



Smithsonian Institution

FALL 2017

THE MUSEUM IDEA

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Smithsonian magazine

museum day **live!**

MINECRAFT
EDUCATION EDITION

This year, Museum Day Live! features special interactive lesson plans created by Smithsonian in partnership with Microsoft using Minecraft: Education Edition. These lesson plans are designed to stimulate STEM activities in a variety of settings.

THE MUSEUM IDEA

“Real museums are places where Time is transformed into Space.”

— Orhan Pamuk, novelist

CATEGORIES: Culture, Art, Science, History

AGES: Primary (5 - 8 years old), Intermediate (9 - 12 years old), Middle School (12 - 15 years old)

OBJECTIVE: Plan your own “Museum of Me”

MINECRAFT: EDUCATION EDITION EXTENSION

Create museums using Minecraft: Education Edition

- As a way of introducing the notion that an assemblage of things can tell a story, consider what objects you would bring together to help frame your story.
- Write an artist's statement explaining the choices you've made in your museum. Think about the architecture and how visitors will navigate through the space. Remember to name your museum!
- After creating your “Museum of Me” in Minecraft, reflect on the quote above. How has the digital age changed your concept of space and time? What about your concept of the traditional museum? What will the museums of tomorrow look like?

Related lessons and worlds: [Landmarks in our Community Lesson](#)



BEGIN YOUR MINECRAFT JOURNEY:

Download the trial at aka.ms/beginhere

Join our community at aka.ms/joinus

Learn to Play via our Tutorial at aka.ms/learntoplay

Start a conversation using [@playcraftlearn](#) and [#MinecraftEdu](#)

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National Air and Space Museum

Good teaching is the ability to get students to see the old as new and the new as old. It is the art of leading people to take a second look at what they look at every day and having them see it—*really see it*—for the first time. It is the capacity to get students to find the familiar in the unfamiliar, the known in the unknown: to understand what they see.

An exciting way of opening a student’s eyes to the new in the old and the old in the new is through your local museum and the objects, or things, natural and man-made, living and nonliving, which museums collect, preserve, display, and interpret. Museum objects may be either extraordinary or commonplace, but they are always authentic. They are always the real thing. Their authenticity and the manner in which they are displayed and interpreted give them a unique power to educate.

This, then, in essence is the “museum idea,” which like all ideas, is portable. If you want to open your students’ eyes to things and through things, museums are a great place to start. But if you don’t want to stop there, or if there is no museum in your area, here are some ways of conveying the “museum idea” to your students in your own classroom.

All of these exercises can help students understand what museums are about: why they exist and what the people who work in them do. More importantly, through activities such as these, students can find out for themselves that there’s much to be learned from handling, studying, and displaying real things. These are lessons that cannot be learned from television, radio, the printed and spoken word or, in fact, in any other way.

And that is the “MUSEUM IDEA.”

—Dennis O’Toole, former Curator of Education
National Portrait Gallery

CURATING YOUR “MUSEUM OF ME”

The word *curator* comes from the Latin *curare*, meaning “to take care of.” A museum curator oversees the care, display, and interpretation of objects. The interpretation comes in when these things are brought together in an exhibit to tell a story.

As a way of introducing the notion that an assemblage of things can indeed tell a story, ask students to consider what objects they would bring together to tell their own stories in a “Museum of Me.”

MUSEUM OF ME

You might suggest the idea of a timeline that marks the most important events of the student’s life. This can serve as a guide for deciding which objects to gather to represent those events. The objects might be photographs, drawings, souvenirs, toys, items of clothing, or anything else. Challenge students to broaden the scope of the timeline by looking into what was happening in the world at large in the years the timeline covers.

ACTIVITY 1: BE A CURATOR

Now ask that each student winnow down the list of objects to the ten best for telling the story. Suggest the idea that a single object can be interpreted in very different ways, depending on how it is presented. For example, a rubber snake placed next to a rubber alligator might represent an interest in herpetology or memories of a trip to Florida. A rubber snake placed next to an apple might represent memories of a Bible class.

TAKING A DEEPER LOOK AT ART

Playing Artist: Artists often use very subtle ways to communicate their message. The Lansdowne portrait of George Washington to the right is a great example of how the artist used symbols to convey a specific idea to viewers. Ask students to take a close look at the portrait. Below are some questions to prompt discussion. After students analyze the picture, ask them how *they* would paint George Washington.

