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Exploring Culture **The Museum**

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–Margit E. McGuire

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ABOUT STORYPATH

THE STORYPATH STRATEGY

Storypath offers both a structure for organizing the social studies curriculum and an instructional strategy for teaching. The structure is a familiar one: the story. The strategy is grounded in a belief that children learn best when they are active participants in their own learning, and places students' own efforts to understand at the center of the educational enterprise. Together, the structure and the teaching strategy ensure that students feel strongly motivated and have meaningful and memorable learning experiences.

Originally developed in Scotland during the 1960s, Storypath draws support from decades of experience with teachers and students. The approach has its roots in these beliefs about children and learning:

- The world is complex and presents many layers of information. Children know a good deal about how the world works and have a reservoir of knowledge that is often untapped in the classroom.
- When children build on that knowledge through activities such as questioning and researching, new understandings are acquired. Because children construct their own knowledge and understanding of their world, their learning is more meaningful and memorable.
- Problem solving is a natural and powerful human endeavor. When children are engaged in problem-solving, they take ownership for their learning.
- The story form integrates content and skills from many disciplines and provides a context for children to gain a deeper, more complex understanding of major concepts.

AN INQUIRY APPROACH

Questioning, by both teacher and students, is a key component of Storypath. Through the story structure and the discourse it creates, the teacher guides students in their search for meaning and understanding as they acquire new knowledge and skills. Your questions, and the discussions they engender, cause students to:

- ask their own questions and think critically about what they know;
- use their prior knowledge to make sense of new information;
- connect personally to important social studies concepts.

The story structure and inquiry guided by unit goals provide the framework for students to integrate skills and complex content through problems they encounter. As they do so, their understanding of important concepts is extended and key connections are made.

THE STORY STRUCTURE

For thousands of years, stories have helped us create order and make connections between events. Storypath's narrative structure helps students understand concepts that they often find difficult to comprehend in the traditional social studies curriculum.

Each Storypath unit centers on a unique and engaging story that provides a concrete context for understanding the social science content. This story may be based on actual historical events, as developed in *Struggle for Independence*. Or the story might instead be based on typical community or business structures, as developed in *Families in Their Neighborhoods* or in *Understanding the Marketplace*. From all of these structures, students develop a meaningful context for developing understanding of the topic.

Typical structure of a Storypath unit

CREATING THE SETTING

Students create the setting by completing a frieze or mural of the place.

CREATING THE CHARACTERS

Students create characters for the story whose roles they will play during subsequent episodes.

BUILDING CONTEXT

Students are involved in activities such as reading, writing, and research to stimulate them to think more deeply about the people and the place they have created.

CRITICAL INCIDENTS

Characters confront problems typical of those faced by people of that time and place.

CONCLUDING EVENT

Students plan and participate in an activity that brings closure to the story.

PLANNING THE UNIT

EXPLORING CULTURE THE MUSEUM

MAKE KEY DECISIONS

Decide on a Topic of Study. This Storypath unit is organized with a focus on the study of culture, allowing you to select your own cultural group or groups to study. Students will use the context of a museum to develop an understanding of those cultures. For example, the classes that piloted this unit covered such topics as Native American tribal groups, their own state (Ohio), another country (Canada), and a continent (Europe). You could use any place, region, or time period as your focus. By creating their own museum exhibits, students have an opportunity to explore a particular culture in depth, while learning how museums create exhibits. As you move through this Storypath, you will be offered a range of options for adapting and extending the unit to meet your particular needs.

Enrich the Assessment. On pages 71–73, you will find the Objectives Overview chart for this unit. Your class will cover additional content strands based on the museum type and subject of study you choose.

Prepare for Students' Research. Students will need to locate and gather information about cultures from a variety of sources. You may want to assemble some resources for students beforehand. The Portfolio assists the research process; however, you may need to elaborate on the Portfolio pages, make them specific to your particular topic, or teach lessons on particular research skills.

Make Space for the Storypath. You will need enough wall space for students to make the museum frieze and to display themselves as museum employees and various other materials they complete during the unit. You may also need cardboard boxes for creating miniature, three-dimensional museum rooms. Large dishwasher or refrigerator boxes work well. Locally owned appliance stores are more likely to save boxes for classroom use than large chain outlets. Alternatives to this approach could include life-size displays (if you have the space), poster displays, or any other approach you want to use.

