

Martian Museum

By: Dartmouth Heritage Museum

Grades: 4-6



Overview & Purpose

In this activity, Learners will analyse, study, and draw evidence-based conclusions about historic household tools and items. Learners will pretend they are Martians being presented with new objects for a museum about “Earthlings.” Unfortunately, the Martians who collected them could not get any information on the objects’ names or uses. It is now up to the Martian Learners to act as History Interpreters and, through careful guided analysis, to decide what they think the objects are, and what they were used for. Learners may work individually or in small groups, and will present their final analysis to the rest of the class for discussion. Teachers may also ask questions and challenge the learners on their ideas and encourage them to back up their claims with their observations and any evidence.

NS Essential Learning Outcomes

English Language Arts: Grade 4-6

1.0 Learners will communicate effectively and clearly respecting cultural contexts.

4.0 Learners will respond personally and critically to a range of culturally diverse texts.

Social Studies: Grade 4:

3.0 Learners will evaluate the impacts of exploration.

Social Studies: Grades 5

1.0 Learners will investigate how we learn about the past, with a focus on Acadians, African Nova Scotians, Gaels, Mi’kmaq, and additional cultures

Social Studies: Grade 6

1.0 Learners will investigate the role of culture in communities, inclusive of Acadians, African Nova Scotians, Gaels, Mi’kmaq, and additional groups.

Materials Needed

1. Martian Museum Activity Booklets (or other paper/notebook to record answers on)
2. Writing instruments
3. Mystery Items
4. At least one pair of gloves - preferably cotton - per group

Preparation

1. Print activity booklets and answer sheets
2. Review the objects
3. Review *Mystery Answers* document

Activity

1. Discuss in class how museums investigate the past through artifacts. What is an artifact? Why do they matter? What if no one alive knows what it is? How could you find out? What can you find out by looking at an object, even if you don't know its name or how it was used?
2. Introduce rules for handling artifacts. Be careful, wear gloves, and touch the artifacts as little as possible.
3. Present learners with their Martian Museum booklets. Explain that today they will pretend to be Martians working on a new exhibit for their Martian Museum. They have been told the exhibit will be about the "Earthlings." Other Martians have already gone to Earth and brought back many interesting objects - but sadly they were unable to find any information on them. It's now up to the Martian Learners to investigate the objects. Go through the booklet together and discuss how to use the information to make a guess on what the objects are called, and/or what use they had.
4. Discuss together what makes a good guess - or an educated guess. What are the 5 W's? How much detail should they guess about? How can they back-up their

guesses with what they have observed? Tell your Martian Learners that once they have investigated the mystery objects, they will present their guesses to the rest of the Martian class. They should be able to justify their guess with what they have learned.

5. Learners can be split into small groups or work individually while investigating the objects. Once groups/learners have had a chance to examine the objects, ask them to present their guesses to the rest of the class, who can ask questions.
6. Discuss the guesses as a class. Did the class find any guess better than the rest? Which group was most convincing? How close do they think their guesses are to the truth?
7. Present learners with the answer sheet. Go over the answers together. Who was closest? Who was way off? How could they have guessed better?

Variations and Extended Learning

Social Distancing Alternative

The Martians have chosen to quarantine the objects for a few weeks to be safe, and thus students can only review and investigate the mystery objects through provided video clips. Discuss how this will change their approach to investigation, and what limitations it has.

Alternative Environment

Complete the activity in the home with family and/or friends.

Secondary Level Activities

Have Learners create a small mock exhibit for the Martian Museum using their guesses and all the objects, including text for small plaques which visitors to the Museum would read to explain the object. The exhibit should have a theme or overarching idea connecting and justifying all the objects as best they can. May also include a write-up explaining and defending their choices. (Communication, Persuasive writing, creative thinking).



Appendix A: Answer Sheet

Mystery Object 1: Candle Snuffer/Wick Trimmer

Use: To trim the wick on candles, and to snuff (put out) the flame. When putting out the flame, the trimmers were used to cut off the burnt end of the wick, while cutting off the air and snuffing the flame at the same time. This kept candles fresh and ready to be used again.

Mystery Object 2: Egg Scale

Use: to measure the weight of eggs. Back in pioneer days, people often kept their own chickens and would use the eggs to trade for things they needed at the store. Eggs were measured on the scale before the trade took place. Lighter weighted eggs indicated an underfed chicken, and lessened the value of the egg itself. Unfortunately, the scale could only weigh one egg at a time, so if someone brought in a lot of eggs, weighing them would take a long time!

Mystery Object 3: Cream Whipper

Use: To pump air into heavy cream and “whip” it up for desserts or hot cocoa. Now we would use an electric mixer to whip up heavy cream - or buy it in a can.

Mystery Object 4: Apple Corer

Use: The corer is used to both take out the core and peel the apple at the same time. The apple is speared onto the central piece, and a small blade on an outer piece is set against the apple. The corer is then cranked, and voila, a peeled and cored apple is ready with far less effort than peeling or coring by hand.

Mystery Object 5: Button Hook

Use: To help pull buttons through stiff and tight Victorian clothing – including boots and shoes. The hook was put through the buttonhole and then hooked around the button to pull it through. This was especially useful prior to the invention of the zipper.

Mystery Object 6: Shoe Stretchers

Use: To stretch out shoes, which used to be made without sizes as we know them today. Leather shoes could be stretched to accommodate a child’s growth or a new owner. Shoes were much more expensive and rarer at the time, so owners wanted as much use as possible.

Mystery Object 7: Wool Carders

Use: For the brushing and cleaning of wool before it is spun. The carders had a small amount of wool between them and was brushed back and forth - this also detangled the wool to make it easier to spin.