

TEACHER TOOLS COLLECTIONS CENTRAL



*"Objects . . .
invite close looking, spark imagination, inspire us
to make things, raise questions that lead us to learn about the world."*

- Beth Alberty



Made possible with funding from





Dear Teacher:

Welcome to ***Collections Central!*** Front and center are treasure's from the museum's collection of nearly 30,000-pieces—fascinating, revealing objects gathered from all over the world that represent the many ways people live, past and present, and the diversity of our natural world. Students are invited to look, make, imagine, and know as they explore objects and the stories they tell.

Knowing that children are naturally interested in what anthropologists and historians call material culture—in things they can see and touch and connect to their own lives and interests—*Collections Central* showcases natural-science specimens and cultural artifacts, including the skeleton of an Asian elephant! Multi-sensory activities bring objects to life, as children pilot a boat, design their own exhibits, and use touch alone to identify mystery objects.

Our state-of-the art digital companion **Collections Central Online** allows children to zoom in on specimens for an up-close look and to use web tools to draw pictures of their favorite pieces. This is also the perfect tool for pre- and post-visit research and activities for both students and teachers.

We hope you will enjoy this Teacher Tools Professional Development Resource Materials Packet. Inside you will find an explanation of the content covered in *Collections Central* as well as suggested activities for you to do with your students to help you implement an object-based approach to learning, especially as it relates to your Social Studies, History, and Cross-Cultural curricula. It is our hope that you will use this materials packet as a resource to further assist you in conveying *Collections Central's* educational concepts to your students and colleagues.





Look What's inside Collections Central Teacher Tools—

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What Collections Central Is About



Big Idea: Objects tell stories!

Main Message: *Objects give me a wealth of information about the people, the resources, the technology, and the times that contributed to their creation.*

The activities and exhibits invite visitors . . .

- to look closely at objects in order to see and learn more
- to experience artistic choice and design in making things
- to exercise their imaginations inspired by the extraordinary variety of images and things people from different places and times have created
- to increase their knowledge of the world's natural and cultural richness

Exhibit Highlights

Activities

The gallery offers more than 20 different activities, each interpreting a set of objects. Some of the activities your students can do are:

- Hunt the gallery for objects based on their details
- Examine the details of things closely through magnifying devices
- Match a replica to one of three similar objects using just the sense of touch
- Select, arrange, and string beads inspired by beaded objects on display
- Make patterns from geometric shapes inspired by decorated objects on display
- Build a building inspired by models on display
- Complete a "junior collector" worksheet using exhibits
- With a partner, play a game of describing and matching minerals
- Solve puzzles based on objects on display
- Draw objects with paper and pencil or on the computer
- Experience a ride on a Brazilian boat with a *carranca* (monster) at the front



Thematic Exhibits

During each academic year, five large display cases are changed to hold a new set of objects selected and arranged to highlight themes that complement programs and curriculum—or are showcased simply because they are interesting. In 2008-2009, the exhibit themes are:

- African Masks (a two-case display)
- Objects of Antiquities
- Belts and Bands
- Plants

Another large case is always a surprise because it changes intermittently throughout the year and the themes are sometimes whimsical or prompted by special events or occasions. In September 2008, *Collections Central* will open with *Green*, a visual essay on the color green in honor of the Museum's "green" building. Past exhibits in this series have been *Spiderman*, the Museum's metal lunch box collection, and *Kachinas*, displaying the museum's Hopi spirit figures.

Cabinet of Wonders



Before there were public museums, in the 17th to 19th centuries, wealthy gentlemen assembled and kept eclectic collections of "wonders"—natural specimens such as skulls, eggs, skins, and pickled remains; and the artifacts of far-flung native cultures, such as spears, shields, baskets, sculptures, and masks. In *Collections Central*, the Museum's Asian elephant skeleton and other objects from its collection are arranged in the way that such a "cabinet of wonders" might look. (You can see such a cabinet in the popular children's film, *The Spiderwick Chronicles*, where it is covered in cobwebs and dust.) Visitors can add their own artifacts and contrast this older way of displaying and studying objects with modern methods.

