

# A WINDOW TO THE PAST

❖ A unit of study that makes History come alive ❖



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## A NOTE ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Katherine Lawrence and Jan Wells are retired educators. Both have spent years in the classroom and also supported colleagues while serving as consultants at the Vancouver School Board. As writers of many educational resources for teachers and students, they collaborated on the 2006 revision of the Roedde House curriculum to bring it in line with other educational initiatives in the field.

Katherine is a great grandchild of Matilda and Gustav Roedde, and thus brings a unique perspective to the project. Vicky Jensen is a photographer and author. She has written widely on both BC coastal marine history and Indigenous cultures.

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# OVERVIEW OF WINDOWS OF THE PAST

## RATIONALE FOR THE PROGRAM AND EXPLANATION OF COMPONENTS

This curriculum started with the idea of making history come alive for students by focusing on an historic building. The particular building was Roedde House Museum in Vancouver's West End. This was the home of a middle class family built in 1893. It is now a museum furnished and maintained as it was in the late Victorian era when the Roedde family owned it.

Windows to the Past is an approach to social studies for the elementary school classroom based on the study of local and personal history. The central premise is that the exploration of our own lives and the lives of those in our local community makes history come alive. For students and teachers alike, it is an exciting and dynamic blend of hands-on-activities and thoughtful academic study which creates rich background knowledge and understanding of the subject. It presents a series of adaptable lesson ideas grouped together within two units of study and provides a basis for the social studies program in your classroom. The ideas are classroom-tested and have proven their worth over time.

The importance of local history is central to the whole curriculum. History connects us to our own roots and helps us to understand who we are. Learning from history helps us to make decisions about issues that affect us today. Active citizenship, the exercise of a vote in a democratic society and the understanding of current affairs depend so much on being able to see the present as a consequence of the past. The impact of

historical events on the lives of everyday people connects us to our ancestors. When we can see historical events and our family stories through the eyes of those who lived in our community before us, then we can begin to feel some of the impact of those events and times.

## WHAT IS IN THE PROGRAM?

Windows to the Past is organized around two units of study:

- Exploring Roedde House Museum
- Learning from Objects

The first unit encompasses the visit and the second unit revolves around our Artifact Kit. There are many activities from which teachers may choose involving reading, researching, writing, art, oral presentations and hands-on exploration. The curriculum is open - ended and endlessly adaptable to local circumstances, and the time frames suggested are only guidelines.

## RESOURCES

Resource materials that capture students' imaginations are part of the design including the use of a kit, complete with printed materials, artifacts and games. The sorts of artifacts that have a place in the kit are explored in the unit Learning From Objects. When a tour date is booked, the Roedde House Museum office will arrange delivery of the box to the school about two weeks prior to the site visit and the teachers will return it the day of the visit.

## **INTEGRATING WINDOWS TO THE PAST AND HERITAGE FAIRS**

The Canada's History Society's Heritage Fairs program encourages students to explore Canadian heritage in a dynamic, hands-on learning environment. Students use the medium of their choice to tell stories about Canadian heroes, legends, milestones, and achievements - and present the results of their research at a public exhibition.

### **For more information contact:**

<http://www.canadashistory.ca/Education/Heritage-Fairs>

## **HOW LONG DOES THE PROGRAM TAKE?**

This is an integrated curriculum. Windows to the Past could be five weeks long, but the wealth of ideas will easily fill a much longer time. You can

pick and choose activities from each unit that you wish to pursue with your class and carry them out concurrently, or pursue the units sequentially. Combined with the visit to Roedde House Museum, the key activities will give students a taste of learning about the past through interaction with objects, architecture, family members and historical resources.

The amount of time spent also depends on whether work is carried out only during the periods scheduled for social studies, or whether art and language arts lessons can be used as well. In order to give opportunities for all learners to express their knowledge, activities were chosen that feature drawings, presentations, interviews and written assignments. The enthusiasm of the class will also be a factor. Some classes will become so enthralled that the activities expand and grow as the ideas flow.

## **HOW TO BOOK A SCHOOL VISIT AND HAVE USE OF THE ARTIFACTS KIT**

To book a school visit to Roedde House Museum with your class:

- Fill in the form on the museum's site
- Phone Roedde House Museum at 604-684-7040
- or contact the museum by email at [office@roeddehouse.org](mailto:office@roeddehouse.org)

When a school visit is booked, the Roedde House Museum office will arrange delivery of the Artifacts Kit to the school about two weeks prior to the site visit.

