

## Visiting a museum, gallery or site

### About the unit

This unit provides a structure for a visit to a museum, gallery or site, or any visit outside school. The visit would be most effectively used at the start or in the middle of a unit of work, so that work back at school can be based on the information and experience acquired. If it is used at the end of a unit, it can round off work in an enjoyable and exciting way, but to be effective, pupils must be able to see it as the culmination of what they have been learning.

### Where the unit fits in

The visit can be incorporated into any unit in the key stage 3 scheme of work. It may be that the museum, gallery or site can contribute in the longer term to the scheme of work and a partnership can be established with them. Pupils could go on to use the resources of museums, galleries or sites in other areas of learning, especially those involving some sort of enquiry. These resources could include those delivered over the internet.

### Expectations

#### At the end of this unit

**most pupils will:** use recording techniques to gather visual and other information; use this information to help them develop their work; compare and comment on a selection of objects, including the ideas, methods and approaches used, and relate these to the context in which the work was made; comment on some of the different parts and aspects of a museum, gallery or site

**some pupils will not have made so much progress and will:** use their visit to contribute to their work; describe the museum, gallery or site and some of the things that happen there; comment on similarities and differences between their experience and other places with which they are familiar

**some pupils will have progressed further and will:** assess visual and other information, including images and artefacts from different historical, social and cultural contexts; use this information to help them develop their ideas, taking into account the audience and purpose of their work; discuss the criteria of value by which objects came to be in museums, galleries or sites using evidence from their visit; analyse and comment on the relationship between the physical nature of the museum, gallery or site and its social, cultural and other functions

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## Prior learning

It is helpful if pupils have:

- used a range of media for recording observations and ideas, including visual and audio methods
- observed and recorded information from pictures, artefacts and objects in detail
- asked and answered questions about pictures, artefacts and objects in order to acquire information
- scanned materials to identify information of relevance
- used specific objects or scenes as opportunities for imaginative thinking
- discussed the aims and outcomes of the work they are carrying out

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## Language for learning

Through the activities in this unit pupils will be able to understand, use and spell correctly vocabulary relating to:

- the physical form of museums and galleries
- the social function of museums and galleries
- the use of museums and galleries

Speaking and listening – through the activities pupils could:

- discuss and respond to initial ideas and information when carrying out the task and refining their ideas

Reading – through the activities pupils could:

- select relevant information and link it to information from a range of sources
- undertake independent research using appropriate reading strategies

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## Resources

For practical work, resources include:

- materials for recording the visit, *eg sketchbooks, notebooks, activity sheets with spaces for recording, cameras, digital cameras, hand-held audio recorders*

For the visit pupils will need:

- a plan of the museum, gallery or site
- a publicity leaflet for the museum, gallery or site
- an outline of the structure of the visit
- resources for specific activities, *eg postcards or photographs of objects on display or in the collection, briefing sheets for role plays, structured trails or worksheets*
- access to the museum, gallery or site website

For the museum visit teachers will need:

- to make a preliminary visit to the museum, gallery or site to plan the work on the class visit, including, if possible, a training/briefing session with staff to clarify basic facts, *eg the roles of staff involved, if there will be an opportunity to touch/handle objects*, and to discuss what will be done in any direct teaching session
- large version or overhead transparency (OHT) of museum, gallery or site map/plan
- resource packs or guides
- pictures of objects for classroom practice (these may or may not be used on the visit itself)
- briefing sheet for helpers

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## Note

- Some museums, galleries and sites do not permit the use of cameras or audio equipment.
- Postcards are available in many museums, galleries and sites. These can be collected and used as a central resource.
- In some cases, teachers may need to prepare their own plans of the building.
- Information and resources are not always available in advance.

