

Mystery Artifacts



During Your Program

A Museum Educator will arrive at your classroom or other program space 5 to 10 minutes before the scheduled start time of the program. He or she will need a few minutes to set up and prepare.

Please note that Bennington Museum does not allow our Museum Educators to be alone with your students. You, or another appropriate staff person, must be present at all times.

The Museum Educator will bring a suitcase, clearly labeled with the Bennington Museum logo. The suitcase contains the materials necessary for the program presentation which, in the case of Mystery Artifacts, includes the artifacts and Mystery Artifacts Investigation worksheets. Bennington Museum can provide a complete list of the contents of the suitcase, including images, if your school has any concerns.

Please see the attached Outreach Information sheet for additional information about your program.

The Mystery Artifacts Program

The primary goal of the *Mystery Artifacts* program is to encourage students to closely examine objects, to use their observations to generate ideas, and then alter or support their ideas when presented with additional information.

Your Museum Educator will begin the program with a review of the word *artifact* and a discussion with the students about why artifacts – especially those from long ago or from other cultures – interest us. The Museum Educator will then involve the class in a modeling of the observation processes they will use later in the program and will also introduce the idea of *use wear* (how an object is worn down or damaged through use) and *context clues* (all of the other information we have about an object, including other objects associated with it, its place of origin, to whom it belonged and when, etc.). The Museum Educator will talk the class through an investigation of one “mystery” artifact, ultimately leading them to discover the object’s actual purpose.

Next, the students will work in 4 or 5 small groups of 3 to 5 students each. (You may wish to create these groups in advance.) Each group will receive an artifact and a *Mystery Artifact Investigation* worksheet. They will have a few minutes to handle and examine their artifact, and to make a sketch of it. Then they will use the worksheet to record possible uses of the artifact and the reasoning behind their ideas. During this process, the Museum Educator will

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circulate among the students, asking questions that may support or challenge the students' ideas. We encourage classroom staff to participate in the process.

Once they have made initial observations and developed some ideas, each group will receive a context clue for its object. This may be another object, a description of the place the object was located, or another piece of information that will support or challenge the ideas proposed by the students.

Finally, the Museum Educator will present each group's artifact and their thought processes to the rest of the class. The actual use of each artifact is finally revealed.

When the program is completed, your Museum Educator will need a few minutes to collect and repack the items used in the program.



Outreach Information

Bennington Museum is looking forward to presenting an outreach program in your classroom. We are pleased to offer a variety of learning experiences through our collections and educational activities. Please refer to the following guidelines as you prepare for our visit:

- Please make this information available to all appropriate teachers and staff.
- To ensure that each student has the opportunity to participate fully, outreach programs have a maximum group size of 25 students. Larger groups must be divided into separate presentations.
- Outreach fees are on a per presentation basis. Schools outside the Southwestern Vermont Supervisory Union are required to pay a mileage fee based on the federal rate.
- Please provide name tags for your students.
- Your program will begin and end as close as possible to the times listed on the enclosed confirmation sheet. The museum educator may require some extra time for set up and clean up before and after the program.
- **Classroom teachers are required to be in the room at all times during the presentation.** Your museum educator cannot assume responsibility for the safety and supervision of your students. If you must leave the room, you must arrange for another school staff person to supervise the class.
- Inappropriate or disruptive behavior must be dealt with by the classroom teacher and chaperones. Our museum educators do not know individual school policies.
- We encourage adult involvement in the program. However, we ask their cooperation in keeping conversation to a minimum while the museum educator is speaking, and in allowing the students the opportunity to answer questions first. Of course, adults should feel free to ask questions if they wish.

If you have any questions, please call the Director of Public Programs at (802) 447-1571. We look forward to visiting your class!

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