You may not be planning a school visit right away but may want to be a part of the Roedde House Museum school database so that you will be kept informed via email of any new education initiatives, relevant cultural events and updates to the school programs. If so, you can contact us at [office@roeddehouse.org](mailto:office@roeddehouse.org) and we will be happy to add you.

# Exploring Roedde House Museum

## THE FIELD TRIP EXPERIENCE

We begin our tour with an acknowledgement of Indigenous land and a study of immigration to British Columbia with a tour of Roedde House Museum, the home of a middle class family built in 1893. Tell students that they will be touring a home that is now a museum set-up exactly as it was over 100 years ago. They will get to see how the family lived in those days, which objects were used in their daily lives and some idea of what everyday life was like.



When touring Roedde House Museum a class is split usually into three groups that rotate through three activities. Stress to students that everyone will experience every activity.

Before students tour Roedde House Museum, explain that it is an unusual museum in that its artifacts are quite accessible to the public. Displays are not roped off. Few things are behind lock and key.

Students will be expected to be respectful of the objects in the museum. There will be limited opportunities to handle objects while at Roedde House Museum. It is a visual not a tactile experience.

Students may be unfamiliar with docents, so you will need to explain that a docent is a volunteer resource person whose job is to provide information and safeguard objects in the museum. Docents will give instructions and ask questions. Students should be ready to respond politely.

Behaviour that is respectful of the docents is expected at all times.

Confirmation and reminder emails will be sent to you from Roedde House Museum when you have booked your tour.

Limited street parking is available on Robson and in the West End. Parking spots are scarce in the neighbourhood, so give yourself some extra time or use public transportation. (Closest Skytrain station: Burrard. We are on the #5 Robson bus route).



There are three parts to the class visit:

1. The inside tour of Roedde House Museum (60 minutes)
2. A discovery kit exercise, where the students will take part in a hands-on examination and discussion of artifacts (20 minutes)
3. Sketching and discussion of the exterior of Roedde House Museum and its architectural features. (20 minutes)

## THE ROEDDE HOUSE MUSEUM VIDEO

Watch the video entitled Windows to the Past, [which you can find in our website](#), before visiting Roedde House Museum. The video, which was made in 1990, introduces two elderly women who were little girls in the early 1900s. Their memories give us a wonderful glimpse into this bygone era.

Their story reinforces the notion of oral history and the importance of capturing the recollections of elders. Watching the video provides students with a visual sense of the time period in which the house was built. Establish the purpose for viewing the video and for touring Roedde House Museum, which is to get a sense of life in Vancouver in the early 1900s.

## ACTIVITY 1: TOURING ROEDDE HOUSE MUSEUM

During the tour, students will get some sense of what family life and entertainment were like at the beginning of the 20th century in Vancouver. After the visit they can contrast this with their experience of contemporary family life and debate whether family life has improved with the times.

### Objectives

- Viewing and enjoying a tour of the late 19th century historic house.
- Discussing and contrasting the life of a young family, as well as leisure, play and entertainment then and now.
- Seeing family treasures first hand.

When the class actually tours Roedde House Museum, look for the various artifacts that have become familiar through exploration of the Artifacts Box and which may have been spotted in the video. Students can look for olden-day versions of today's technology: e.g., irons, underwear, canning jars, lights, and gramophone. Have students take note of labour-saving devices on the Roedde House Museum tour for discussion afterwards. Encourage them to ask questions of

the docents when there are artifacts whose function they do not understand.

You may want to set an assignment for follow-up where the students pay particular attention to an object that intrigues them and later research that artifact's development, design and uses.

## ACTIVITY 2: DISCOVERING THE GAMES AND ARTIFACTS BOX

### Objectives

- Opportunity to play games from the turn of the 19th into the 20th century.
- Explore household items that were used at that time.

## ACTIVITY 3: DRAWING ROEDDE HOUSE MUSEUM

This activity involves making an accurate drawing of one section of Roedde House Museum. Students choose a feature that interests them, such as the cupola, the porch or one of the elevations, and using paper, pencil and clipboard, they make a sketch.