Make Time for the Storypath. In schools where subjects are divided among teachers, social studies and language arts teachers can work on the unit collaboratively. The art teacher can assist students in preparing the frieze, making the figures, and other activities that reinforce and integrate art principles.

Plan a Field Trip. Following Episode 7, you may wish to plan a field trip. You may be tempted to take the field trip at the beginning of, or early in, the Storypath; however, if you do this, students will tend to replicate the museum rather than construct their own understanding of such a place. When students visit a museum at the end of the unit, they have a purpose for such a visit. Generally, plan six to eight weeks to complete the unit.

CUSTOMIZE THE UNIT

Adapt the Unit. There will likely be many times in this unit when you will want to modify the curriculum to suit your own needs and follow the logical progression of the story. Alternative activities or special arrangements are suggested at various points during the unit to assist you in adapting the unit to meet your unique needs. Frequently, students will provide an unanticipated twist to the Storypath or important learning opportunities will arise. The Storypath allows for the accommodation of those special circumstances.

There are times when students will role-play museum employees in the story to understand a particular viewpoint. At other times students will reflect on the events of this unit out of role so that they can examine and understand situations from their own perspectives. These are opportune times to help students connect their own experiences and deepen their understanding of the roles of workers and the operation of a museum.

Connect to Other Storypaths. Complementary units include and . In both of these Storypaths students create the people who lived and worked in these times to learn about the past. For other Storypath topics go to www.teachstorypath.com.

Connect to the World of Work. This unit reinforces the connection between the world of school and that of work. Students create resumes as they imagine themselves as museum employees, examine how museum staff members work together effectively, and use their knowledge and skills to create exhibits. Exploring the jobs of museum staff members makes the learning experience meaningful and relevant to the world of work.

INVOLVE OTHERS

Involve Families. Family members and other adults can serve as excellent resources for you and your students. It is possible that family members have special knowledge about your cultures of study or museums. Invite them to share what they know.

Involve the Community. A guest speaker from a museum serves to enrich students' experiences. Visits by guest speakers should occur at the end of the unit when students can knowledgeably compare and contrast their own experiences with the new information they are receiving. This makes for a more powerful and memorable learning experience.

Create a Learning Community. An open and supportive atmosphere is essential for students to engage in the discourse that is basic to the learning process of the Storypath approach. Students should understand the value of reflective discussions and the importance of collaborative work in deepening their understanding of complex ideas. Consequently, students should be expected to listen carefully and respond thoughtfully and respectfully to each other's ideas.

1

EPISODE

BUILDING CONTEXT DESIGNING A MUSEUM

INTRODUCING THE MUSEUM

page 15

Students listen to and discuss a letter that invites them to submit designs for a new museum.

Materials Teaching Master 1, *Invitation Letter from Museum Donor*, TH* p. 50
Content Slide Set 1

Grouping Whole class

Schedule Approximately 30 minutes

DESIGNING THE MUSEUM FACADE

page 16

Students learn about design features, establish criteria for designs, and create designs for a museum facade.

Materials Teaching Master 15, *Self-Assessment: Social Skills*, TH p. 64
Portfolio 1, *Self-Assessment: Museum Design*, p. 4
Content Slide Set 2

For creating the designs:

- graph paper, pencils, colored pencils, crayons, or colored markers
- optional: computer with graphics program

Grouping Whole class to establish design criteria; individually, with a partner, or in small groups to create designs

Schedule Approximately 2 hours. This activity can be spread over several days.

CONCLUDING EPISODE 1

page 18

Students reflect on the design process.

Materials Pocket folders or sturdy paper to make folders (one per student)

Grouping Whole class

Schedule Approximately 30 minutes

EPISODE OBJECTIVES



- **Social Skills** *Organize, plan, and make decisions while creating a frieze with group members.*
- **Critical Thinking** *Organize ideas from class discussion in new ways and apply those ideas to the museum designs.*
- **Critical Thinking** *Define the needs of a museum, establish criteria for the design, and then apply those criteria by creating a building design.*
- **Literacy** *Listen to and discuss a letter from a museum donor.*
- **Literacy** *Communicate design ideas by creating drawings of the front facade of the museum.*

Name _____ Date _____

SELF-ASSESSMENT: SOCIAL SKILLS

Social skills are important to working successfully in a museum. Use this chart during this unit to keep track of how well you work with others.

