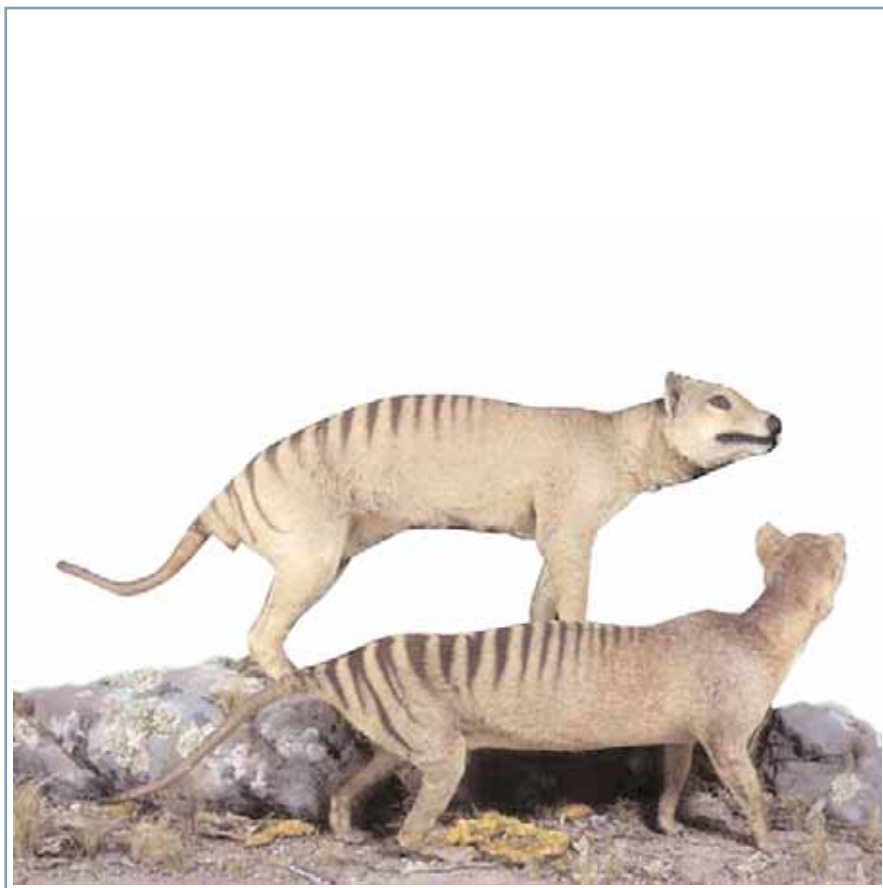


# Treasures

Museum Victoria celebrates 150 years

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## Education activities



Explore what museums do. Collections and exhibitions can be powerful learning resources, stimulating curiosity and helping us gain a greater understanding of the world in which we live.

Examine an object. Who made this artefact/where did this specimen come from? What was it used for? When? Learning from objects provides opportunities to develop imagination, creativity and language as well as skills of enquiry and investigation.

The following activities are designed for students in the middle years of schooling, Years 4-9, and can be adapted for other levels. Additional resources are available online at [museumvictoria.com.au/treasures/](http://museumvictoria.com.au/treasures/).



## Collecting and Collections

- Brainstorm
- Discussion
- How do people collect things?
- ICT activity
- Who are we?
- Mystery artefact
- Debate
- Science Collections



## Working with objects

- Interpretation: one object, many stories
- If objects could talk
- Getting to know the objects: stage 1
- Preserving the evidence: stage 2
- Making collections: stage 3
- Documenting collections: stage 4



## Exhibition development

- A school-based exhibition
- An ICT activity
- Making exhibitions



## Oral Histories

- Real life in Little Lon
- Real life in your suburb
- Doing your own oral history



# Collecting and Collections

Begin this unit of work with a discussion with your students about the museum's core business – the collections and collecting.



## Brainstorm

- List some things that people collect that are popular right now.
- List some small things that people collect.
- List some large things that people collect.
- List some perishable things that people collect.
- List some valuable things that people collect.
- List some things that people collect from a specific period of time.
- List some things that people collect that belonged to famous people.



