

Learning with the Artefacts

Artefacts provide a fascinating insight into the past and allow us to develop a deeper historical understanding. They are a great way to engage children's interest and attention, encouraging curiosity and helping pupils to make links between periods of history. Object-based learning enables items to be shared with the group and this tactile experience aids investigative skills that can bring history to life for all pupils.

Before introducing the artefacts to the class use the background information to ensure that you are familiar with the contents and what each artefact represents.

Consider how you want to use the artefacts, for example:

1. **For decoration/visual stimuli** - Demonstrate and explain each artefact before creating the display using the background notes provided and consider displaying images on the wall to create visual impact. Refer to the images and artefacts at different times during the study and encourage pupils to create labels and additional information as they develop understanding.
2. **As an educational tool to support learning** - Individual artefacts can be linked to concepts or themes such as daily life/society/communication. They can then be investigated at different points during the learning journey and used as a research focus helping pupils to ask and answer questions about the past. There are many ways to use artefacts. We have included some activity ideas here as a free download, along with example exploring artefacts sheets to encourage close observations of the items. We hope you enjoy using them.

Introducing the artefacts

- Teach the children how to handle the artefacts carefully and store them safely and securely.
- Some artefacts you use will be replicas. The first time that children encounter a replica, ensure that you explain that these are replicas rather than originals and discuss why this is so.
- Talk about materials/fragility/location/size/value/age of originals and explain that old objects are getting rarer, and they must be preserved for others to use in the future.

Ideas and suggestions

Explore the toy artefacts and think about the valuable role artefacts play in helping us to learn about and understand what toys were like in the past and how they have changed through the ages.

1. Mystery Boxes or A Suitcase

When introducing the artefacts, think about ways to build up excitement. You could, for example, hide the objects in a mystery box or suitcase and wrap them in protective layers of packaging. As the children carefully unwrap, you can explain the fragile nature of artefacts.

2. Lucky Dip

Get children to take it in turns to pull an item secretly from a box, bag or case. They should look at the artefact and then describe it to their peers without saying the name of the object. They can describe what they see, feel, smell, hear. Who can guess it correctly?

3. Observe and investigate

Take a closer look at an artefact and investigate it in more detail. Ask children to draw a picture or take photographs of it. They may want to look from different angles or focus on a specific part. You could use magnifying glasses or microscopes to really get in the role of a historian. Use descriptive language to describe the toys.

(See Observe and Investigate and Explore and Discover Activity Sheets)

4. Create your own ...

Make toys from various materials and write instructions for playing games. Design and describe a toy for the future. Look carefully at the artefacts and how toys have changed through the ages. What features have stayed the same and what is different?

5. Let the object talk!

Imagine if the artefact could talk. What would it say? Describe the stages in the artefact's life. Think about the objects journey from when it was made, how it was used and why, the experiences that were had with it along the way and how it was discovered many years later. Tell the story of one of the toys in the artefact collection.

6. Be an expert

Explore the different roles of experts that work with artefacts, such as an archaeologist, a museum manager, documentary maker, conservator, or antique dealer. Children take on a role and create something about the artefact from their perspective. It could be a label in a museum, a fact file, or even a mini documentary!

7. Role play and Hot seating

Choose an artefact and create a short drama piece about it. Use mime, movement, gesture and speech to show how the object would have been used. You could also use hot seating. One person acts as the person who would have used the item in the past, and the rest of the class can ask questions to find out more.

8. Historical Detective Work

Make close observations and draw and describe the objects. Ask them to record their initial ideas about what the item is and come up with questions they would like to answer about the artefact. Create a timeline of toys from different eras, placing the toys in chronological order from oldest to newest. Develop time vocabulary.

9. Memory Game

Place the artefacts on a tray and talk about each one. Have fact file cards that match each artefact. Can children match up the artefact with the correct fact file?

10. Odd One Out

Compare different toys and how they have changed over time. Compare what they are made from, the design and how they would be used. Discuss which object could be the odd one out and why.

11. Surveys, Interviews and Questionnaires

Find out about toys from the past by asking people from different generations to talk about the toys they played with when they were young.