Collections Central Online (www.brooklynkids.org/emuseum)

Our state-of-the art digital companion to the exhibit is available on the Museum website and at computer terminals throughout the building. The digital collections allow children to zoom in on specimens for an up-close look and use web tools to draw pictures of their favorite pieces. This is the perfect tool for pre- and post-visit research and activities for both students and teachers.



Goals for Teachers and School Groups

What we want students to learn—



- **Skills of observation, description, looking things up, and using imagination are among the fundamental tools of learning from objects;**
- Knowledge of world cultures and history;
- An appreciation and understanding of the commonalities and differences among cultures;
- Knowledge about how objects are made in the context of the time in which they are made;
- Museums collect objects just like children and adults do, but on a different scale; and
- Learning from objects in museums can be fun!

How we want students to learn—

With joy! Students coming to *Collections Central* can experience objects with their senses, their actions, their imaginations, and their curiosity. **We want them to ask questions, seek answers, and gain insight into the multitude of "stories" objects have to tell.** They can choose what they want to focus on and learn. They can go at their own pace. Our aim is that they become "fearless learners."

Suggested Classroom Activities

Take Collections Central back to your classroom!

1. The Handmade Book/Grades 3-6

Start this activity with a discussion of what a book is, but tell your students they cannot use the words "page" or "pages" in their description of what books are. This restriction of words encourages your students to find new ways of thinking and speaking of a familiar object. Find out from them what they consider to be the important parts of a book. What materials are books made of? What is the purpose of books? Introduce your students to the concept of the artist book, which is often not an object to read but to look at as one would look at a painting or sculpture.

Following this discussion, have your students make their own artist book. Accordion books are perhaps the easiest to make in a classroom setting. When they finish the book, they can use it for writing and artwork they make about objects in the classroom or in a **Portable Collections** case.

Standards: *Meets Art and Language Arts Standards.*

Related NYCDOE Units of Study: *Visual Arts Performance Indicator - explain their reflections about the meaning, purposes, and sources of works of art. Language Arts-Standard 1: Language for Information and Understanding.*

Collection Central Exhibit Connections: *Looking Closely, Artistic Choice and Design.*



The Handmade Book/Grades 3-6 continued—

Here are very simple instructions for making a handmade book—

What You Need:

- Unlined, colorful, 5"x 8" index cards
- One yard of colorful fabric ribbon at least two to three inches wide
- Tacky glue

Here's How to Do It:

Encourage your students to draw or write their stories on one side of the index cards, using one for a cover page with the title and author of the story. Stretch the ribbon out on top of a table, and line the cards up horizontally across it, one inch apart, in the order of the story. There should be extra ribbon at both ends. Glue the cover page about six inches from the left end of the ribbon. Then continue gluing each consecutive card about one inch from the card next to it. Repeat until you have all the pages placed on the ribbon. When the glue is dry, fold up the cards starting with the cover page, accordion style, and gather the ribbon at both ends. The ribbon can be tied in a bow to make a beautiful book.

3. Mask Making/Grades 3-6

Masks are worn to replace one face for another. The mask can represent many things such as persons, extraordinary beings, and abstract ideas. Discuss with your students the type of persons, beings, or ideas for which they could envision creating a mask. Have them make a list of color, shapes, designs, and other visual elements that would be related. Have them sketch how their mask might appear, as a plan for creating a three-dimensional mask of their own. After the masks are completed ask students to share how they decided what to make and how they accomplished it.

Standards: Meets Art and Language Arts Standards.

Related NYCDOE Units of Study: Visual Arts Performance Indicator - experiment and create art works, in a variety of mediums. Language Arts-Standard 1: Language for Information and Understanding. Language for Social Interaction.

