

CREATE A CLASSROOM MUSEUM EXHIBIT

Introduce students to the purpose of museums and process of designing and creating exhibits.



OBJECTIVES

Students should:

- Brainstorm different kinds of museums and their purposes.
- Design and create a museum exhibit within your classroom.
- View ASDM exhibits with a critical eye during their visit.

MATERIALS

- copies for each student of *Exhibit Evaluation - Student Handout*
- collected “artifacts,” and natural materials (rocks, etc.)
- various art supplies depending upon the type of exhibit students want to create; may include: cardboard display boards, markers, paints, etc.

GETTING READY

Prepare the materials as listed in the left margin of this page.

DOING THE ACTIVITY

WHAT IS A MUSEUM?

SETTING THE STAGE

Many students have visited a museum of some sort. Stimulate class discussions by asking the following questions:

1. Name some museums you’ve visited and tell what you saw there. (*Natural history, art, children’s, history, science, etc. You may wish to broaden the conversation to zoos, aquariums and botanical gardens since ASDM is actually a combination of these.*)
2. What is the purpose of having museums? (*To preserve a collection of animals or artifacts and to educate the public. The Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum is a non-profit educational institution focusing on natural history and dedicated to fostering public appreciation, knowledge and wise stewardship of the Sonoran Desert region. Because*

ASDM is also a zoo, one of its purposes is to preserve Threatened and Endangered species.)

3. What makes museums interesting? (*Answers will vary.*)
4. What makes a museum display interesting to you? (*Answers will vary.*)
5. What is involved in setting up a museum display? (*Setting up a museum display takes lots of planning and coordination from many of the museum’s departments. Tasks include: fund raising, budget development, researching the needs of plants and animals, exhibit design, sign writing, exhibit construction, safety review, planting vegetation, obtaining animals, taking care of animals, publicizing the new exhibit, maintaining the exhibit, and lots more.*

CAREER FOCUS

1. Write the Desert Museum department titles (Table 1) on the board. Discuss how each department is important in exhibit design and construction.

SCIENCE DIVISION

Table 1

GENERAL OPERATION

Botany – Grows, plants, and maintains plants on the Museum grounds
Earth Sciences – Manages the Museum’s geology collection and exhibits
Herpetology – Manages and takes care of the reptile and amphibian collection
Invertebrate Zoology – Manages and takes care of the arthropod (insects, scorpions, spiders, etc) collection
Ichthyology – Manages and takes care of the fish collection
Mammalogy & Ornithology – Manages and takes care of the mammal and bird collection
Research & Science Outreach – Team of scientists that research plants and animals of the Sonoran Desert Region

Administration – Includes the Museum Director, manages all Museum personnel
Design & Planning – Designs exhibits, signs, and printed materials
Development & Community Relations – Raises money, promotes Museum to public, handles the media
Education – Teaches the public about the Sonoran Desert, all educational programming, docent/guide training
Finance – Manages the Museum’s money
Guest Services – Takes care of visitors
Maintenance – Helps with exhibit construction and is in charge of the cleanliness, safety, and maintenance of the Museum buildings and grounds

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2. After giving students some time to think about the responsibilities involved with each department, assign a job title to each student. As a class, work through a sample exhibit design project, allowing students to act out the role of their job title.

EXHIBIT DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

1. Explain that your class will be working in groups to create a "Classroom Desert Museum." Each group will be responsible for designing and constructing an exhibit of a Sonoran Desert animal.
2. Divide the class into about 4 - 5 groups. Have students select an animal for their group exhibit. Discuss your parameters with students including how much time they will have to complete the exhibit, what materials they can use, and how much classroom space each group will be allocated.
3. Teams need to begin by thoroughly researching the needs of their animal before they can start designing the exhibit. While researching, they should consider which information they would like to include on exhibit signs.
4. Pass out copies of the *Exhibit Evaluation Handout* and explain that they need to consider each area while creating their exhibit. (You may want to use this form to help establish their grade.)
5. Meet with student groups to keep them on task. Discuss any problems or challenges students are facing as a class. Have students try to solve the enclosed sample ASDM exhibit problem (see "*Exhibit Problem Solved!*").
6. When all exhibits are completed, students can act as museum guides as they explain their exhibits to other students. Open your "Classroom Desert Museum" for public viewing.

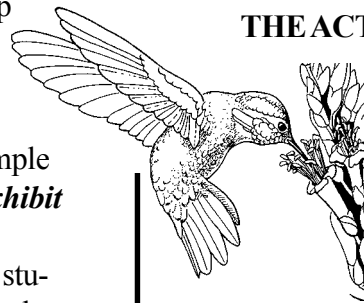
EXHIBIT PROBLEM SOLVED!

As teams are designing an animal exhibit, it is important that they try to think of all the needs of the animal. Have students brainstorm a solution to the following problem:

The Desert Museum is very proud of its hummingbird aviary. It is one of the only aviaries in the world to breed hummingbirds. Why is this aviary so successful? The Desert Museum staff has carefully thought of everything the birds need in the wild to survive and how modifications can be made so they can live well in captivity. To start with, we knew the birds needed a complete diet. The aviary is planted with plants that hummingbirds feed on in the wild. But because space is limited, the diet must be supplemented. So, the Museum uses a special food imported from Germany called "Nectar Plus." It looks like dirty orange juice, but it has everything the birds need including carbohydrates, proteins and fats.

We try to create exhibits that are complete ecosystems, but sometimes this is a challenge. For example, the hummingbird aviary was once renovated and afterwards staff noticed that the nests of the hummingbirds were coming apart and the eggs were falling out! A solution had to be found! Can you solve this problem?

THE ACTUAL SOLUTION



After some brainstorming, the staff realized that the renovation had disturbed the spiders in the exhibit. Spider web is a crucial ingredient in hummingbird nests! The problem was solved by adding spiders to the aviary, along with other useful materials such as pet hair and dryer lint.



VOCABULARY

- **botany**- the study of plants
- **herpetology**- the study of reptiles and amphibians
- **ichthyology**- the study of fishes
- **mammology**- the study of mammals
- **ornithology**- the study of birds
- **zoology**- the study of animals

1. After visiting the exhibit, people should know:

2. How is the display interactive?

3. Does the exhibit have an overall, eye-catching design? Explain. _____

4. Are items labeled? _____ Are labels easy to read? _____

5. Is the exhibit safe for visitors? _____

6. How much maintenance is required? Daily? _____

Weekly? _____

7. What materials were used to build the exhibit? _____

8. What is the budget for the exhibit? _____

9. Are any items on loan from other museums? _____ If so, how will those items be secured?