Pupils should learn:

Pupils:

### Why are we visiting a museum, gallery or site?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to discuss and critically question the role and function of the museum, and/or gallery site</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss the museum, gallery or site to be visited. Compare it with other places where the pupils may have seen art, craft or design such as shops, churches.</li> <li>Show pupils some examples of objects from the museum, gallery or site. Discuss why some things are collected or displayed by museums, galleries or sites and others are not. <i>Who or what decides that an object is valuable? Are any of the objects unique or very fragile? What is the difference between reproductions and originals?</i></li> <li>Review the unit of work the pupils are doing. Discuss the role of the visit to the museum, gallery or site in this work. <i>Why is it important to see the real objects? How will that experience contribute to the work? What will be the outcome expected from the visit?</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>comment on the role and function of museums, galleries and/or sites</li> <li>explain why certain types of objects are in museums, galleries and/or sites</li> <li>identify links between their work in school and their visit to the museum, gallery or site</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The reasons for the visit must be clear to pupils. They will need to understand its place in the work they are doing and its relationship to the final outcome. Emphasise the importance of seeing the 'real thing' and what this might mean.</li> <li>Talk to pupils about different kinds of museums, galleries and sites. Put the visit in context, eg:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>is it a collection or only exhibitions?</i></li> <li>– <i>does it have collections other than art, craft and design?</i></li> <li>– <i>what is the purpose of the organisation?</i></li> <li>– <i>what are its current priorities?</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
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### What is in the museum, gallery or site that will help with our work?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to discuss and critically question the objects in the museum, gallery and/or site</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss what the pupils could learn from the visit and how it will help their learning, eg, <i>they will be able to: compare objects with others on display; look for clues in textures and details; see a three-dimensional object from all angles; see objects in a special place.</i></li> <li>Ask pupils to work in groups and list the kind of information they will need to gather from their visit. Ask them to think about questions such as <i>What are the best ways of examining objects? What activities will allow us to make the most of the time available? How can the visit help us with future work?</i> As a class, compare the lists.</li> <li>Clarify with pupils the basic questions they will need to ask themselves about the objects they will see, eg <i>Does the object have a use in everyday life, or is it intended to make us think or react? Is the artist or maker still alive? Is the object unique or mass-produced? How do I feel about it?</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identify the information they can extract from the visit</li> <li>ask appropriate questions about the objects they study</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The discussion of objects can eventually be narrowed to the purpose of the pupils' visit. In some cases context may be of the greatest importance, in others technique.</li> <li>Ask pupils what other help the museum, gallery or site might offer apart from the objects themselves. Ask them to identify what it will not be able to provide.</li> <li>Provide pupils with some guidance so that they do not have unreasonable expectations of the museum, gallery or site.</li> </ul> |
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Pupils should learn:

Pupils:

### What will the visit be like?

- about what is expected of visitors to museums, galleries or sites
- to show respect for other people's needs in public places
- to record and analyse first-hand observations, to select from experience and imagination and to explore ideas for different purposes
- Go through the itinerary and structure of the visit using maps and plans. Explain how pupils will deal with coats and bags, when they will have lunch, whether they will go to the shop, what they will need to bring with them and who they will meet.
- Discuss the pupils' expectations of the atmosphere of the museum, gallery or site. *What do people do when they visit? How do they behave? What sort of behaviour is expected? What other factors affect the way people behave in a museum, gallery or site?*
- Identify how the pupils will respond to the objects, *eg read meanings from the clues in the work; hypothesise about the meanings, giving alternatives; investigate meanings by looking for clues among the objects such as written texts. Will pupils use one or all of these methods?*
- Develop the pupils' abilities to 'see with the mind', 'touch with the eyes' and to use their other senses to identify what the object would sound like, smell like or taste like.
- Talk about how pupils will record what they see and do on the visit. Ask them to be clear about:
  - which parts of the object they will be recording, *eg a detail, the whole, a colour, a pattern*
  - what media they will use, *eg drawing, camera, words*
  - the purpose of the recording, *eg to describe appearance, analyse composition or interpret the image or object*
- have a clear idea of the different parts of the museum, gallery or site and what they will do there
- appreciate the need for attention and concentration
- identify ways of responding to objects
- devise a variety of ways of recording information and their responses
- try out methods of recording and assess their practicality
- It is important that a teacher visits the museum, gallery or site before the class visit to allow for proper planning.
- Pupils should not feel oppressed by behavioural constraints. Conversation and discussion are to be encouraged, but they must understand the issues surrounding the conservation and protection of objects.
- If possible and if time permits, ask the pupils individually or in groups to devise ways of recording what they need to bring back to school. They could tape-record role play interviews, *eg between the artist and the patron*, or write a list of questions raised by the object and discuss them with a peer. Compare the different methods and ask pupils to try out the recording systems, using a picture or slide of an object.