Episode: _____

Describe the group situation or event: _____

Criteria	I need to work on this.	I did this some of the time.	I did this most or all of the time.
I respectfully listened to others.			
I contributed actively to the group.			
I encouraged others to participate.			
I suggested solutions to problems.			
I did my fair share of work.			

One thing our group did well together:

One thing our group needs to work on:

One thing I did well:

One thing I could do better:



SET 1

SLIDE 1

What are museums?

Museums are special places that collect and display many different things. In a museum, you can walk through an Egyptian tomb, examine a spaceship flown by astronauts, or view sculptures created thousands of years ago. Museums can take you where you've always wanted to go. They can also take you places that you didn't even know existed.



These visitors to a nature museum learn about various animals.

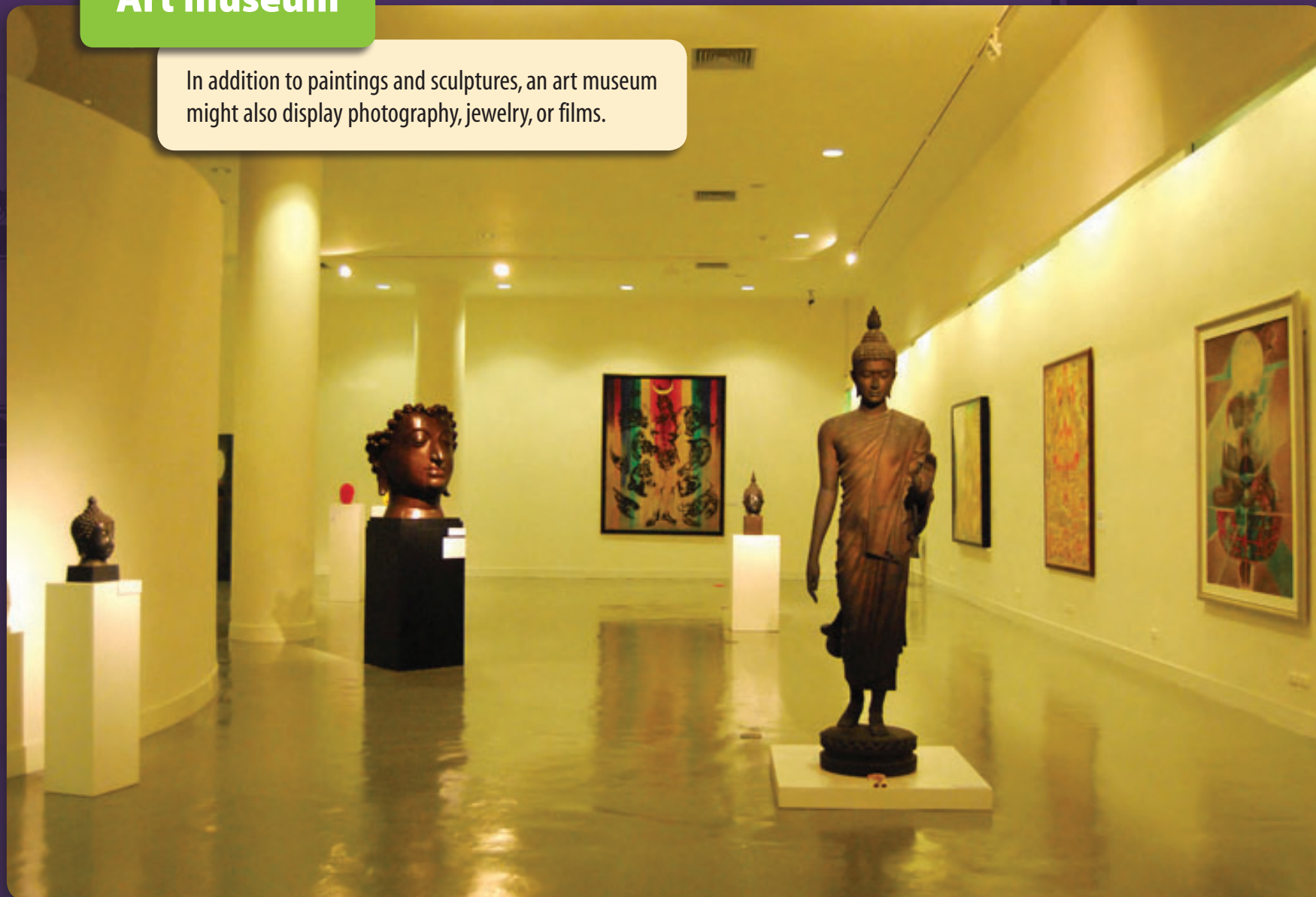
Natural history museum

1. Why do you think museums are important to a community? *(making inferences)*



Art museum

In addition to paintings and sculptures, an art museum might also display photography, jewelry, or films.





Types of Museums

Art museums are devoted to presenting and defining art.

History museums give visitors a glimpse of the past.

Natural history museums trace the physical history of the Earth, its plants, animals, and people and their cultures.

Science museums educate the public about science and technology.

Special interest museums focus on only one subject, such as baseball, airplanes, or the circus.

2. What kind of museum would you most like to visit? *(connecting)*



SET 1

Student Handout

Questions:

1. Why do you think museums are important to a community? (*making inferences*)
2. What kind of museum would you most like to visit? (*connecting*)

Slide 1

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Slide 1

These visitors to a nature museum learn about various animals.



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Opposite Page: Bottom, Used under the GNU Free Documentation License



Types of Museums

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▶ Slides
2, 3

The Smithsonian: A National Treasure House