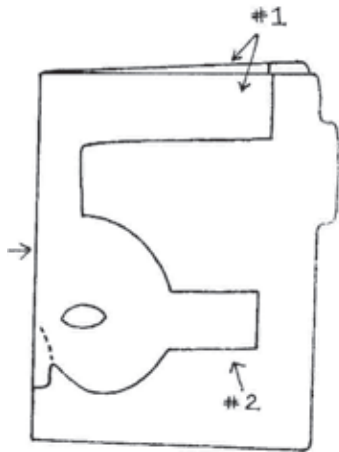
Collections Central Exhibit Connections: Increasing knowledge of World Culture, African Masks.

Here are simple instructions for making a half-mask out of an ordinary manila file folder—

What You Need:

- 1 manila file folder for each mask you want to make
- 1 elastic or rubber band for each mask you want to make
- pencil & scissors
- tape
- art supplies/materials to decorate your mask (this can include crayons, markers, paints, fabrics, sparkles, feathers, etc.)





What To Do:

Using the pattern drawing as a guide, sketch the mask onto the file folder with the fold of the folder at the center of the mask face (indicated by the arrow at the left of the drawing.) You may need to make your drawing larger or smaller, depending on the size of your head—some experimentation will help you decide just how large to make it. Have your students draw the pattern on the file folder with pencil and cut it out on the dark lines, except for the eyes. **DO NOT CUT THE FOLD OF THE FILE FOLDER.** The dotted line around the nose is optional. They can cut it off completely and let their own noses stick out or they can cut it partially so that it covers their noses and sticks out some.



Then they should remove the masks and poke a tiny hole where the center of the eye should be. Have them try the masks on before cutting out the whole eye, to make sure the holes are properly aligned. Then have them cut out the eye holes.

Decorating the mask:

Now have the students spread their masks flat and decorate them with paint and other materials you have assembled for this purpose. They should aim for personality and fun. Remind them that the side and top tabs will be on the side and top of their heads. Assembling the mask: Once your students are done decorating their masks, have them attach the tabs together again with tape and attach the elastic or rubber band to the sides so that it will go comfortably around the back of the head.



3. Collage Work: Unusual Places and Extraordinary Beings/Grades 3-6

Begin with a discussion of super-heroes or villains, magical places, and extraordinary beings like angels, mermaids, centaurs, unicorns, and more. Explore the myths and lore of different cultures that include unusual places and extraordinary beings. Explain that museum objects often depict extraordinary creatures conjured by the craftsmen and artists who made them. Students can create their own extraordinary beings by taking images out of different contexts and putting them together in new ways. For example, they can take a head out of one magazine picture and put it together with a body or wings or wheels from another. Or they can take a catalogue picture of a coat and paste it into the desert.

This way of using materials will free your students from the burden of having to create image, color, or form. All you need is old magazines, newspapers, catalogues, or other printed materials and enough scissors, glue, and background paper such as wallpaper, gift wrap, or paper board to which students can attach their cut outs. Have them write a story about their extraordinary creation and share it with the class.

They can see some examples of traditional art that shows composite figures of human and animal forms by searching the Museum's collection website, **Collections Central Online: www.brooklynkids.org/emuseum** for sculptures of Ancient Egypt and India.

Standards: Meets Art and Language Arts, Social Studies Standards.

Related NYCDOE Units of Study: *Visual Arts Performance Indicator- experiment and create art works in a variety of mediums. Language Arts - Standard 1: Language for Information and Understanding. Language for Social Interaction. Social Studies - Standard: Read historical narratives, myths, legends; learn about how historical figures lived . . . hopes, fears, etc.*

Collections Central Exhibit Connections: *Increasing knowledge of World Culture, African Masks.*

4. Solar Amulet/Grades 2-4

As a complement to the *Objects of the Ancestors* exhibit in *Collections Central*, investigate how the sun has been glorified. Discuss with your students why the sun is so important and why it might appear in many of the world's mythologies. For example, there are many examples of heroes and deities related to the sun such as Horus in ancient Egypt and Apollo in ancient Greece. There are also great numbers of sun symbols that can be used in this activity. Have your students do some research on sun mythology and symbols and collect different examples. Culminate with having the class make their own solar amulets.