## Discussion

Discuss:

- What is considered valueless to one person may be valuable to another.
- Some objects have no monetary value but have other values.
- What might people in 2050 collect compared with what people collect now.



## What do you collect?

Why do you collect?

How do you store your collections?

What do you think will happen to your collections in the future?

Do you have permission to collect the things you do?

Do you collect things that belonged to other people?

If you collected things that other people said belonged to **them** would you want to give them back?

Should we return objects that were traded or stolen in the past? If you had these in your collection would you return them?

How are objects valued? Discuss historical value, emotional value and monetary value.

What do you think people in 20 years time will collect from the present day?

## How do people collect things?

Discussion could include methods such as:

buying, swapping, digging, rubbing, taping, filming and photographing.



## ICT activity

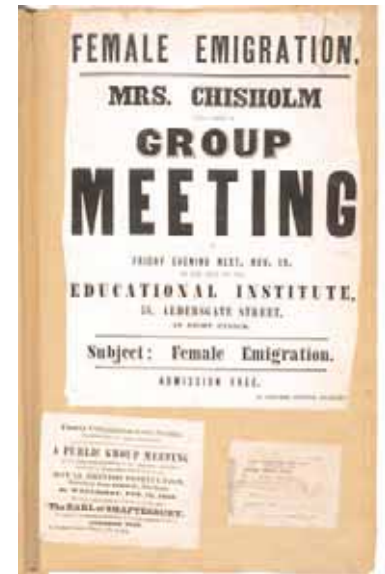
Ask your students to conduct a survey in the school, family or neighborhood about types of common collections and what has been collected. Suggest they create data-show presentations showing their results.



## Who are we?

Try this with your students:

- In a small group, each person contributes several personal items from their school bag, wallet or locker.
- Arrange the items on a table. Imagine in one hundred years time, these are all that is left of the class.
- Sort them into categories according to whether they give a date or a place, or the gender, cultural background and interests of the owners.
- Record this information on a chart.
- Discuss: What else do they tell you? What do they leave out?
- Students now write a profile of the class, based on these items.
- Discuss: How accurate is this profile?
- Present the findings to the group.



## Mystery artefact

- Each person in the class brings a fragment or whole artefact from home. Ask students to make it as mysterious as possible.
- Students swap artefacts with each other.
- They record as much information on a chart as they can about that artefact. Include size, shape, material, possible function, any signs of decoration or writing.
- Can they work out how it was made? Where it is from? What is the artefact?
- What would be left if it was buried for one hundred years?
- Select a number of artefacts for presentation to the class. Each person describes how they came to identify their artefact.





## Debate

- Have students conduct an Internet search for major world issues dealing with repatriation of objects from museums' collections. The Parthenon (Elgin) marbles issue is a good place to start.
- Debate: that museums should return items from their collections to people who wish to have them back.

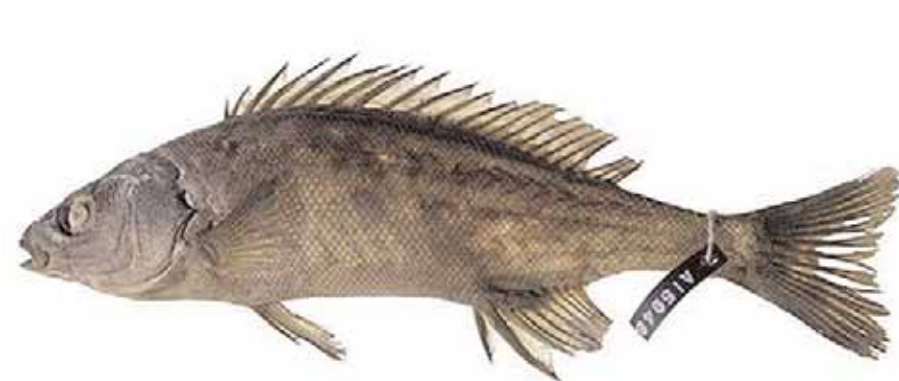


## Science Collections

It has been estimated that Museum Victoria holds 16 million objects in its collections. Many of these are in various disciplines of Natural History – Entomology, Arachnology, Ichthyology, Herpetology, Ornithology, Mammalogy, Palaeontology and Geology amongst others.

