

# Mystery Artifacts



## Before Your Program

Your students will be better prepared to participate in the *Mystery Artifacts* program and will learn more from it if you guide them through the following activities prior to our visit.

### **Practicing Observation**

During the program, students will be asked to use their senses and observational skills to study artifacts. Prime your students for this activity by having them practice observing. Play a game in which one student is given an object to describe to another student (who cannot see the object). The describer should use only readily observable attributes, such as shape, color, and texture. Start with something easy, like an apple. (In the case of an apple, the describer would *not* include attributes such as crunchy or sweet, since those rely on background knowledge and not on readily observable features.) Move onto bigger challenges and more complex objects. For the ultimate challenge, use an object that is unfamiliar to both students and have the guessing student attempt to draw a picture of the object based on the description.

### **Time Travel**

Your students will be looking at objects that are 100 to 250 years old. Engage your students in a discussion about what life was like then. What inventions had not yet come about? What did people do for work? Make predictions about what kinds of objects they might see during the museum program, based on their understanding of the time period. It may be helpful to read stories set in the 1800s and early 1900s with your class. *Farmer Boy* by Laura Ingalls Wilder, and *A Week in the 1800s (Ultimate Field Trip)* by Susan E. Goodman, are two possibilities.

### **What is an Artifact?**

It is helpful when the students understand what an artifact is before participating in this program. An artifact is any object made by human beings, especially one that is intended for subsequent use. We usually think of artifacts as being very old, but an object doesn't have to be old to be an artifact. Everything humans make and use is an artifact! Use the attached *Artifact or Not?* sheet to help your students understand what are (and are not) artifacts.

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# Artifact or Not

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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What is an artifact, anyway? Use a dictionary or the Internet to look up the word "artifact."

An artifact is \_\_\_\_\_

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Based on the definition you found, which of these are artifacts?  
(check the correct box for each)

The Empire State Building

Artifact

Not an  
Artifact

The skeleton of a dinosaur

Artifact

Not an  
Artifact

An ancient piece of the mineral, quartz

Artifact

Not an  
Artifact

An elephant carved out of a piece of quartz

Artifact

Not an  
Artifact

Your television

Artifact

Not an  
Artifact

A broken piece of pottery

Artifact

Not an  
Artifact