Class Museum Project

Objectives

Cross-curricular project using the Collections Online website as a focus for creating a Class Museum. This could be part of a wider project for example a Local History Study (KS2) or it could be a good introduction to history (KS3 – start of Year7). An opportunity to get pupils thinking about 'What is History?', 'What's it got to do with me?' and 'Why is History important?' On a much more basic level it could also be appropriate at KS1 to teach pupils about "changes in their own lives and the way of life of their family or others around them". This project also incorporates elements of Maths, ICT, English and Art.

Introduction and Questions

By looking at the collections of Leicestershire Museums we can see that museums collect many different kinds of objects. These objects help to tell us about life in Leicestershire and help us to understand about the past.

Not everything in museum collections is very old or very expensive. Museums often add new objects to their collections so that people in the future will be able to understand about life today.

> What is the most up-to-date object on this website and when does it date from?

Items do not have to be expensive to be important and useful museum objects. The toys in the Harborough Hoard would not have been expensive toys – they are made from cheap materials (e.g. wood and bone) and they are homemade. These are the sort of toys that most children would have played with. They are a unique collection and are very valuable to historians because they tell us something about life in the past.

Leicestershire Museums have a substantial toy collection. This is partly because Palitoy, an important toy manufacturer, was based in Leicestershire.

Another important part of Leicestershire Museums' collection relates to coal mining. There are several important coalfields in the Leicestershire area and for many years, a significant proportion of the local male population was employed in this industry.

NEXT, the High Street fashion retailer, is also based in Leicestershire and for this reason Leicestershire Museums have decided to collect a sample of Next clothes and accessories. This is an on-going process and NEXT gives new outfits to the collections every year. In this way, Leicestershire Museums will gradually build up an increasingly important and interesting collection about British clothing in the late 20th and early 21st Centuries.

> Are there any factories in your area?

> What do they make?

Maybe your area is strongly associated with a particular trade, industry or product. Or maybe it was in the past. Over the last few decades many local industries and factories have closed down and enormous changes have taken place. Most museums collect objects and information related to their local area and these objects can help us understand the past more clearly and help to bring it to life for us.

> Look at the Action Men, the miners' lamps, and the clothes and think about why they are part of the museum collection. What can it tell us about childhood, work, fashion etc?

When an object is added to a museum collection it is given a special number (called an accession number) and everything that is known about the object is recorded on an information sheet. This process is called documentation. Good documentation usually includes a picture of the object and explains any links to other objects, pictures or information about the object. Today most museums use a computer database for documenting the collection.

Activity

In this project the class can create a museum of 'our class' which would help someone in 100 years time to understand about life today.

1. Each child has to choose an object to put into the class museum. Think very carefully about what to choose and why you think it should go into the class museum. The object could be anything which is of significance to their lives – it could be a favourite toy, an item of clothing, a souvenir from a holiday, a favourite packet of sweets etc.

2. Give the object an accession number. Suggested format is number or initials of class followed by a fullstop, then the year followed by another fullstop and then a running number sequence starting at 01. For example Class 4A undertaking the project in 2005 would give the first item accession number 4A.2005.01. The accession number is to be clearly written on a label and then attached to the object. Post-it notes might be the most practical label option.

3. Study the object carefully to find out as much as you can about it. Look for any labels or writing on the object. These often tell you who made the object, where it was made and sometimes when it was made and what material it is made from. If appropriate the internet could be used to find out more information about the manufacturer and the product etc.

4. Fill out an Object Recording Sheet (two versions available for different age and ability ranges at the end of this document). This will involve measuring the object and either drawing or photographing it.

5. The details from the object information sheet then need to be put onto a computer database such as Microsoft Access.

6. A short display label then needs to be made – either produced on computer or very carefully handwritten. Think carefully about what information to include on the label. It needs to be clear and easy to understand. For KS3 it might be appropriate to think about the different ways the object could be interpreted. The information must always be true and accurate, but by emphasising some facts and leaving other bits of information out, the reader could get very different messages about the object. Pupils could try this out to illustrate how different perspectives can be put on even the simplest of objects.

7. Think about how the items are going to be displayed – many different ways of grouping items eg subject, size, materials, use etc.

8. Produce poster to advertise the class museum.

Object Information Sheet (1)

Object number

Name of object

What is the name of the company who made the object?

Where was the object made?

When was the object made?

What is the object made from?

Size of the object:

- height
- length
- width

Your name

Draw a picture of your object here

Object Information Sheet (2)

Accession number

Object name

Title

Name of manufacturer

Production date

Production Place

Materials

Measurements

Choosen by

Why did you choose this object?

Drawing / photograph of the object