- What would you expect to find in the collections listed above?
- Read about these Museum Victoria collections:  
<http://www.museum.vic.gov.au/collections/sciences/natsci.asp>
- The museum's Bioinformatics website allows public access to information obtained from the museum's butterfly, snake, lizard, frog and mammal collections. Choose one of these animal groups and review the relevant information about it on the Bioinformatics website:  
<http://www.museum.vic.gov.au/bioinformatics/>

Use the Bioinformatics website to research the butterflies, snakes, lizards, frogs or mammals of your district. Choose from the right hand menu at <http://www.museum.vic.gov.au/bioinformatics/projects.htm>





# Working with objects

Archaeologists and historians depend on artefacts and documents to piece together the history of a place, a person or a time. This long-term project will involve students in making and classifying a collection.



## Interpretation: one object, many stories

- Each student chooses an object. This could be an object from their collections, something from the classroom, an object from home or perhaps a favorite gift that they have received.
- Discuss with students that any object can have a number of different stories attached to it or different ways of looking at it. For example, a shell from a midden could be examined by a zoologist, an anthropologist and an Aboriginal heritage worker.
- Choose an object and use it as an example. Explain that the students will be adding interpretation to the object of their choice. They can even make something up about their object(s).
- Use the following chart if appropriate to start your students on their way.

### One object, many stories

Object name	Story One	Story Two

- Students present their interpretations to the rest of the class or in small groups.
- Alternatively, each student could write Story One about a particular object and then another student could offer an alternative interpretation in Story Two. This could be also carried out in small groups.



## If objects could talk

This is a task that asks students to consider creating a dialogue between objects or between an object and themselves. This may be new to students so it would be worthwhile doing the following:

- go over the conventions of written dialogue
- have students practice writing some simple dialogue between two people
- have students attempt to create some dialogue between two objects in your classroom. These can be two objects that are usually associated with each other, but this is not necessary
- students may wish to work in pairs to develop their dialogue
- students may perform or simply read their dialogue to the class.



## Getting to know the objects: stage 1

- Each student brings in a special object from home. This could be a postcard, letter, book, household good, toy, jewellery etc.
- Students working in pairs examine their two artefacts to familiarise themselves with them. They could sketch them from different angles, describe them in detail and handle them.
- When they are confident with the process, they should swap their objects for another two items and then use their skills to fill out the chart in the example below.

### Name of object: hand held manual food mixer

Size	Fabric (made from)	Made in	Special features or decoration	How it operates	Used by: (Job or gender)	Date	Modern equivalent?	Why design changed
(30cm x 6 cm)	Metal and plastic	England	Blue plastic grip and turning handle	RH holds the grip while LH turns handle which rotates beaters	Food/kitchen use prob. women. Beats & aerates cakes, batters, liquids	1950	Hand-held electric mixer and blender	Quicker & improves aeration & blending



## Preserving the evidence: stage 2

When archaeologists and historians find and collect artefacts these objects often need special care to preserve them. Conservation of objects is also a major concern for museums and their collections.

- Using any two objects that the students have brought to class (see: Getting to know the objects: Stage 1), they can re-examine them from a conservation point of view. Students should consider how best to conserve their object for the next 100 years using the chart below as a guide:



### Name of object: Souvenir ticket to the Swimming Events, Sydney Olympics

Date/age of object	Made from	Fragile parts	Best storage method	Best handling method	Potential dangers
Sept 23, 2000	paper	Entire ticket is fragile, especially at the edges	Store flat, between 2 layers of cardboard	Gloves to be worn; object held on flat of palm	Avoid moisture, moths & mice

- Students could swap their objects and examine a different object in the same way.

## Making collections: stage 3

Museums classify and store objects in collections. These activities will help students to learn the process.

- Working in groups and using all the objects the class has brought in students could devise a system of classification. This could be by date (eg: 1950 – 1960), or type of object (eg: 'tools' or 'personal clothing'). The objects can also be classified broadly into 'science collections' or 'history collections' or more specifically into 'history collections – personal letters' or 'history collections – domestic tools'.
- Each group should record the reasons for their classification technique and be prepared to argue their case if several methods are suggested. After the discussion, the whole class should reach consensus on one method.



