

AMAZEMENT IN THE BASEMENT: SPECIMEN STORYTELLING

GRADE LEVEL: K-5



Objectives

- Students will write a creative narrative or comic imagining the life story of a specimen, from discovery to display
- Students will develop an appreciation for the role of museum collections in preserving natural history

Preparation

- Provide examples of a creative narrative or comic to inspire students' work
- Print or gather optional photos of collection specimens for students who may not select one during the visit
- Prepare writing and/or drawing materials for the post-visit activity

Materials

- Pencils
- Two worksheet printouts: one with sentence frames and another with open response lines to support different learning approaches.
- Paper
- [Comic book template](#) printouts

INSTRUCTIONS

We recommend completing the Introduction section in the classroom or as a group before entering the Museum.

Introduction (10 minutes)

- Begin by asking students:
 - Why do you think museums keep collections of plants, animals, fossils, and more?
 - How do you think scientists learn from specimens that were collected many years ago?
 - What could we discover about nature by studying natural history collections?
 - What kinds of stories do you think specimens would have if they could “talk?”
- Introduce the assignment – each student will select a specimen from the exhibit and create a narrative or comic about its journey from discovery to display.

Exploration (30 minutes, during exhibit visit)

- Distribute a worksheet and pencil to each student.
- Instruct students to explore the exhibit and select one specimen that captures their interest.
- Encourage them to take notes, sketch and record details about the specimen’s features, the habitat where they would find it, and why they chose it on the first page of their worksheet.

Post-Visit Activity (in classroom)

- Guide students to start transforming their notes from the worksheet into a creative story or comic. Provide them with either plain paper or comic strip template printouts. *If a student did not select a specimen, you can provide them with any photos you took of specimens while on the visit or pair them with another student to work together.*
- Encourage them to think about story elements when filling out page 2 of the worksheet:
 - Characters: Who or what is a part of your specimen’s journey? (Scientists, community members, the specimen itself, other organisms in the habitat)
 - Setting: Where did the specimen come from? Where was it studied? How did it end up in the museum?
 - Plot: What key events happened to the specimen along its journey?
 - Conflict or Challenge: Did the specimen face obstacles, changes, or threats in its environment?
 - Resolution: How does the specimen’s story end with it preserved in the museum? What is that specimen teaching visitors that come to the museum?

Wrap-up

- Have students share their story or comic with the class.
- If time, host an “open mic” event where you invite other classes to come to your classroom to hear students sharing their stories/comics.

Extension Ideas

- Compile stories/comics into a “Specimen Storybook” and share with other classes at your school.
- Connect their stories/comics to conservation issues by having them research threats to threatened or endangered species that are similar to their specimen or live in a similar habitat or area of the world.

Name _____

Date _____

AMAZEMENT IN THE BASEMENT: SPECIMEN STORYTELLING

Directions: All of our specimens tell a story of a particular plant or animal. Today, you'll be the storyteller. Choose a specimen and share its story.

Draw and name specimen:

About My Specimen: What does it look like? What type of habitat would it live in? Why did you choose it?

My specimen is _____ (color/size) and has a

_____ (trait) that helps it _____

_____. It lives in the _____ (habitat).

I chose it because _____

Story Framework: Imagine your specimen's journey by answering the questions below.

Characters: Who or what is a part of your specimen's journey?

The characters in my story are _____

_____. My specimen met _____ on its journey.

Setting: Where did the specimen come from? How did it end up in the museum?

It came from _____ and was brought
to The Nat by _____.

Plot: What key events happened to the specimen along its journey?

First, the specimen _____.
Then, it _____.
Lastly, the specimen _____.

Conflict or Challenge: Did the specimen face obstacles, changes, or threats in its environment?

One problem it faced was _____. It had
to survive by _____.

Resolution: How does the specimen's story end with it preserved in the museum? What is that specimen teaching visitors that come to the museum?

Now, the specimen is in the museum and _____.
Visitors can learn _____ from it.

Name _____

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Resolution: How does the specimen's story end with it preserved in the museum? What is that specimen teaching visitors that come to the museum?