

What Can We Learn from Museums?

Educator's Guide

Adapted from: [Can We Believe What We Learn From Museums and Other Historic Sites?](#)

Before the Visit

Step 1: Introduce students to the purpose and the origin story of Shelburne Museum with this [Google Slideshow](#). This background knowledge should help put students in a better position for inquiry and critical thinking during their time at the Museum.

Step 2: After viewing the slideshow linked above, engage in preliminary inquiry by having students respond to the following questions. This can be a written activity, discussion, or both! (Worksheet provided.)

- What do you expect to see when you get to Shelburne Museum? Some things to think about historical items, artworks, and buildings.
- What stories do you think will be told at the Museum? Whose stories are they?
- What questions do you have that you hope will be answered by your visit?

During the Visit

Students will be using their Passports throughout the day to record what they are seeing, thinking, and wondering across the Museum. Remind them that this will be a valuable resource when they return to school and reflect on their visit. Thoughtful details and careful and complete work will be helpful!

After the Visit

Students will reflect on their time at the Museum. This can be a written activity, discussion, or both (worksheet provided). If students completed the pre-visit worksheet, they should have that available for reference.

- Were any of your “Before Your Visit” questions answered by your visit? If so, choose one of those answered questions. Share your question and the answer you found.
- If none of the questions were answered, share something interesting that you learned or noticed.
- Share a story that was “told” by something you saw at the Museum. Some ideas to think about

are stories told by the *Ticonderoga*, items in the General Store, or a painting.

- For advanced learners—What stories are missing? Why might they be missing?

Lesson Extensions

- Use these pre- and post- visit inquiries for a visit to another museum or historic site, either virtually or in-person.
- Tell a story from Shelburne Museum in more depth: create an artwork, write a short story or a poem, act it out in a skit, etc.
- [“I Used to Think...Now I Think...”](#) Thinking Routine from Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Additional Resources

Ellsworth, Tina M. “Can We Believe What We Learn from Museums and Other Historic Sites?” Using Inquiry to Prepare Students for College, Career, and Civic Life (Secondary Grades), edited by Scott M. Waring, National Council for the Social Studies, 2023, pp. 296-328.

C3 Teachers. <https://c3teachers.org/> Accessed 11 March 2024.

Shelburne Museum. “Collections” <https://shelburnemuseum.org/collections/> Accessed 11 March 2024.

What Can We Learn from Museums?

Before Your Visit – For All Learners

Now that you know a bit more about Shelburne Museum, you can respond to these questions. It's OK if you have been to the Museum before and you already have an idea of what may be there. Keep in mind that some exhibitions do change each year, so some things may look different from the last time you were there!

What do you expect to see when you get to Shelburne Museum? Some things to think about are historical items, artworks, and buildings.

What stories do you think will be told at the Museum? Whose stories are they? Some ideas to think about are stories about certain people, places, events, time periods, etc.

What questions do you have that you hope will be answered by your visit?

What Did We Learn from a Museum?

After Your Visit – For All Learners

Now that you have visited Shelburne Museum and recorded your observations, new knowledge, and questions in your Passport, you can answer the questions below. You should use your “Before Your Visit” worksheet and your Passport to support your responses.

Were any of your “Before Your Visit” questions answered by your visit? If so, write the question that you found the answer to.

Your question:

Answer to your question:

If none of your questions were answered, share something interesting that you learned or noticed at the Museum instead.

Share a story that was “told” by something you saw at the Museum. Some ideas to think about are stories told by the *Ticonderoga* steamship, items in the General Store, or a painting.

Here’s an example of a story: I saw a small ice skate in the General Store. It told a story about kids having fun ice skating in winter a long time ago.



Name: _____

What Did We Learn from a Museum? – Continued

After Your Visit – For Advanced Learners

What are some stories that you think may be missing from the Museum? Some ideas to think about are stories about particular time periods, groups of people, or places.

Why might these stories be missing? What questions/wonderings do you have now?

How might you find the answers to your questions/wonderings?