- George Washington disliked posing for portraits. Do you think he really held a sword for hours for the artist, or did the artist include a sword as a symbol?
- What other symbols can be found here?
- What do these symbols tell viewers about Washington in 1796?

Playing Curator: Using the Lansdowne portrait again, ask students to design a picture frame to display the painting. Would they use a large, elaborate frame or something simple? Ask them to compare their drawings and consider the impact a frame has on the work.

Finally, ask students to write an *exhibition label* that will be hung next to the painting in the museum.



Lansdowne portrait, oil on canvas, Gilbert Stuart, 1796
National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution;
acquired as a gift to the nation through the generosity of the
Donald W. Reynolds Foundation

ACTIVITY 2: DRAWING UP BLUEPRINTS

Curators and exhibit designers have to consider how the architectural space of a museum room shapes a visitors' experience of the objects on display.

After each student decides what objects to include in their "Museum of Me," the design process begins. The student should draw up a plan to show how the items they've chosen can best be arranged to communicate *their story*—their hobbies, pets, family, friends, school, hopes, dreams, etc.

After completing Activity 1, use Activity 2 to design the floor plan of the exhibit. Ask students to respond to some of these questions:

- What color are the walls and floor?
- How big are the objects on display?
- Does the room feel crowded or empty?
- Where does the light come from? Are there windows?
- Does the room itself create a certain mood?
- How might the atmosphere shape a visitor's experience?

ACTIVITY 3: ART OF ARCHITECTURE

Now that students have decided what will be included within their museum and how visitors will move through the exhibit, encourage students to consider the exterior.

- Is the museum in a city or a rural area?
- Is the museum large or small?
- Does it fit in with its surroundings or does it have a bold architectural design?



Smithsonian Institution Building (The Castle)
Ken Rahaim, Smithsonian

BUILDING ON THE PAST

In the opening statement on page 3, Dennis O'Toole expresses the importance of learning by "handling, studying, and displaying real things." Since that statement was originally written in 1978, we've seen the rise of the personal computer, internet, mobile devices, selfies, and social media. We're now living in a digital age—our concepts of communication and sharing ideas have seen a shift away from the real. When working on these activities, challenge your students to rethink what exactly a museum is and should be. Are physical objects still necessary to tell their stories, or are they more important than ever?

Below is a list of great articles and resources for students to create their own digital collections.

RESOURCES

Discover, create, and share your own digital collections using Smithsonian's Learning Lab: learninglab.si.edu

List of museum specific jobs and descriptions: mag.rochester.edu

Smithsonian Institution Buildings: si.edu/museums

Five Things You Didn't Know About Picture Frames: smithsonian.com

The Powerful Objects From The Collections of Smithsonian's Newest Museum: [Smithsonian magazine](https://smithsonian.com)

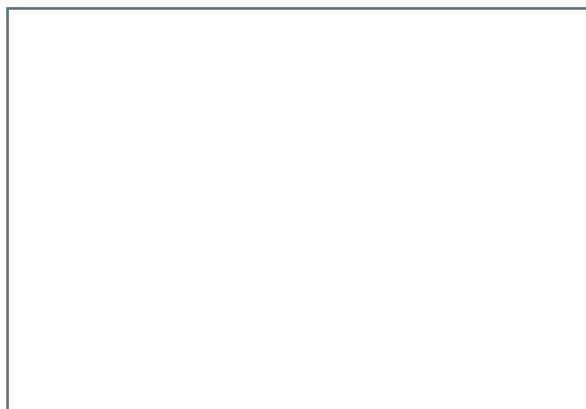
Watch A 1,400-Pound Right Whale Skull Arrive At the Smithsonian: smithsonian.com

Inspiration for this lesson and the introduction came from *Art to Zoo*, December 1978: smithsonianeducation.edu

MUSEUM OF ME: BE A CURATOR

INSPIRED BY WORKS FROM: _____
Museum

INSTRUCTIONS: A curator's job is to oversee the care, display and interpretation of objects. Imagine you're a curator seeking inspiration for your next exhibit, an exhibit about YOU! Select ten (10) objects to bring together to tell your story. Consider how the same object can be interpreted differently based on how it's presented. Look for symbolism in works of art or objects that relate to you. For example, including a map might suggest you want to travel. Fancy jewelry might suggest that you aspire to be wealthy or maybe that you love to dress up.