Take a 3"x5" index card and fold it in half. Staple the folded card along each side leaving the top open, in this way creating a pocket. Cut a piece of 3"x5" colored construction paper (black is best) and fold it the same way. Glue this as a cover on the index card. It will hide the stapled edges. With a hole punch put two holes at the top (the open end of the pocket) right and left. Decorate the front and the back with sun images that has been collected or have students make their own. Thread a piece of string or ribbon through the holes to wear it around the neck. Inside the amulet students can place a secret object, either a little drawing or word they have made or a bag of spice tea or several cloves that will give the amulet a warm and pleasing aroma and remind them of the heat of the sun.

Standards: Meets Art and Social Studies Standards.

Related NYCDOE Units of Study: Purposes, and sources of works of art; develop their own ideas and images through exploration and creation of art works based on themes, symbols, and events. Social Studies - Standards 1: Study about different world cultures and civilizations focusing on their accomplishments, contributions, values, beliefs, and traditions.

Collections Central Connections: Objects of the Ancestors.

Museum Resources

School Adventures at the Museum

Bring your students to the Museum and let our educators lead the class on your chosen adventure.

For Grades 3 and up—

- **West African Masks.** Students examine the West African masks that were used to represent spirits, ancestors, and different forms of power. They listen to an African tale and discuss how African artists have given shape to the forces of nature and its varied materials. Students create their own masks.
- **Early America, Primary Sources.** Students investigate artifacts of early American daily life. Through primary sources such as plates, cups, lamps, and candle molds, as well as personal documents such as cards and letters, they experience American history first hand. A colonial hornbook, used to teach reading and writing to children too busy with farm work to attend school, is a featured object. Students construct and decorate a hornbook of their own.

Cost is \$125 per adventure

Contact our Scheduling Secretary at (718) 735-4400 x118 for information.



Professional Development for Teachers

Bring us to your school or arrange for a group of teachers to come to the museum to learn tips and techniques for how to bring Brooklyn Children's Museum magic into your classroom.

- **Classroom use of the Museum's Portable Collections Cases.** This workshop is designed to aid you with the classroom use of the Museum's object-rich **Portable Collections Cases**. An inquiry-based approach to teaching, and the objects and related materials in these cases, bring important elements of the museum experience into your classroom. Teachers will also engage in a related art-making activity that can be brought back to the classroom.
- **Part I: Turning Show and Tell Around.** Storytelling is one of the most effective strategies for teaching. This workshop gives teachers a blueprint for selecting useful stories, preparing to tell, and eventually telling stories as a way of teaching. You will have an opportunity to listen and envision while you are told several stories from cultures such as: African, Asian, Native American, Pacific Island or Ancient Egyptian, Greek, or Roman. You will be invited to analyze the tales and discuss and explore techniques used in instructional storytelling.
- **Part II: Objects and Words: The Visual/Verbal Nexus.** This workshop is a second level of storytelling. In many cultures objects are decorated with signs and symbols that are related important cultural ideas. These ideas are also found in the spoken word, in sayings, songs, proverbs, and in stories. We will explore this link. An object, and an effective story related to that object can be the key to deeper exploration of important issues about their own culture as well as others.

Cost is \$150 for 3 participants, \$25 for each additional participant.

Contact our Senior Manager for School Programs at (718) 735-4400 x123 for more information.

The Museum's Portable Collection Cases—A Museum in Your Classroom

Bring the excitement of teaching with Museum objects to your classroom. Each case contains objects, media, books, and a teacher's guide with activities and other information. Below is a selection of Collections Central-related cases. For the full list, visit <http://www.brooklynkids.org/exhibition/portablemuseum.asp>.

- **New York 100 Years Ago**
- **Northeast Woodlands Native Americans**
- **Masks**
- **Mexican Folk Art**
- **Inside India**
- **Adornment**
- **African Musical Instruments**
- **Bags, Boxes, Bowls, and Beyond: Containers from Around the World**
- **Telling Stories Through Objects**
- **Dolls of World Cultures**
- **Central Inuit**



Rental is \$85 for two weeks (delivery and pickup in Brooklyn is included).

