

# Enhancing pupil learning on museum visits



## About this free course

Find out more about studying with The Open University by [visiting our online prospectus](#).

This version of the content may include video, images and interactive content that may not be optimised for your device.

You can experience this free course as it was originally designed on OpenLearn, the home of free learning from The Open University:

<http://www.open.edu/openlearn/education/enhancing-pupil-learning-on-museum-visits/content-section-0>.

There you'll also be able to track your progress via your activity record, which you can use to demonstrate your learning.

The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA

Copyright © 2016 The Open University

## Intellectual property

Unless otherwise stated, this resource is released under the terms of the Creative Commons Licence v4.0 [http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/deed.en\\_GB](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/deed.en_GB). Within that The Open University interprets this licence in the following way:

[www.open.edu/openlearn/about-openlearn/frequently-asked-questions-on-openlearn](http://www.open.edu/openlearn/about-openlearn/frequently-asked-questions-on-openlearn). Copyright and rights falling outside the terms of the Creative Commons Licence are retained or controlled by The Open University. Please read the full text before using any of the content.

We believe the primary barrier to accessing high-quality educational experiences is cost, which is why we aim to publish as much free content as possible under an open licence. If it proves difficult to release content under our preferred Creative Commons licence (e.g. because we can't afford or gain the clearances or find suitable alternatives), we will still release the materials for free under a personal end-user licence.

This is because the learning experience will always be the same high quality offering and that should always be seen as positive – even if at times the licensing is different to Creative Commons.

When using the content you must attribute us (The Open University) (the OU) and any identified author in accordance with the terms of the Creative Commons Licence.

The Acknowledgements section is used to list, amongst other things, third party (Proprietary), licensed content which is not subject to Creative Commons licensing. Proprietary content must be used (retained) intact and in context to the content at all times.

The Acknowledgements section is also used to bring to your attention any other Special Restrictions which may apply to the content. For example there may be times when the Creative Commons Non-Commercial Sharealike licence does not apply to any of the content even if owned by us (The Open University). In these instances, unless stated otherwise, the content may be used for personal and non-commercial use.

We have also identified as Proprietary other material included in the content which is not subject to Creative Commons Licence. These are OU logos, trading names and may extend to certain photographic and video images and sound recordings and any other material as may be brought to your attention.

Unauthorised use of any of the content may constitute a breach of the terms and conditions and/or intellectual property laws.

We reserve the right to alter, amend or bring to an end any terms and conditions provided here without notice.

All rights falling outside the terms of the Creative Commons licence are retained or controlled by The Open University.

Head of Intellectual Property, The Open University

# Contents

Introduction	4
Learning Outcomes	5
1 Object-based learning	6
2 What's out there for our school?	7
3 Learning styles and museums	8
Conclusion	9
Keep on learning	9
References	10
Acknowledgements	11

# Introduction

---

Museums give children experiences above and beyond the everyday – experiences that enrich and build upon classroom teaching and learning. Taking pupils to a museum, or bringing museum artefacts into school, instantly changes the dynamics of the usual learning environment. It gives you as a teacher the opportunity to start afresh with each child, to reach and engage with pupils in new and different ways. This unit explores practical ways in which you can make the most of the UK's extraordinarily dynamic and diverse museums and galleries; it gives you pathways into museum resources, and shares examples of teachers and museum educators making the most of museum artefacts.

Find out more about studying with The Open University by [visiting our online prospectus](#).

# Learning Outcomes

---

After studying this course, you should be able to:

- understand how the use of objects and museum activities can enhance pupil learning
- identify museum resources and support available to teachers, and understand the ways of accessing those services.

# 1 Object-based learning

Harnessing the power of original, real things, that's what learning in museums is all about ...

Osborne (2004)

Pupils are handling a Second World War gas mask. This is part of their work on the Home Front. They can feel the weight of the gas mask and smell the stifling warmth of the mask on their face. This gives them a depth of understanding that nothing else could. For the moment they are connecting with the sensations and physical feelings of a wartime child. This richness and immediacy of experience can be applied across the curriculum and with pupils at any age. The resources for activities like the one described above, together with many more ideas and educational programmes, are located in museums.

Museums are the nation's treasure houses. They're packed with objects, stories, ideas and creative, knowledgeable people. When these elements combine with a teacher's professional expertise they can add an extra and magical dimension to a child's learning.

