

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 coins and think about how archaeologists and historians use coins to learn things about the past. Coins are a valuable historical source that can give us insights into historical figures and religious beliefs. We can discover how coins were used and how it has changed throughout history.

1. Mystery Boxes or Bag

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

2. Lucky Dip

Get children to take it in turns to pull a coin secretly from a box, bag or case. They should look at the coin and describe it to their peers. Can they guess from the description what era the coin might be from?

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.

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

4. Create your own ...

After learning about the coins, ask children to make their own replica or design their own coin. Be sure to include all the details and create an information sheet to accompany their new coin.

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.

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

8. Mini Archaeological Dig

Use a sand tray to carefully hide the artefacts. Allow children to uncover the buried items using tools such as trowels and brushes. 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.

9. Memory Game

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

10. Compare and Contrast

Investigate how money has changed over time and discover how coins were made and how they were used. Compare the size, colour, weight and markings of the different coins.

11. Timeline

Create a timeline of all the coins. Which is the oldest? Discover how money has changed through history and what it can tell us about the past.

12. Archaeology

Investigate archaeological finds and what the coins can tell us about the past? Find out more information about the coins.

Observe & Investigate

Image or drawing of coin:

Describe using your senses:

- What does it look and feel like?
- What is it made from?
- How big is it and how heavy does it feel?
- Has it got any detail on it? Markings? Writing? What do they mean?
- Has it got a date on it? Which century does it belong to?
- Are there any images on it such as gods, animals or weapons?

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?)

Is the coin handmade (hammered) or cast? Can you see the strike marks?

What condition is it in? _____

Where do you think it was found? _____

What do you think it is called? _____

What value do you think it had and what do you think it was used for? Was it used for daily life or to show wealth?

Who might have used it? _____

What difference did the coin make to people's lives? _____

What can this coin tell us about life in.....? _____

Create a timeline of the coins from the collection.