

Museum Exhibit – Teaching Strategy

Quick Overview

Students curate and justify a small set of artifacts (replicas, images, or primary sources) to construct and defend a historical interpretation.

Skill Objective

Students will...

- Conduct focused research using credible sources to locate historical artifacts.
- Evaluate and select artifacts that best support a central exhibit theme.
- Organize information in a clear, intentional structure modeled after a museum exhibit.

Content Objective

Students will...

- Explain key events, ideas, or developments related to the chosen historical theme.
- Describe how individual artifacts reflect broader historical contexts or perspectives.
- Use historical evidence to support interpretations and explanations presented in the exhibit.

Civics Skills Connection

Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices:

- **Viewpoint Diversity:** Students examine an array of historical viewpoints and engage with each other through dialogue and respectful debate.
- **Context and Relevance:** Addresses the “so what?” question by creating an opportunity for students to see how the knowledge and skills learned in class apply to their lives and communities.
- **Selecting Materials:** An opportunity for students to select and assess materials with a lens of ensuring they represent the varied groups of history and reflect the experiences, themes, and topics to which students can relate.

Prep ahead

- Provide or suggest artifact sources (or allow open research)
- Decide exhibit format (digital, physical, or both)

Strategy Steps

1. Organize students into groups of 2–4 or allow individual work.
2. Have students identify a topic, theme, or guiding question, emphasizing that exhibits reflect interpretive choices and represent specific perspectives.

3. Ask students to select 2–3 artifacts that support an interpretation and justify why each belongs in the exhibit and what perspective it represents. Students should:
 - explain how choices shape meaning of the exhibit
 - connect the exhibit to broader historical or cultural significance
4. Exhibits are displayed, shared, or presented to classmates for feedback and discussion.

Customizations

- **Option 1: Gamify It**
 - Students vote on exhibits based on criteria, such as strongest theme, most compelling artifact, or clearest historical explanation, with students required to justify their choices using evidence.
- **Option 2: Focus It**
 - Local History Focus - Require at least one artifact or theme connection tied to local or state history, helping students see themselves and their communities reflected in the past.
- **Option 3: Shift It**
 - Perspective Challenge - Assign groups different perspectives related to the same event (e.g., leaders, everyday citizens, marginalized groups) and compare how exhibits differ.
- **Option 4: Move It**
 - Museum Walk & Reflection - Students circulate through exhibits and complete short reflection prompts about how different curatorial choices shaped their understanding of history.