### Objectives

- to study a particular style of architecture by sketching it
- to be exposed to more of the history of the West End and early Vancouver

## FOLLOW - UP ACTIVITY

After class has already visited the house, your students may wish to enter their drawings into the Roedde House Museum postcard competition. On completion of the drawings, teachers should send them to Roedde House Museum and the winners for each year will be announced in early June. The winning drawings are made into postcards that are available for sale at Roedde House Museum. The winning students will receive a certificate from Roedde House Preservation Society.

# Learning from Objects

Understanding artifacts increases our comprehension of the world. This unit presents a series of lessons designed to offer opportunities for exploration, hypothesis testing, analysis and the development of understanding derived from primary sources in the form of photographs, art works and, most specifically, artifacts.

## WHY USE AUTHENTIC HISTORICAL OBJECTS IN THE CLASSROOM?



- Objects spark curiosity
- Provide information in a format other than writing
- Helps promote and develop observation, reflection and deduction skills
- Engages children who have not yet acquired the classroom language

Everyone can use objects. Often, children for whom English is a second language or children with learning difficulties will relate well to activities involving objects. Differences between learners which are emphasized by reading and writing are diminished by hands-on explorations.

The Window to the Past Artifacts Box/School Kit is available for teachers to borrow from the Roedde House Museum. Several kits have been

assembled which are loaned to the schools on a rotating basis. Objects in the kit may be handled in the classroom and compared with objects observed in the museum. The objects in the Artifacts Box are not necessarily rare -- in fact most of them were common in the early 1900s. They are intended to provide an intriguing bridge between contemporary life and earlier times.

This unit comprises three activities. The key activity in this section is Activity 3: Exploring the Artifacts Box. Activities 1 and 2 are designed to help students develop visual observation skills. Doing at least one of these activities prior to examining the artifacts in the box, Activity 3, benefits students.

Some teachers like to begin with a preliminary look at the contents of the box, fill in the worksheet and discuss about what has been discovered. Then the lessons that focus on accurate descriptive vocabulary and drawing with detail are taught. Other teachers focus on the skills needed to handle the objects, to describe them and draw them accurately. They set criteria for the completion of the worksheet, and only then do they open the box.

Prior to opening the Artifacts Box, discuss briefly the importance of handling artifacts with care and being responsible for their safety. Each kit contains a pair of white gloves. This gives an opportunity to discuss the conservation of historical artifacts.

**When you are ready to return the box, please ensure that the inventory sheet is tallied and any missing or broken items noted.**

## **ACTIVITY 1: DRAW AN ARTIFACT FROM ROEDDE HOUSE MUSEUM**



During the tour, students will get some sense of what family life and entertainment were like at the beginning of the 20th century in Vancouver. After the visit they can contrast this with their experience of contemporary family life and debate whether family life has improved with the times.

### **Objectives**

- to encourage students to focus on details and reproduce an object with precision and accuracy
- to train students' eyes and minds to pay attention to what they really see and then draw with that information in mind

### **Materials**

- paper for two drawings
- pencils or pens
- familiar, simple mechanical or other object chosen from the Artifacts Box to draw

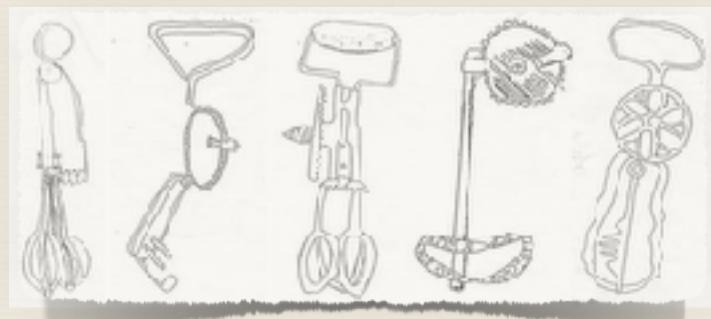
### **How to Do It**

1. Students choose one from a selection of two or three simple mechanical objects that you have available for study in the Artifacts Box, such as a can opener, a pencil sharpener or an eggbeater. After a quick look, hide the object and ask the students to draw it from memory. Each student should attempt his/her own drawing, trying to include as much detail as possible.
2. Collect the first drawings and produce the object for study, paying special attention to how the various parts work together, to their size, proportion, texture and design.
3. Students draw the object again on a second piece of paper, only this time the object should be available for visual reference. Encourage inclusion of another object that gives a sense of scale (e.g., an egg with an eggbeater) and discuss why that would be useful. As students do their second drawing, you may wish to emphasize the importance of drawing with accurate proportion, texture and careful detail. Students will also benefit from seeing various examples of technical drawing that a librarian or art teacher might provide