## Documenting collections: stage 4

Collection staff working at museums attach tags with the registration information to each object, and often number the object itself in tiny print. This registration information can be clearly seen on many of the objects in the museum.

Olympic swimming ticket: sh010257;  
Rec. no. 14808;  
Reg. No. 99/506



Registration tag for the Social History collection

- When the categories have been finalised, the objects themselves can be physically grouped into collections, and then labelled and numbered. This activity could be organised in groups. For example, one group makes the labels, another works out the numbering system, the third group writes the labels, and the fourth group tags the objects.
- One group of students can make an electronic database of the objects using the registration numbers and the object descriptions from the work already completed. (See: Getting to know the objects: Stage 1; Preserving the evidence: Stage 2)

For example:

*Bottle opener; 10 cm long, stainless steel, made in Australia for the 1956 Olympics; bottle opener end in the shape of a running shoe with the words **Melbourne Olympics, 1956**, engraved along the shaft; souvenir for the tourist market, Registration Number: 27; Collection: Melbourne Events – Souvenir. On loan from the Kellett family.*

The 24-hour Museum web site from the UK is a good introduction to learning in museums for students. You can find it at <http://www.24hourmuseum.org.uk/>



# Exhibition development

It could be said that students have a long history of presenting their work. As individuals they research and present written work and art pieces, construct multimedia, plan and deliver performance and prepare items for public display. Some schools have even established 'School Museums'. Exhibitions also offer the opportunity for a cross-curricula approach.



## A school-based exhibition

- Without underestimating the size of such projects, turn the whole class into a multi-disciplinary exhibition team to research, develop and deliver an exhibition on a theme or an area of studies.
- Some of the roles involved in getting an exhibition off the ground are:  
directors, producers, photographers, designers, preparators, curators, historians, educators, scientists, researchers, cabinet makers, artists, film makers, multi-media developers, community members, sponsors, editors, conservators, collection managers
- Some of the stages involved in the exhibition development process are:  
concept development, design development, conservation, object selection, label writing, multimedia production.





## ICT activity

- Present the exhibition concept using a multimedia program of your choice through a data show.
- Present the exhibition design development ideas through a data show.
- As an integrated program, the class exhibition project could develop skills in the following ICT areas. For example:

*File Management:* organising and storing data in relation to the development of the exhibition.

*Word Processing:* the use of word processing software to develop exhibition labels.

*Graphics:* develop and display design concepts.

*Multimedia:* use of multimedia for exhibition segments as well as concept presentation.

*Electronic Communication:* use an email account to communicate with exhibition team members.

*Database:* use of a database for the storing and retrieval of information related to the collections used in the exhibition.

*Spreadsheet:* use of spreadsheet to itemise the objects and images that are used in the exhibition.

*Desktop Publishing:* using desktop publishing programs to produce exhibition flyers, invitations to openings and advertising material and exhibition catalogue.

## Making exhibitions

At Melbourne Museum, one of the exhibits in the Australia Gallery displayed some of the objects selected in 1888 to show the world that Australia was advanced and civilised. These included paintings, furniture and scientific instruments. The museum today is celebrating 150 years of its history and collections.

Suggest the following to the students:

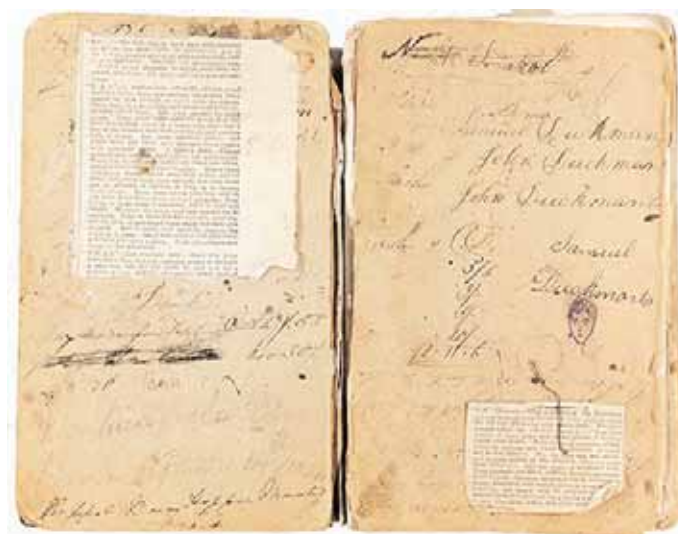
- If they were going to prepare an exhibition in 150 years time what would they choose?
- They could make a list of 12 objects, paintings and anything else they would exhibit.
- Using any format or presentation techniques they could design an exhibition that tells a story about the last 150 years.





