

Using artefacts to help children to develop their Historical Understanding and Key Skills

Items from our loans boxes can be used in a multitude of ways to help children to develop their key skills of investigation and enquiry, interpretation and analysis, presentation and communication, as well as extending their historical knowledge and understanding. Below are some generic ideas that have been developed by BEd students at the University of Gloucestershire in conjunction with Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum, in a project funded by the MLA. If you have any comments on these, or have some good ideas of your own that you would like to share, please email sandra.ashenford@cheltenham.gov.uk

Mystery Package

Place one of the objects from your box into a cardboard box filled with shredded paper, and wrap up in brown paper tied with string. Ask someone to deliver the mystery package to the classroom. Act surprised. Ask the children to gather round to help you unwrap it. The class then works together to investigate the object: feel it, describe it, think about what it is made from, make inferences about what it might be used for. As the session draws to a close, you check the box and discover a little card. On the card are details about the object and the time period it is from.



Feely Bag

Create a 'feely bag' or box and place an object inside. Ask a child to put their hand in and describe what they feel. The other children could draw what is being described.

Matching Up

Create some picture cards to go with the objects in your box and ask the children to match pictures and objects. For example, match an object with a picture of the room it would have been used in, or a picture of the person who would have used it.

Advertisement/Instruction Leaflet

Ask the children to work in small groups, and give each group an object from the box. Ask them to examine the object carefully and think about what it is used for. They can then create an advertisement or write an instruction leaflet to explain to the rest of the class what it is and what it is used for.



Odd One Out

Spread out the objects from your box on a table, but include an object that does not 'belong' (because of its function, age, the materials it is made from etc). Ask the children to work out which is the odd one out and to explain why.

Timeline

Some of the boxes contain the same type of item, such as telephones, from different eras. Ask the children to create a 3D timeline, from oldest to newest. Can they explain their ordering?

Archaeology

To help the children to understand that artefacts are often found in the ground, bury a selection of suitable objects from your box in a tray of sand. Encourage the children to carefully unearth the objects. Use sieves and brushes to remove the sand. Discuss how and why objects are buried and why they are sometimes found again. Books such as the Dorling Kindersley publication *A Street Through Time* demonstrate this well. Please note that not all the objects in the boxes are suitable for burying. If in doubt, check with Claire.



Hot Seating

Use an object from the box as a prop for hot-seating. When you are holding, or wearing if appropriate, the item, you answer the children's questions in role. When the children are more familiar with the period, they could take turns in the hot seat.

Lost Luggage

Pack appropriate objects from the box into a small suitcase. Explain to the children that the suitcase has been lost and you want to try to find out who owned it. Examine the objects carefully, looking at the materials they are made from, their condition etc. Ask the children to make inferences about what the objects are for, who might have used them and what time period they are from.



Class Museum

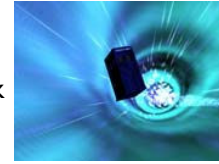
Use the objects from the box to create a Class Museum. Ask the children to consider how the objects should be grouped. There is no right or wrong answer, but children should be able to justify their choice. Ask them to think about how the objects should be labelled and what information should be given. Ask other classes or parents to visit the Class Museum.

Research

Ask the children to work in small groups. Each group is given an object from the box and asked to research its use. Each group then prepares a role play using the artefact to show the rest of the class.

Time Travel

Set up the classroom as a scene relevant to the topic and period you are covering. Place objects from the box around the scene for the children to investigate. Explain that you have travelled back in time and ask the children to use the objects as clues to work out where they have travelled to.



Buried Treasure

Place the objects from your box in an old wooden box or tin chest. Explain that the box was dug up recently in the school grounds. The Museum has been contacted but does not have anyone available at the present time to collect the box. They have asked the children to prepare a report on the objects. Ask the children to work in small groups to investigate an object. You could prepare pro forma sheets for children to record material, size, possible use, potential time period, etc. Compare findings at the end to see if any common links have been discovered.



Tell a Story

Use an object in the context of a story, true or fictional. Other objects could be used to inspire the children's own creative writing for a historically accurate story set in the time period being studied.

Compare and Contrast

Bring in modern equivalents of some of the objects in your box. How are the objects similar? How are they different? Do they still perform exactly the same function?

Interactive Display

Lay out the objects from your box on a table beneath a display board. Post key questions on the board such as "What did the Victorians do in their spare time?" Let the children investigate the artefacts in their own time, allowing them to contribute to the display by writing thoughts, answers or questions on small cards which are available on the display table. The display could be used during plenary sessions, or questions asked could become the focus of a history session.