1

Title: _____

Artist: _____

Date: _____

Medium: _____



2

Title: _____

Artist: _____

Date: _____

Medium: _____

MUSEUM OF ME: BE A CURATOR



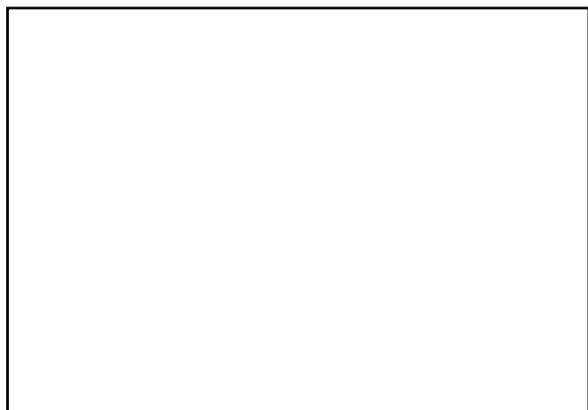
3

Title: _____

Artist: _____

Date: _____

Medium: _____



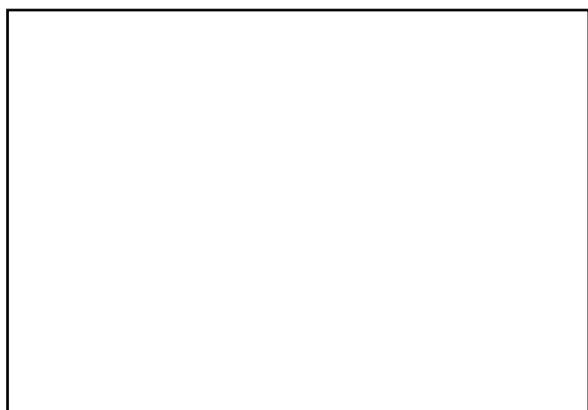
4

Title: _____

Artist: _____

Date: _____

Medium: _____



5

Title: _____

Artist: _____

Date: _____

Medium: _____

MUSEUM OF ME: BE A CURATOR



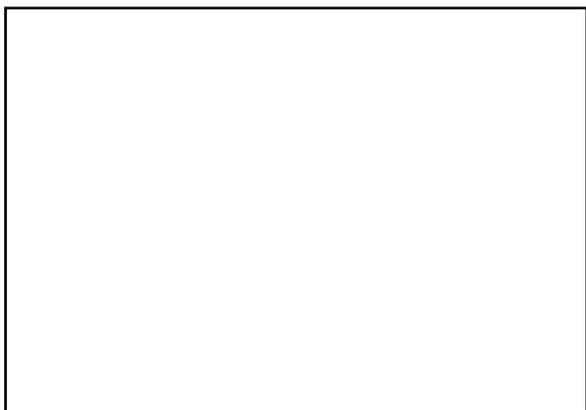
6

Title: _____

Artist: _____

Date: _____

Medium: _____



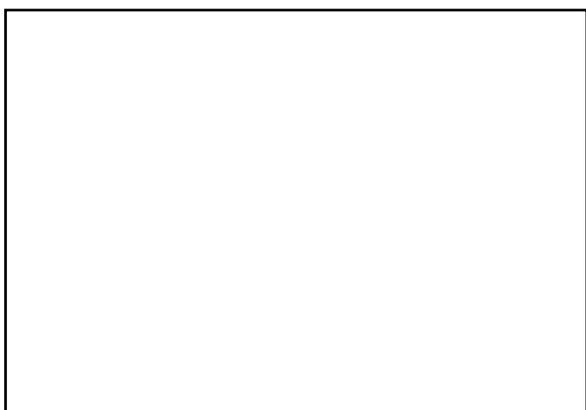
7

Title: _____

Artist: _____

Date: _____

Medium: _____



8

Title: _____

Artist: _____

Date: _____

Medium: _____

MUSEUM OF ME: BE A CURATOR



9

Title: _____

Artist: _____

Date: _____

Medium: _____



10

Title: _____

Artist: _____

Date: _____

Medium: _____

EXHIBIT DESIGNER

An exhibit designer constructs the layout for an exhibit and also decides wall colors and object arrangement.

