum standards.

- Have students use the self-evaluation rubric on the *Slavery Exhibit Planner* worksheet to evaluate how their chosen artifacts work together to create a [cohesive](#) exhibit that meets the standards.

4. As a class, have students define an official standard to add to their culminating project rubric.

- Display the [Standards for Museum Exhibits Dealing with Historical Subjects](#) for the class.
- Discuss the value of the standards in their project work, and ask students to identify which of the standards are relevant to the students’ projects.
- Highlight words or phrases they feel are relevant to their work.
- In groups, invite students to write a standard/expectation for their project rubrics that is inspired by the [Standards for Museum Exhibits Dealing with Historical Subjects](#).
- Have students share their newly defined standard and vote on which to include in the [Sunken Slave Ship: Final Project Rubric](#).

Tip

Step 1: Students may need help in understanding the standards. The infographic [I Am a Historian I Make Exhibits](#) explains the responsibilities of a museum curator and what must be considered when creating exhibits. Note: contains the word “ass”

Tip

Step 3: Students can evaluate a partner's [Slavery Exhibit Planner](#) using the [Standards of Museum Exhibits Dealing with Historical Subjects](#) to practice reflecting with a rubric and providing constructive feedback.

Rubric

[Slavery Exhibit Planner](#): When reviewing student selections for the slavery exhibit, take note of whether or not the student has included evidence that they've met the achievable standards. For instance, is there evidence that the student has identified the artifact as an object, written documentation, oral history, image, work of art, music, or folklore? Also, take note of whether or not the student presents multiple competing points of view in their selection and description of the artifacts and any connections to how the selected artifacts would represent the diversity within their own community. If there does not seem to be a connection among the selected artifacts or if the exhibit is not addressing any of the standards in an identifiable way, support the student in better understanding how they can demonstrate the requirements.

Extending the Learning

Students read [The Legacy Museum: From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration](#) and watch [EJI's New Legacy Museum](#) about the National Memorial for Peace and Justice's Legacy Museum. Provide vocabulary explanation for the following terms: lynching, segregation, and genocide. Ask the following questions:

- *Where have we seen or heard about segregation and genocide in history or our own lifetimes?*
- *Why would people want to immortalize these topics in a museum?*
- *Does the location of this museum matter? Why or why not?*
- *How might memorials, such as this one, prevent history from repeating itself?*

OBJECTIVES

Subjects & Disciplines

[Anthropology](#)

- [Archaeology](#)

- Sociology
- Conservation
- English Language Arts

Geography

- Human Geography

Social Studies

- Civics
- U.S. History
- World History

Storytelling

Teaching Approach

- Project-based learning

Teaching Methods

- Guided listening
- Information organization
- Research

Skills Summary

This activity targets the following skills:

- 21st Century Student Outcomes
 - Information, Media, and Technology Skills
 - Information Literacy
 - Information, Communications, and Technology Literacy
 - Media Literacy
 - Learning and Innovation Skills
 - Communication and Collaboration
 - Creativity and Innovation
 - Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
 - Life and Career Skills

- Initiative and Self-Direction
- Leadership and Responsibility
- Productivity and Accountability
- Social and Cross-Cultural Skills
- 21st Century Themes
 - Civic Literacy
 - Global Awareness
- Critical Thinking Skills
 - Analyzing
 - Applying
 - Creating
 - Evaluating
 - Remembering
 - Understanding
- Geographic Skills
 - Acquiring Geographic Information
 - Analyzing Geographic Information
 - Answering Geographic Questions
 - Asking Geographic Questions
 - Organizing Geographic Information

National Standards, Principles, and Practices

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS & LITERACY

• CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1:

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on Grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

• CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.2:

Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.

• CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.8:

Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the

data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.9:**

Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

- **WHST.6-8.2.:**

Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/ experiments, or technical processes.

- **WHST.6-8.4.:**

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

THE COLLEGE, CAREER & CIVIC LIFE (C3) FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL STUDIES STATE STANDARDS

- **D1.5.3-5.:**

Determine the kinds of sources that will be helpful in answering compelling and supporting questions, taking into consideration the different opinions people have about how to answer the questions.

- **D2.His.6.6-8:**

Analyze how people’s perspectives influenced what information is available in the historical sources they created.

- **D3.1.6-8:**

Gather relevant information from multiple sources while using the origin, authority, structure, context, and corroborative value of the sources to guide the selection.

Preparation

What You’ll Need

REQUIRED TECHNOLOGY

- Internet Access: Required
- Tech Setup: 1 computer per learner, 1 computer per pair, Color printer, Monitor/screen, Printer, Projector, Speakers, Word processing software

PHYSICAL SPACE

- Classroom
- Computer lab

GROUPING

- Heterogeneous grouping

RESOURCES PROVIDED: WEBSITES

- National Museum of African American History and Culture: Slavery and Freedom Exhibit

RESOURCES PROVIDED: HANDOUTS & WORKSHEETS

- [Slavery Exhibit Planner](#)
- [Sunken Slave Ship Final Rubric](#)

RESOURCES PROVIDED: REFERENCE

- American Historical Association: Standards for Museum Exhibits Dealing with Historical Subjects

RESOURCES PROVIDED: MAPS

- MMA: Map of the Metropolitan Museum of Art

BACKGROUND & VOCABULARY

Background Information

Museums have a long history, going back to the third century B.C.E. in Egypt. Today, however, it has become uncommon to find any country or even a town, that does not have a museum. The traditional role of museums is to collect objects and materials of cultural, religious, and historical importance, preserve them, research them, and present them to the public for education and enjoyment.

Organizers or managers of museums and their exhibits are called curators. Curators oversee the museum's collection and develop, plan, and execute various exhibitions, planning all aspects of the presentation and installation of artifacts. Curators need strong analytical skills

to determine the origin, history, and importance of the objects they work with. They are responsible for documenting identification and authentication processes.

Curators also must know how to organize, store, and easily retrieve records and documents as needed for authentication purposes. Curators create labels and interpretive materials for artwork. It is important for them to understand the multiple perspectives of historical events, so they can accurately represent these perspectives in their exhibits. Since they are also responsible for ensuring that a museum is a teaching tool for the community about the past, they must organize educational events and opportunities to engage the public with the exhibits and the learning that is attached to it.

Prior Knowledge

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Recommended Prior Activities

- [Ethnography of Africatown](#)
- [Finding the Clotilda](#)
- [From Benin to Mobile](#)
- [Meet Cudjo Lewis](#)

Vocabulary

Term	Part of Speech	Definition
artifact	<i>noun</i>	material remains of a culture, such as tools, clothing, or food.
cohesive	<i>adjective</i>	unified or sticking together.
constructive feedback	<i>noun</i>	tool to enhance the teaching and learning process; highlighting strengths and achievements as well as areas for improvement.
exhibit	<i>noun</i>	display, often in a museum.
gallery	<i>noun</i>	area used to display groups of material organized by type.
legacy	<i>noun</i>	material, ideas, or history passed down or communicated by a person or community from the past.
preserve	<i>verb</i>	to maintain and keep safe from damage.

For Further Exploration

Articles & Profiles

- [NPR: The History of Museums, 'The Memory of Mankind'](#)
- [ASCD: Introducing the Museum Project](#)

Video

- [TedEd: Why Do We Have Museums?](#)



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