'Museums' in the context of this unit refer to the museums sector, including museums, galleries, interactive science centres, heritage sites and children's museums

Provided here are links to three accounts of the ways in which museums and galleries can be used with pupils.

First, a visit by older secondary school pupils to a large national museum. These visits are available for pupils of all ages.

Click on 'view document' below to download Looking at paintings at the National Gallery

[View document](#)

Small local museums also have much to offer. Here is a description of a role-play session with a class of seven year olds. Note the comments made by the class teacher on how this activity enhances pupils' learning.

Click on 'view document' below to download Victorian role-play at Preston Manor

[View document](#)

The third account, *Museums in the classroom*, demonstrates the diverse range of activities and learning pathways that can arise when a school sets up a museum of their own. Whilst the school featured here is a nursery school, the principles of exciting interest, close parental involvement, and offering a range of activities suited to specific learning outcomes, are applicable to all ages.

Click on 'view document' below to download Museums in the classroom

[View document](#)

## Activity 1

Objects, or material things, are central to the museum experience. They can be a powerful teaching tool, giving children meaningful and lasting memories of their museum visit or of a classroom-based lesson using objects.

To find out more about the theory behind object-based teaching please read the article **The power of objects** by clicking on the link below.

Click 'view documents' below to download The power of objects

View document

Now try the questions in the accompanying activity sheet **Questioning objects**, by clicking on the link below.

Click 'view document' below to open the Activity sheet

View document

You will need a mobile phone to be your 'object' – an example of a meaning-laden yet familiar and everyday object.

The questions range from those directly related to the physical object to the wider context of the object. You will probably generate much more information about the phone than you might anticipate!

You could do this individually, or with colleagues as a group exercise. This activity aims to highlight the huge potential for learning and teaching inherent in objects, by stimulating discussion and careful reflection upon an object.

## 2 What's out there for our school?

There are close to three thousand museums, galleries and heritage sites in the UK and there are approximately 100 million visits made to them every year. Internationally important collections of ancient relics and artistic masterpieces jostle for our attention alongside personal collections of precious oddities.

We have a dynamic national network of hi-tech, interactive science centres, encouraging creative thinking and practical experimentation. The centres look back at the history of science, explain key theories and principles and look to the future. Their emphasis is always on doing and discovering, based on the belief that hands-on interactivity leads to understanding.

Our art galleries, whether a single room in a remote rural area or a vast national institution, act as both display spaces and places for inspiration or reflection. As well as paintings, sculptures and drawings, you'll find photographs, video installations, ceramics, crafts, live artists at work and much more.

We live surrounded by our rich cultural heritage. The British landscape, both urban and rural, is dotted with reminders of our past. Steam railways, castles, coal mines, canals, medieval barns, Roman fortifications, ancient burial mounds, prehistoric fossils ... the list goes on.

These resources can be used as inspiration across a range of subjects. History, art and science have the most obvious links, but literacy, numeracy, citizenship, geography and drama can all be taught to great effect with the imaginative use of local museum and heritage resources.

### Activity 2

It's always useful for a school to have an up-to-date list of the museums, galleries and heritage sites in the local area.

To research what's available near you use the search box or map search when visiting the [24 Hour Museum](#).

You may like to print out a list of venues and their collection details and keep it handy when planning, or post it as web link for colleagues if you have a school web or intranet site. This makes it easier to incorporate museum visits into your teaching at the planning stage, rather than as an add-on later.

The document *Accessing museums and galleries* is also useful. It has ideas for getting started with your local museum together with short descriptions of a few of the many national projects that welcome and encourage school participation and involvement.

Click on 'view document' below to download *Accessing museums and galleries*: a practical guide.

[View document](#)

## 3 Learning styles and museums

It is generally accepted that children and adults learn most effectively in a variety of ways, that we have as human beings a range of differentiated learning styles.

If we had access to resources like this, we could make learning real ... Having the freedom to walk a bit more, have a bit more space, spread out into this environment is so conducive to learning. It's very special.

Inspiring Learning for All (2004)

Museums are perfectly placed to cater for different learning styles, in practical and meaningful ways. Museums offer opportunities for play, experimentation, and on a basic level, for walking around, sitting on the floor and standing up. Children are more free to move – no small thing for a child who finds sitting at the same desk in the same position every day an effort which distracts from learning.