Pupils should learn:

Pupils:

### The visit

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to select from a range of visual and other information to help them develop their ideas for independent work</li> <li>• to analyse and evaluate the objects displayed and their significance</li> <li>• to express opinions and make reasoned judgements about objects displayed</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a range of activities on the visit, including independent work and work with small groups of pupils.</li> <li>• Set the pupils a number of tasks. They could:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– select relevant information from a range of sources and link it to other information</li> <li>– gather their impressions of the building and the setting for the objects, <i>eg the history of the building, its atmosphere, how the objects are displayed</i></li> <li>– focus on the main purpose of their visit, <i>eg a key idea, a small number of objects or rooms</i></li> <li>– scan the objects on display and try to make connections between them, <i>eg make links between objects with similar uses or from different periods</i></li> <li>– try to gain information quickly, <i>eg Which object is the oldest? Most valuable? Most useful?</i></li> <li>– carry out some independent research, including using appropriate reading strategies</li> </ul> </li> <li>• As the visit progresses, check that the pupils have gathered the material they need, and if not, provide more direction. Hold a final check just before the end to allow time for any final recording.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• collect visual and other information, using a variety of appropriate recording techniques</li> <li>• comment on the atmosphere of the museum, gallery or site and the ways in which they are used and enjoyed by visitors</li> <li>• synthesise information and ideas from different sources, when reading for specific purposes</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure any helpers are aware of the purpose of the visit, its structure and the sort of support expected. If possible hold a short briefing or send notes to helpers well in advance of the visit.</li> <li>• Perhaps use a simple warm-up observation task to start to accustom pupils to the museum, gallery or site and its protocols.</li> <li>• Provide maximum opportunities for discussion, debate, hypothesis and for pupils to use descriptive, imaginative language.</li> <li>• Plan for work and discussion in pairs, small groups and as a whole class. Encourage questions that are triggered by particular objects or displays rather than generic questions.</li> <li>• The learning outcomes of these activities will depend on the precise nature and purpose of the visit.</li> </ul> |
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### Follow-up

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to adapt and refine their work and plan and develop this further, in the light of their own and others' evaluations</li> <li>• to organise and present information in different ways</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the visit with the pupils. Encourage them to:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– make considered responses to the objects in an open way. <i>Did the objects inspire, impress, alter mood, stimulate thought about sensitive issues?</i></li> <li>– think critically about the words that are used to describe the objects on display. <i>Whose words are they? What would the curator, the maker or artist, a collector, the general public, a child say about the object?</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ask the pupils to use the material recorded on the visit to develop their work to final outcome or completion.</li> <li>• Where an issue arises that cannot be dealt with from resources, encourage pupils to pose specific questions to the museum, gallery or site via letter or e-mail.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• describe their experiences of the museum, gallery or site</li> <li>• make a final product using the reference material collected on the visit</li> <li>• follow up the visit with further questions</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate the outcome and the pupils' experiences to the education officer.</li> <li>• It is a good idea to provide the pupils with further information about visiting the museum, gallery or site independently.</li> <li>• Education officers are happy to reply to enquiries that are focused and have emerged from a degree of work done in advance.</li> </ul> |
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