

House & Home

Museum Activities: Introduction

The hands-on activities listed here are intended for use on-site to engage visitors in a creative exploration of the exhibits primary themes. These activities can also be adapted for use in off-site programming for more specialized audiences. Either way, they are best suited for a pre-scheduled activity in a museum classroom or non-gallery location.

Activity One: {HOME} Keeping Objects, Keeping Connections

Age Appropriateness: All ages, ideal for families and multi-generational groups

Time Needed: 1-2 hours, depending on number of participants

Introduction: During this activity, visitors will have the opportunity to tell the stories behind the treasured objects from their own homes. In this case, visitors will bring in family heirloom objects. You will need to engage in some pre-exhibit program planning and promotion for this activity through your website or a mailer so that visitors can have adequate time to secure heirloom objects and the stories accompanying them. You may wish to require pre-registration for this activity as well.

Required Materials:

- Patricia Polocco's book *The Keeping Quilt* (travels with exhibit Educational Material)
- Digital camera
- Quilt or another heirloom quality object from your collection
- Guest conservationist (optional)

Program Directions:

1. Ask visitors "What is an heirloom?" An heirloom is a valuable object that has belonged to a family for several generations. If possible, display/present an heirloom from your own collection to illustrate the point with a tangible object.
2. Inform visitors that you will be reading the book *The Keeping Quilt* aloud, which is the story of what an heirloom quilt has come to mean to a Russian family.
3. After reading the book, ask the following questions:
 - Besides the obvious uses for the quilt, what unique things did it become for this family over the years?
 - How did the keeping quilt connect generations/tie people together?
 - Think about the twenty million or more people who came through Ellis Island. Whether they decided to live in New York or in our town, how do you think they made their new houses feel like homes?
 - Why do we keep some objects and not others?
4. Next invite visitors to "Tell us about your keeping object..." Inquire how it was acquired or created, about its first owner, how it has been passed down through the generations, and what it has come to mean to your family.
5. Take a digital photo of the family with their object. Email the photo to the family and consider posting it on your website.
6. Consider inviting a conservationist (or using one on your staff if possible) to have on site for families interested in learning more about how to safely preserve heirloom objects.

Extensions: Continue the discussion with questions like:

- The keeping quilt helped to keep the family history and traditions alive and connected the family over time. Today, what might a family keep to preserve traditions and family history? (a scrapbook, photo album, or a videotape of special events).

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Activity Two:{HOUSE} Our HOUSEstory

Age Appropriateness: All ages, ideal for a family

Time Needed: one to two hours

Introduction: This activity gives your visitors a chance to record the “house-story” of their current residence.

Required Materials:

- 4-5 photographs of historic homes in your area
- “Our HOUSEstory” packet (one for each participating family)
- Color copy (if possible) of participating family’s house photograph
- Pens and pencils
- Scissors & glue sticks
- Colored pencils (optional)
- “Tips for Discovering More about Your Home’s History” handout

Program Directions:

1. Introduce this activity by passing around historic photographs of homes in your area that represent a variety of architectural designs, styles, and periods. Your state historical society or county library most likely has access to these kinds of photos or has a digital, web-based database of historic photographs.
2. Invite comments on each photo with exploratory questions like:
 - What do you notice about this house? Is there anything that makes it unique?
 - How old do you think it is? Who do you think first lived here? (have the answers to these questions available)
 - What is the made of?
 - Can you think of how our region’s climate or unique landscape characteristics may have influenced its design?
3. Instruct participants to look at the photograph of their own home. What do they know about its history? Inform them that the following activity will help them to create a record of what they know about their home’s history for both themselves and future owners.
4. Pass out a copy of “Our HOUSEstory” packet to each participating family. They will work together to complete the worksheet as best as they can. They should begin by pasting a color copy of their home in the space provided. The rectangular box below the picture is for inserting the home’s address. The remaining pieces of the document should be self-explanatory.
5. While all family member will contribute to this project, encourage the family to designate the following roles:
 - Scribe (will write text)
 - Architect (will draw floor plan)

6. Before departing, pass out the “Tips for Discovering More about Your Home’s History” handout so that families can continue to learn their house history through online searches and local historical resources.

Alternative Idea: this would be a great opportunity to add to your institutions own archives by recording participant’s knowledge of their home’s history through a podcast series.

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Museum Activity 3

Activity Three: {HOME} “Oh Give me a Home Where...”

Age Appropriateness: All ages

Time Needed: 30 minutes

Introduction: This activity gives visitors a chance to write a song about their home based on the iconic song, “Home on the Range.”