There are very often opportunities to listen, to explore through a range of media and to move freely between different types of learning experiences in today's museums. The range of styles of interpretation offered by the sector gives teachers and e-learners a range of ways of accessing collections and subjects.

For instance, a child who learns best in an interpersonal way relates to the world through an understanding of other people and a sensitivity to their feelings and motivations. This type of learner would respond well to an exhibition or display that relates ideas and factual knowledge to an identifiable person, a person they can respond to on a personal level.

An example of this would be the National Portrait Gallery's 2003 exhibition of the photographs of Julia Margaret Cameron, a nineteenth-century photographer. The show covered a range of issues pertinent to the Victorian era – family life, travel, photography as a developing art form, portraiture, literary figures and religion – all seen through the filter of Cameron's work and life.



### Activity 3

In May 2004 a website called **Inspiring Learning for All** was launched by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. It stemmed from a widespread and ongoing consultancy and research project and aims to support museums in their production of educational materials. A direct link to the website is available **here**.

On the site is a quiz based on Gardner's theories of multiple intelligences, which relates each one to the relevant types of museum displays, workshops and exhibitions. It is available as a **Learning styles activity**. It gives details of each of the seven types of intelligence and provides examples of ways in which they all relate to museums and galleries.

It's particularly interesting to try this activity as a group exercise with colleagues, identifying the range of different learning styles present in your staffroom and seeing how museums could cater for them.

Click on 'view document' below to download the Learning styles activity

[View document](#)

## Conclusion

This free course provided an introduction to studying Education, Childhood & Youth. It took you through a series of exercises designed to develop your approach to study and learning at a distance, and helped to improve your confidence as an independent learner.

## Keep on learning



## Study another free course

There are more than **800 courses on OpenLearn** for you to choose from on a range of subjects.

Find out more about all our [free courses](#).

## Take your studies further

Find out more about studying with The Open University by [visiting our online prospectus](#).

If you are new to university study, you may be interested in our [Access Courses](#) or [Certificates](#).

## What's new from OpenLearn?

[Sign up to our newsletter](#) or view a sample.

For reference, full URLs to pages listed above:

OpenLearn – [www.open.edu/openlearn/free-courses](http://www.open.edu/openlearn/free-courses)

Visiting our online prospectus – [www.open.ac.uk/courses](http://www.open.ac.uk/courses)

Access Courses – [www.open.ac.uk/courses/do-it/access](http://www.open.ac.uk/courses/do-it/access)

Certificates – [www.open.ac.uk/courses/certificates-he](http://www.open.ac.uk/courses/certificates-he)

Newsletter –

[www.open.edu/openlearn/about-openlearn/subscribe-the-openlearn-newsletter](http://www.open.edu/openlearn/about-openlearn/subscribe-the-openlearn-newsletter)

## References

Anderson, D (1997) V&A Museum, A Common Wealth: Museums in the Learning Age. A Report to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

Osborne, K. (2004) Exeter Museums Service, at the MLA site Inspiring Learning for All, [www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk](http://www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk) [accessed 23 August 2004].

Inspiring Learning for All (2004) Quotation from a teacher from the London Museums Hub Focus Group, on the MLA site at [www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk](http://www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk) [accessed 23 August 2004].

# Acknowledgements

The content acknowledged below is Proprietary (see [terms and conditions](#)) and is used under licence.

Grateful acknowledgement is made to the following sources for permission to reproduce material in this unit:

The content acknowledged below is Proprietary and is used under [licence](#).

This unit was originally prepared for TeachandLearn.net by Anra Kennedy, Education Officer at the 24 Hour Museum. Anra is a trained teacher and has experience of education project work in a museum setting.

Adapted from: Kasuga Sho: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/skasuga/508092493/>, Sitomon: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/sitomon/1533274213/>, Dave Patten: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/davepatten/2047001490/>, notcub: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/notcub/1778089895/>, [Details correct as of 19th November 2007]

Every effort has been made to trace all copyright owners, but if any have been inadvertently overlooked, the publishers will be pleased to make the necessary arrangements at the first opportunity.

## **Don't miss out:**

If reading this text has inspired you to learn more, you may be interested in joining the millions of people who discover our free learning resources and qualifications by visiting The Open University - [www.open.edu/openlearn/free-courses](http://www.open.edu/openlearn/free-courses)