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 Roman artefacts and think about the valuable role artefacts play in helping us to learn about and understand what life was like in Roman times and learn about the influence the Romans had on Britain.

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.

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

4. Create your own ...

After learning about the artefacts, ask children to make their own record or replica. They could draw it or make a full 3d model. Be sure to include all the details and they could create their own information sheet to accompany their drawing or model.

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 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. 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 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

Lay out your artefacts and include some from a different time period to the one you are learning about, or even modern-day items. Can the children spot which resources are the odd ones out and are not from the era you are studying?

11. Geography

Find out who the Romans were and why they came to Britain. Use maps and learn about the Roman settlements.

12. Archaeology

Investigate archaeological finds and what they can tell us about the past. For example, look at Roman coins and learn about the Roman Empire, religion, economy and Roman culture.

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 anything?

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? _____

Where do you think it was found? _____

What do you think it is called? _____

What do you think the object was used for? _____

_____

_____

Tick the box/boxes to best describe the item

A luxury item	A useful item	An ordinary item	A valuable item

Who might have used it? _____

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

_____

_____

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

_____

_____

_____