Contact our Scheduling Secretary at (718) 735-4400 x118 for more rental information.

Exploration Tips

Before You Go—

- **Sharpen Your Eyes.** So much in *Collections Central* depends upon the act of close and careful looking. Help students sharpen their skills of looking and comparing by showing them objects that look identical but differ slightly. For example, you might show them two baseball caps or two used yellow pencils. Comparing two similar things will help them to notice more about each one.
- **Discuss Gallery Behavior.** The Museum is a place to have fun, but it is indoors and your class will be sharing it with other groups. *Collections Central* is a place to slow down, look closely and carefully, try out gallery activities, create, reflect, and explore. There is no need to whisper, but indoor voices are appropriate

When You're Here—

- **Look.** *Collections Central* is full of objects including natural science specimens and cultural objects from many periods of time and cultures. Students may need help focusing their attention. This is easy to do by pointing out several objects and asking them to compare them. Or you can start them on a treasure hunt by using the detail cards that require them to look for the details in objects, and then make up your own (Can you find an object with red beads and a tail?). Other activities that help students look closely are the drawing horses, the Adapt-A-Detail station, several puzzles, and the magnifying table. Not all close attention is looking; students can experience identifying an object solely by touch. The ability to look closely and carefully is useful at the museum, in the class room, and out in the world.
- **Imagine.** *Collections Central* has objects that spark students' imaginations. It might be the skeleton of the elephant that gets them thinking about what it looked like when it was alive or how it seems like the bones of dinosaurs or dragons. Drawing their own comics, rearranging magnetic images to create extraordinary beings, riding in the *carranca* boat, and more, stretch students' imagination through the objects associated with them. You can also point out objects in *Collections Central* that show the imaginative prowess of their creators.
- **Make.** Almost all of the cultural objects in our collection are hand made. Finding the materials, learning techniques of working the materials, and perfecting hand skills has taken the makers long hours of learning and practice as well as thoughtfulness and sometimes playfulness about their design choices. By making things ourselves, we can begin to appreciate this work. In *Collections Central*, students exercise their skills and design choices in drawing, building, stringing beads, and making decorative patterns.
- **Learn.** *Collections Central* is a place where students explore and acquire information about objects and learn how to learn more about objects. They can also experience the ways that museums learn about objects—by making their own exhibit and writing labels for it and by experiencing how an object seems to change its meaning when seen in a different context. In front of a display of broken objects, they can act the part of a museum conservator figuring out how to put a broken object back together again.



Back in the Classroom—

- Become an anthropologist and use cultural inquiry skills. Have each student bring in a personal object or image from home to share with the class. Ask that students place the object in a large box when they enter the room at the beginning of the day; this is so no one recognizes other students' objects. Discuss the role of an anthropologist and list the skills he or she may use to explore an object. Then have each student choose one object (not their own) from the collection. Ask students to use their senses to observe and hypothesize about the use or significance of the object. Then ask students to one by one share their thoughts—this can be done in small groups as well. After others have finished sharing, the owner of the object then adds more information about the object. Discussion questions may include: What are the most helpful techniques to explore an object? How does it feel to have someone else talking about your object? How did you feel when they said something that was not accurate or true? How might this activity help us better understand how to study other cultures?
- Create your own changing display of objects based on what is being studied at the time. Have students create and write labels for the objects. Invite parents or other classes in for the "opening."

MORE Resources . . .