## Oral histories

Museums collect people's stories. One way of doing this is to conduct interviews.



### Real life in Little Lon

Marie Owen was a resident of the Little Lon area in Melbourne over 80 years ago. She lived in Cumberland Place off Little Lonsdale Street, in a 1850s weatherboard four-roomed cottage that had been built by her grandfather. She lived with her mother Tess and Aunt Poll from 1920 until 1940 and recorded this oral history in c.1994.

Here is part of her oral history:

*My name is Marie Owen. I was born in 1920 and lived at 42 Cumberland Place, near Little Lonsdale Street, until I married and moved away in 1940. I lived with my mother, Tess, and my Auntie Poll. The house was built by my grandfather... and all of his eight children were born there.*

*It was a weatherboard house with four rooms. It had green shutters, green wooden shutters on each side. You walked right in to the front room and there was a miner's couch and a big table... Over on one side was a sideboard... The gramophone was in the corner and there was a big open fire... with a mantelpiece, mirror and ornaments on it.*

*The dining room had a gully trap and a table and a cupboard. No sink – we had to use a dish for the washing up. Up the yard... was the kitchen with a colonial oven... When it was raining, my mother Tess would be cooking out there and she'd come down and sing out 'open the door Poll' and she'd bring in the meal and we'd all sit and eat it.'*

*We played in the street with hoops; we played hopscotch, and chasey, and cowboys and Indians, running right round the blocks and that. We even played marbles too. And we'd build up the gutter: if there was water coming down we'd build it up and put little boats in and things like that... then somebody would come along and let it all go out. The other game we played was 'nick-nock', where we'd knock on the door and run, and the people'd come out and nobody was there...*



- Make a drawing of Marie Owen's house in Cumberland street. Colour it in the way she has described it.
- Make a floor plan of the layout of Marie's house from her description. Include the furniture.
- Marie Owen describes some of the games she used to play eighty years ago. Which ones have you also played? (hoops, hopscotch, chaisey, cowboys and Indians, marbles boats in the gutter, 'nick-nock').
- Describe one game that that you play or used to play that you don't think Marie Owen would have played in her childhood. This can be an oral or a written description. If it's an oral description, write some bullet points first, to prompt you for your talk.
- Working in a small group, make a list of all the questions you would ask if you were going to interview her. Divide these questions into themes such as food, school, leisure, home. Re-arrange the questions under these themes. Practice asking these questions (try them out on each other).

## Real life in your suburb

- Imagine that you are eighty years old and have been asked to write down your memories of your childhood.
- Using Marie Owen's memories as a guide, make a few bullet points which include a description of your house, the layout of the rooms, a funny or interesting or sad memory you have and a description of the games you played when you were younger.
- Make up four questions that someone would have to ask you, so that you could give him or her the information you have just written down. For example: Can you describe the outside of your house?
- Working in pairs, ask your partner the four questions and record their answers with a tape recorder. Swap over, so that they ask you the questions. You have just made an oral history.
- Use the same technique to interview an older person you know. Make sure you get their permission first.





## Doing your own oral history

### Preparing for an oral history.

- One of the processes of history is to plan, conduct, record and, with permission, present oral histories about people in their communities. Students may be encouraged to do this as part of local history projects. Museum Victoria's *Hidden Histories Project* web site offers examples of interviews conducted by students in their local communities. Sample step-by-step guides to conducting interviews and permission forms are also provided.  
[http://www.museum.vic.gov.au/Hidden\\_Histories/classroom\\_materials/](http://www.museum.vic.gov.au/Hidden_Histories/classroom_materials/)
- You will hear many immigrant women's stories on the following website. Their stories were recorded and they gave permission for their actual voices to be heard.  
<http://www.museum.vic.gov.au/hearhervoice/>
- Check out other sites: <http://www.museum.vic.gov.au/ed-online/>