Required Materials:

- A CD player that can play “Home on the Range” for reference
- Blank song sheets for guests to write in their lyrics
- pens and pencils
- OPTIONAL: a device to record guests' songs to play for future guests

Program Directions:

1. Start by playing the song “Home on the Range”.
2. Give a short history about the song: Dr. [Brewster M. Higley](#) (1823–1911) originally wrote the words in a poem called “My Western Home” in the early 1870s in [Smith County, Kansas](#). The poem was first published in a December 1873 issue of the *Smith County Pioneer* under the title “Oh, Give Me a Home Where the Buffalo Roam”. The music was written by a friend of Higley, [Daniel E. Kelley](#) (1845–1905). Higley's original words are similar to those of the song today, but not identical. The song was adopted by settlers, cowboys, and others and spread across the United States in various forms. During the early 20th century, it was arranged by Texas composer [David W. Guion](#) (1892–1981), who is often credited as the composer. It was officially adopted as the state song of Kansas on June 30, 1947, and is commonly regarded as the unofficial anthem of the [American West](#).
3. Explain to the guests that they will be rewriting this song to reflect their “Home”. There are two options for how this can be done. 1) Individuals may write their own lyrics, or 2) the group of guests may each contribute a line and then compile their lines for a unique song reflecting many perspectives on the memorable parts of their homes.

OPTIONS:

- Display the guests' completed songs so future guests can see what others would highlight about their homes
- Record the guests singing their completed songs and play them for future guests

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Museum Activity 4

Activity Four: {HOUSE} All Things Needful?

Age Appropriateness: All ages

Time Needed: 30 minutes

Introduction: This activity will challenge guests to determine what things are truly NEEDED in a home. By choosing either miniatures of actual household items or pictures of household items, guests will create either a “Top Five” list of household items. VARIATION: Instead of a “Top Five” list, have guests rank a sampling of items according to their necessity.

Required Materials:

- A stack of pictures of household items, OR some miniature representations of household items
- paper and pencils
- If using printouts of pictures of household items, then you will need large pieces of card stock to glue them to
- glue sticks

Program Directions:

1. Introduce this question to the visitors: What are the most needful items in a home? Their answers will vary. Encourage them to state items they think are needed in a house.
2. Inform the visitors that they need to take the idea even further and try and decide how they would rank certain items according to their necessity.

If using pictures of household items:

- Present each visitor (or they could work together as a group) with a small stack of pictures depicting household items. Items might include things like: refrigerator, stove, TV, washing machine, bed, computer, sheets, a knife, clothes, etc.
- OPTION 1: Have visitors pick their “Top Five” items they think are absolute necessities for a house. Encourage them to explain why they chose the items they did.
- OPTION 2: Have visitors rank the items included in the stack of pictures. Have them explain why they find certain objects more necessary than others.
- This activity could simply be a hands-on activity that is left behind for each visitor, or group of visitors, to use.
- An alternative would be to provide paper/card stock to mount the pictures that were chosen. This would be something that visitors could take home with them.

If using miniature representations of household items:

- The concept is the same as the previous activity, but instead of pictures, visitors will use the actual items to classify the most needful items for a house.

- Provide a table or display where visitors can arrange the items they determine are necessary.
- Again, they could rank all of the items included, or they could pick their “Top Five” items and display them.

This is a hands-on activity with no take-home component.

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Quick Craft

Quick Craft #1: Making a Wampanoag wetu

All ages

Time: about 25-30 minutes

Materials Needed:

- pipe cleaners
- paper lunch bags or brown construction/craft paper
- white glue

Instructions: Using the images below as guides, instruct guests to build frames for their wetus, starting with a pipe cleaner formed into a circle. Then make arcs of pipe cleaners to create the desired shape. They mold and twist so easily it should be quite easy to shape. The outer covering is made with squares of cut-up paper bags or brown craft paper. Starting from the bottom of the pipe cleaner frame put glue add glue to the frame and attach the paper pieces. Continue adding layers as you make your way up the frame and then you can add an outer pipe cleaner circle to hold it in place while it dries. To finish it off, you can glue a little flap onto the top, where the smoke could escape from the fire inside. Once it is dry, you can cut a little door flap on one side.





wetus pictured on left, pilgrim houses on right

Quick Craft #2: Invention for the Future

All Ages

Time: 15-30 minutes

Materials Needed:

- White craft paper, cardstock, or marker/paint paper
- markers, water colors, pastels, colored pencils, etc.
- pencils
- handkerchiefs or scarps of fabric long enough for blindfolds

Instructions: This is an exercise for the imagination! First guests will need to get a piece of paper positioned in front of them and choose what they would like to draw with (pencils, paints, markers, etc.). Then, after they have been blindfolded, ask them to draw a picture of the most useful household object of the future. Once they have completed their drawing, remove their blindfold. They might be surprised and how strange their object is. Now they must write a short description of their new item and what is used for. Make sure they give it a proper name. Nothing is too wild or silly! It would be fun to display these for future guests to see, or guests can take them home with them.