Books—

- *Fun With Amulets*. Diana Craig Patch, et. al. Metropolitan Museum of Art, October 1997. Amulets to make and other activities.
- *Hands-On Africa: Art Activities For All Ages*. Yvonne Y. Merrill. KITS Publishing, 2000.
- *Hands-On America, Vol. Two*. Yvonne Young Merrill. KITS Publishing, October 2006. Projects for students to create historically accurate tools, household goods, and other items of everyday life in Colonial America of the 18th to 19th century.
- *Masks*. Meryl Doney. Gareth Stevens Publishing, December 2003. Information about and instructions for making masks.
- *The Story of the Amulet* (CD). Edith Nesbit & Anna Bentinck. Naxos Audiobooks, September 2007. If you are uncomfortable telling stories, this CD features stories from around the world about amulets.
- *The Art of African Masks: Exploring Cultural Traditions (Art Around the World)*. Carol Finley. Lerner Publishing Group, 1999. For grades 5 and up, but adaptable for younger audiences.
- *The MoMA's Art Safari Collage Activity Kit*. Joyce Raimondo. Museum of Modern Art, New York, March 2002. For ages 6-12. Good ideas for provocative materials and ways to present collage.



- *The Museum Book by Jan Mark: A Guide to Strange and Wonderful Collections*. Publisher: Candlewick, September 25, 2007. For ages 9-12, but contains good information that is easily adapted for younger audiences.
- *Working in a Museum*. Arthur John L'Hommedieu. Children's Press, 1998. A children's book about working at the Museum.

Websites—

- **Cabinet of Wonders Game**

Drawing on the curious objects from the collections of the FRAME collaborating museums in United States and in France, this online game for kids and families presents an intellectual adventure with many interactive activities. The player must find an object that the 18th century collector needs to have to complete his collection. Each player must travel around the world to discover this particular object. In the process, he seeks to create his own curiosity cabinet by winning games to retrieve five objects from the museum collections. www.framemuseums.org/sites/room_of_wonders/intro_en.html.

- **Collections Central Online**

This is our online collections catalog developed specifically for children and their educators. It features a selection of natural history specimens and cultural artifacts from the Museum's collection. Each object has its own information page, including multiple views of the object and an online drawing activity. Search tools enable you to find collection objects by keyword, category, country, or continent/region. Online exhibits group objects from across the collection by theme. www.brooklynkids.org/emuseum.

- **Other Museum Collections**

Here are some good museum collection websites where you and your students can explore further the world of objects.

*American Museum of Natural History Anthropology Collection:

http://anthro.amnh.org/anthropology/databases/north_public/north_public.htm.

* Victoria & Albert Museum collections:

Browse the rich collections of the Victoria & Albert Museum in London. This portion of the Museum's website is divided into sections like 'Childhood' and "Textiles," so you can easily find objects that are interesting to you and your students.

www.vam.ac.uk/collections/index.html.

*Old Sturbridge Village collections:

Find an array of objects for daily life and work in colonial America, on the Old Sturbridge Village website. www.osv.org/collections/index.html.



Additional Curriculum Resources—

- Victoria & Albert Museum teacher resources:
This section of the Victoria & Albert site has wonderful activities, easily accessible by topics such as "Fifty Ways to Use Museum Postcards," "Jewelry and Adornments," and "Museum Conservation."
www.vam.ac.uk/school_stdnts/schools_teach/teachers_resources/index.html.
- Art and Life in Africa Project.
A clearinghouse for things related to African art and life ways that includes lesson plans and art projects for teachers. www.uiowa.edu/~africart/index.html.
- Book Arts Web:
Teaching Children Bookbinding: A Pathfinder for Educators.
This site has many links to issues related to book binding and the book arts in general.
www.philobiblon.com.
- The Center of Bookarts:
This is an excellent site for all things book arts. www.centerforbookarts.org.





BROOKLYN CHILDREN'S MUSEUM'S MISSION

The mission of Brooklyn Children's Museum is to actively engage children in educational and entertaining experiences through innovation and excellence in exhibitions, programs, and use of its collection. The Museum encourages children to develop an understanding of and respect for themselves, others, and the world around them by exploring cultures, the arts, science, and the environment. The Museum is recognized among cultural institutions for its leadership in addressing the educational, cultural, and social concerns of youth and families in our dynamic urban environment.

We are more committed than ever to our mission to create experiences and environment where children can be active, successful and confident learners by putting children at the center of the museum experience.

Developed by the Brooklyn Children's Museum

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BROOKLYN
CHILDRENS
MUSEUM

touch the world!

