

Museum Artifacts

Museum Artifact: Objects have a unique fascination that enhances learning and curiosity, and they help to document the history of ordinary people. Object-based learning helps students to develop important thinking skills, such as critical observation and the ability to make connections. Museums often display tools of the past. With each display there is an informational label. An artifact label provides important facts. These facts include what the object is, what it is made out of, how old it is and who donated it to the museum. It also gives other information to understand the significance of the artifact and why it is included in the museum gallery.

With the help of a family member, students need to choose a family artifact. We will be focusing on tools of the past. Our working definition for a tool is: any implement, instrument, etc held in the hand and used for some work. Tools can be found that were used in the home, place of business or work, about the farm, or in handicrafts and building.

Do not give up on this assignment easily. You may be surprised how many old tools have been kept by people long after the tools have been retired from active use. Many people even have collections or decorate their home with tools of a time gone by. If the actual object cannot be transported to class, students may take a photo of the item.

Having a collection of items of your own displayed in the classroom helps the students to get excited about this assignment. If you do not have a collection of items consider contacting The History Museum on The Square to reserve one of their Pioneer Trunks, What is it made from?

Before students can create the labels they may need to do research to learn more about the object. They can interview a family member or person providing the artifact to learn about it or they may need to dig deeper by researching online.

Here are some questions they may need to consider:

- Does it have a label, date, or other writing on it?
- Does it have any moving parts?
- Was it machine made or hand made?
- Does it have any stains or other signs of use?
- Does it have a particular name?
- What was its primary use?
- Is it similar to any tool that we use today?

Explain that, in museums, the word "label" refers to the panels of printed information in an exhibition. Then tell the students that they'll be responsible for writing labels for their own objects. List the following guidelines where everyone can see them.

- Identify the object. (You might also want to state when it was created, if you know this information.)
- Explain what it's made of.
- State who owns the object. (You can also include why the object is important to the owner or to other people.)
- Point out any particular parts that the viewer should pay attention to and explain why they matter.
- Keep your label short. (Remember that exhibition visitors don't want to spend all their time reading. Also keep in mind that exhibition space is limited.)

Explain that research is often an important part of setting up an exhibition. Curators try to find out as much as they can about the objects they're working with, in part so they can effectively interpret the objects (in the form of written labels, lectures, and so on) to exhibition visitors. Encourage the students to do any additional research, as necessary, on their objects. For example, if the object a student brings in belongs to a grandparent, perhaps the student could talk to the grandparent to find out more about the object.

Provide students with a hard copy or digital of [Anatomy of Museum Label](#) (Penn Museum) graphics and discuss the various parts. Then provide examples of actual museum labels.

Using the Museum Artifact Label Planning Guide, choose an artifact from the classroom that as a class you can work together to create a museum label. Students then use the guide for their own artifact and create their artifact label. Tell students to remember to include concise, accurate and clear information.

Once students have completed their labels, have each student write a scavenger hunt clue about their item. The teacher then creates a Scavenger Hunt for the classroom museum. Students tour the gallery and complete the scavenger hunt. You might even want to invite other classes to tour the museum and complete the scavenger hunt.

Museum Artifact Examples

Shell paint container
Maya (Guatemala, Mexico, or Belize),
late Classic period, 550-850 AD
Carved conch shell

This vessel mirrors the hand of the artist who held it more than a thousand years ago. Carved from a shell, it once contained the slip used by a Maya painter. Imagine him cradling the shallow bowl in his palm, its tapered end resting on the wrist as, again and again, he dipped his brush into the pool of liquid within. Traces of that ancient pigment remain.

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Tea Cup • Collection of My Mom • Shaara Torah • Student Curator: Madison P.



Tea Cup
5 1/2 x 5 1/2 x 3 inches, Fine China
England, 1967
Collection of My Mom
Student Curator: Madison P.

This belonged to my grandmother who passed away 13 years ago and it was given to my mother. My grandmother enjoyed collecting different and unusual tea cups and this is one of my favorites.

This artifact has no Jewish connection.

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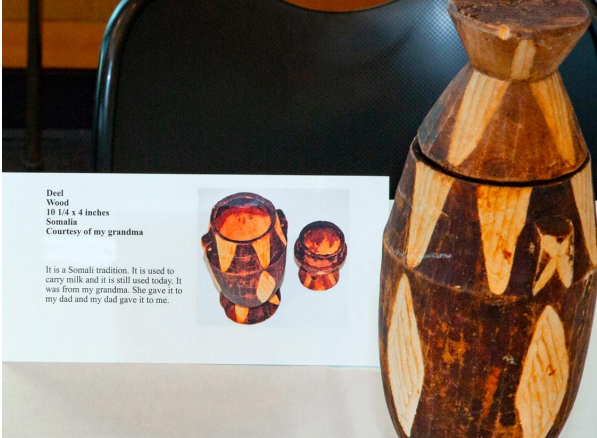
OBJECT: Tooth extractor
DATE: c. 1860
NUMBER: 79.034.052
CATEGORY: Medical Tools & Equipment

DESCRIPTION: Civil War era wood and metal tooth extractor, also known as a tooth key, used to pull teeth. The dentist or surgeon would hook the curved end around the bad tooth, twist and pull to remove the tooth.

CURATOR'S NOTE: Most people don't like the dentist. We go because we need healthy teeth but we don't dwell too much on the tools the dentist uses. But look at this tool closely. It's from a time before the introduction of safe local anesthetic drugs like Novocain. A patient might have been given chloroform or ether to knock them completely unconscious but only if it was available. This tool allowed for a quick, though not painless procedure. But given a choice between a sore rotting tooth and having the problem quickly fixed, which would you choose? Makes you appreciate your dentist a bit more now, doesn't it?

SOURCE: Thomas H. Silver

exhibit envoy



Deel
Wood
10 1/4 x 4 inches
Somalia
Courtesy of my grandma

It is a Somali tradition. It is used to carry milk and it is still used today. It was from my grandma. She gave it to my dad and my dad gave it to me.

**Museum Artifact Label
Planning Guide**

Student Curator _____

Drawing of Artifact	Name of Artifact	
	Measurement in Inches	Materials
	Place of Origin	Approximate Age (or date made)
	Person Who Lent the Item	
Story Of Your Artifact		
Significance of the Artifact to your family		