The Smithsonian Institution is the largest group of museums, art galleries, and research centers in the world. It was created by an act of Congress in 1846 according to the written will of James Smithson, an English scientist. Although Smithson never even visited the United States, he left his entire fortune to the United States government to establish an institution “for the increase and diffusion [spread] of knowledge.” These words are still part of the Smithsonian’s mission statement, or declaration of purpose. Today, the Smithsonian is a storehouse of America’s cultural, social, scientific, and artistic heritage. There are 16 Smithsonian museums, as well as a zoo. Most of the museums are located in Washington, D.C.

▶ Slide 5



The Smithsonian Castle, which opened in 1855, was the original Smithsonian museum.

“I then bequeath the whole of my property . . . to the United States of America, to found at Washington, under the name of the Smithsonian Institution, an Establishment for the increase and diffusion of knowledge . . .”

—James Smithson (1765-1829)

▶ Slide 5



SELF-ASSESSMENT: MUSEUM DESIGN

Use the following criteria to assess your design. Circle the word that you think best describes your performance for each criterion. After assessing your design, you may want to make changes to make it even better.

The museum design is eye-catching.	Minimal	Adequate	Exceptional
Explain your response:			
The building is attractive.	Minimal	Adequate	Exceptional
Explain your response:			
The building is easily accessible.	Minimal	Adequate	Exceptional
Explain your response:			
The design includes an entrance and other appropriate features.	Minimal	Adequate	Exceptional
Explain your response:			
The design demonstrates care in construction.	Minimal	Adequate	Exceptional
Explain your rating:			



FRIEZE GUIDE

Part One: Work with your group to plan and make your portion of the frieze.

1. Discuss how you will effectively work together.

- Make effective contributions to the group.
- Work well with others by listening to everyone’s ideas, offering positive and productive comments, being willing to change my idea to resolve a problem.
- Focus on work to be done, stay on task, do my fair share of the work.

2. Plan your portion of the frieze.

List suggestions of what you will include. Be sure to include details. Discuss your ideas with the group.

3. Decide what you will do for your portion of the frieze.

Part Two: Assess your contributions to the group.

I made effective contributions to the group.	Minimal	Adequate	Exceptional
Explain your rating:			
I listened to others’ ideas and offered positive and productive comments to the group.	Minimal	Adequate	Exceptional
Explain your rating:			
I was willing to change my ideas to resolve a problem.	Minimal	Adequate	Exceptional
Explain your rating:			
I stayed on task and did my fair share of the work.	Minimal	Adequate	Exceptional
Explain your rating:			