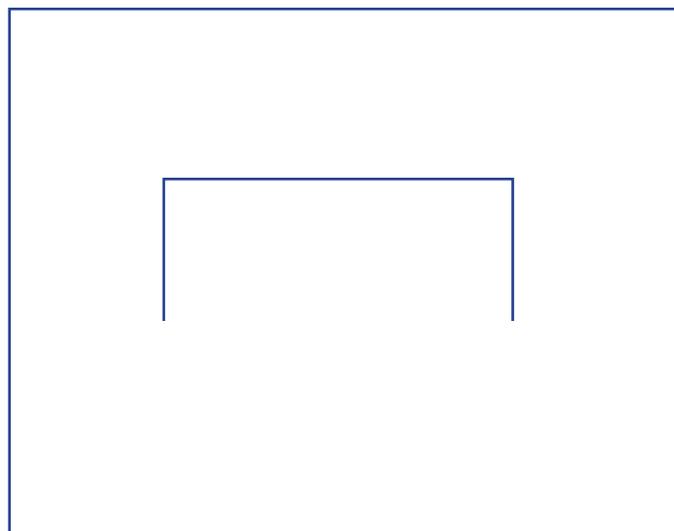
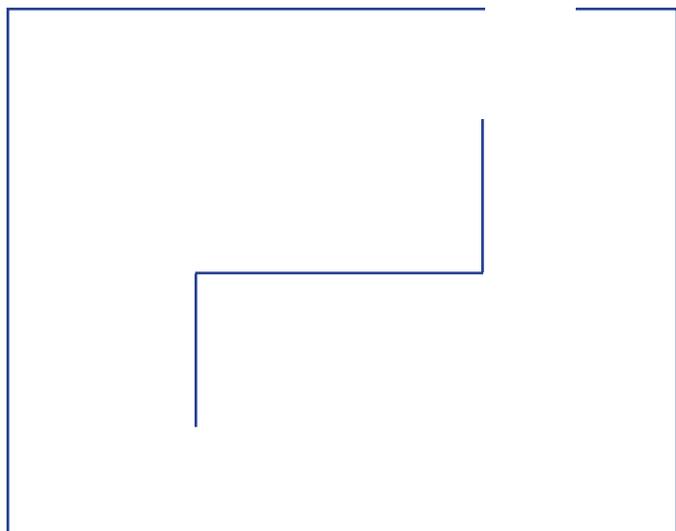
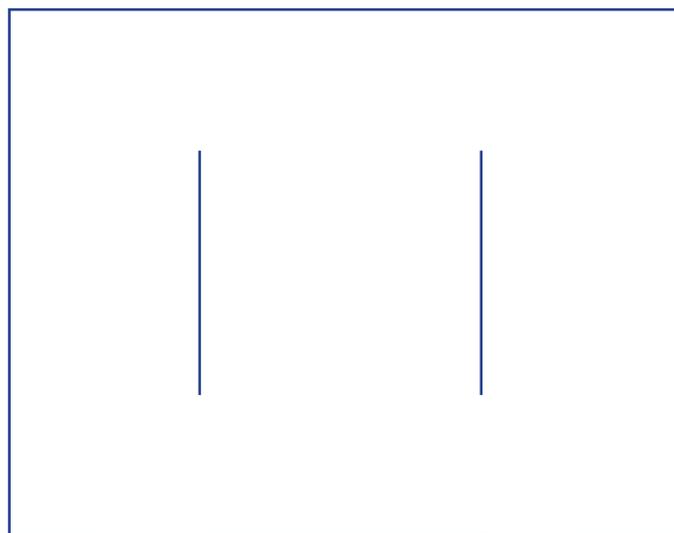
Be an exhibit designer and draw a frame or color the wall around the pieces you've selected.

Let your imagination go wild!

MUSEUM OF ME: DRAWING UP BLUEPRINTS

INSTRUCTIONS: After deciding what objects you will include in your “Museum of Me,” the design process begins. Select a floorplan below for your exhibit. Using the numbers next to the objects you drew in Activity 1, arrange your exhibit. What color are the walls and floor? Where does the light come from? Are there windows? Draw tick marks to represent how much space each object takes up and arrows to show how visitors move through your exhibit.

Exhibit Title



MUSEUM OF ME: ART OF ARCHITECTURE

INSTRUCTIONS: Now that you've selected what the interior of your museum will look like, it's time to take a stab at the exterior. In the space below, draw an architectural design for your museum. Remember, the building is the first impression a visitor will have of your "Museum of Me."

Museum Name