12. Materials

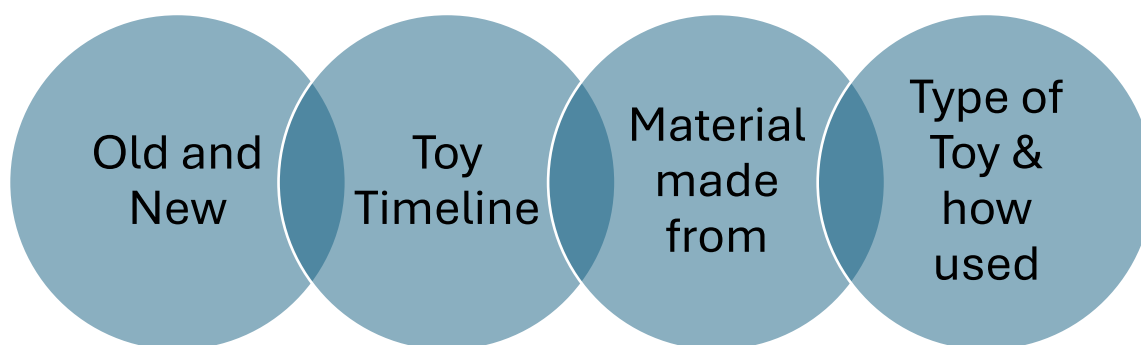
Investigate toy materials and why certain materials were chosen for different toys. Compare old and new toy materials and discuss differences.

13. Sorting

Lay out the artefacts and discuss different ways they could be sorted, for example material or how they were used.

Once decided, ask children to sort the artefacts into different categories, Some artefacts may be used in more than one category.

For example:



14. Learning about a theme

There are lots of themes that often run within a time period.

Choose a theme and explore this in more detail with the children, discussing how this has changed over time.

15. Artefact Investigation

You may want to explore the artefacts in more detail by carrying out a deeper case study investigation into one of the artefacts your class find particularly interesting. For example, teddy bears through time.

The following sheets are for guidance on observing the artefacts, ideas for a toy survey and an example of planning. Please use and adapt to suit your needs. We hope you enjoy using them.

Observe & Investigate

Image or drawing of artefact:

Describe using your senses:

- What does it look and feel like?
- Does it make a noise?
- What is it made from?
- How big is it?
- Has it got any detail on it? Markings? Writing? What do they mean?
- Does the object remind you of any toys played with today?

Explore & Discover

What material(s) is it made of? Why might these have been chosen? (If this is a replica what were the originals made from?)

What condition is it in? _____

How do you think the toy was played with? _____

Does the toy have any mechanisms or moving parts?

Are there any features on the toy such as lights or sound?

Image or drawing of similar toy:

Survey Ideas & Questions

Ask children to carry out a survey amongst their classmates to find out their favourite toy. Results may need to be pooled to get feedback from every child.

You can use some of the following questions to create a survey and adapt depending on the age of the children.

1. What is your favourite type of toy?

- Soft toys
- Dolls or figures
- Vehicles
- Building blocks
- Electronic toys
- Other types of toys.

2. What do you like most about your favourite toy?

- It is soft and cuddly.
- It can roll or drive.
- I can build things with it.
- It helps me express my creativity.
- It makes sounds or lights up.
- Other things you like.

3. What is your favourite thing to do with your toy?

- Snuggle with it.
- Take it on adventures.
- Push it around the house.
- Build towers or houses with it.
- Draw or paint with it.
- Play games with it.
- Other things you do.

4. What is your favourite thing about playing with toys in general?

- It is fun and makes me happy.
- It helps me learn new things.
- It helps me relax and de-stress.
- It gives me something to do when I am bored.
- It helps me make friends.
- Other favourite things.

Have a class discussion about what makes a good toy. Research 'Toy of the Year' winners and give a brief presentation of your findings. You may want to give children specific years to research.

Example of Planning

Toys through the ages		
1	Describe characteristics of toys. What are they like?	Bring in favourite toy from home and describe them. What is it like? Does it have moving parts? Draw a picture of it and label it. Discuss how we might find out about toys from the past. Interview parents and grandparents about toys they played with.
2	Use everyday words and phrases to describe toys from the past. What were toys like in the past? How do we know that a toy is old?	Use artefacts from the collection and see if children can spot difference between old and new toys. Draw and label old toys and make an old toy shop display or classroom toy museum.
3	Describe characteristics of old and new toys. How could you group the toys?	Children can imagine they are putting together an exhibit of the toys. Decide how you would like to sort the items for display purposes- would they try to group the toys by age? Material? By type? Use a Venn diagram to sort the toys by different criteria.
4	Identify similarities and differences between old and new toys. What is the same? What is different?	Draw attention to the design, materials, movement and appearance of the toys. Are these toys still available today? What are the differences between the older toys and modern versions? Are the changes to toys for the better?
5	Order the toys in chronological order. Can you sequence the toys from the oldest to the newest?	Make own toy timeline. Some children might be able to add dates and information they find out about the toys. Make a non-fiction page for a toy book about a particular toy.
6	Visit a toy museum.	Collect information on toys to create a class toy museum using the toys from the collection. Discuss how a museum exhibits and displays items.
7	Assess what children have learnt about toys. How can we show visitors what we have found out?	Display the toys and make museum labels and captions for the toys. Have a class Toy quiz to show what we have learnt. Design a toy for the future.