## **ACTIVITY 2: TWENTY QUESTIONS**

### **Objectives**

- to formulate questions which require more than simple “yes” or “no” answers
- to formulate questions which yield significant information



### **Materials**

- Enough familiar classroom objects (stapler, paper clip, ruler, eraser, lunch box, juice box, quarter or dime, book, etc.) or artifacts from the box to provide at least one to each group

### **How to Do It**

1. With the whole group, discuss how to formulate questions that generate broad information versus those that yield only specifics. For example, if the class is trying to identify an unknown object (such as a set of measuring spoons), questions such as “Is this used by everybody?” or “Did every house have one of these?” or “Is this used in just one room of the house?” might help them more than if they just took a series of guesses -- “Is it a ruler?” “Is it a weapon?”
2. Explain that yes/no questions can be very helpful when students think about “the big picture.” Ask questions that generalize or classify, such as “Is this animal, vegetable or mineral?”

The questions below provide a model:

- Questions about function: e.g., “Does this object provide information in some way?” “Is this object any kind of a machine?” “Does this object require knowledge of reading?” “Would a teacher use this article more than a student?”
- Questions about physical characteristics (colour, size, texture, smell, sound, weight, materials, structure and value): e.g., “Can this object fit in your hand?” (versus “Is this object small?”) “Is this object primarily made out of metal (or paper or wood)?” Questions about value: e.g., “Is this object common enough that everybody in class has one?” “Does this object cost more than five dollars?”

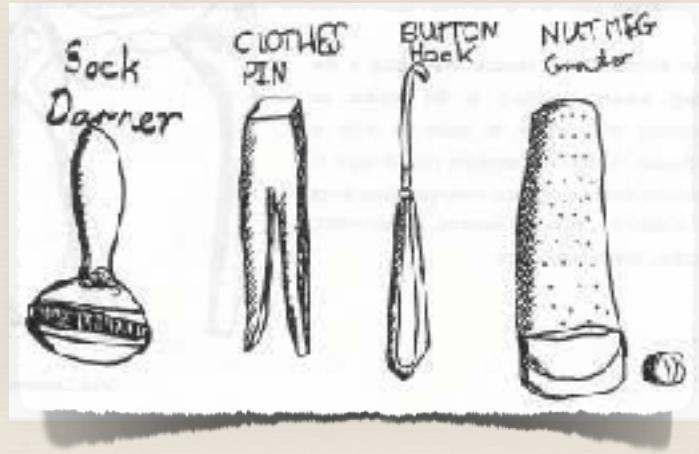
3. Model the activity by having one student select an object that you and the rest of the class try to identify through questioning. One student keeps score on the board. The purpose is to gradually reduce the number of questions needed to figure out the answer.
4. Students try the activity, working in pairs seated back to back. Student A is given an ordinary object familiar to both. Student B must try to identify the object by asking up to 20 questions. After a successful identification or 20 questions, change roles and try another object.

## **ACTIVITY 3: EXPLORING THE ARTIFACTS BOX- KEY ACTIVITY**

During the tour, students will get some sense of what family life and entertainment were like at the beginning of the 20th century in Vancouver. After the visit they can contrast this with their experience of contemporary family life and debate whether family life has improved with the times.

### **Objectives**

- to stimulate interest in earlier times by exploring artifacts
- to figure out what objects were used for and how they functioned
- to understand that we can infer from artifacts how people lived
- to develop vocabulary for terms such as artifact, heritage, collection, preservation, conservation, original, fake, copy, fashion, style, function and design.



### **Materials**

- Artifacts Box, with space for group work around each artifact
- pencils
- Appendix, Learning from Objects

### **How to Do It**

1. Set the stage by arousing curiosity and generating enthusiasm about artifacts. You may tell of discoveries made about ancient civilizations based on artifacts found in tombs, etc. Let students know that they too can make discoveries about not-so-ancient civilizations, too, because we have a box of our own artifacts to explore!
2. Explain that all of the artifacts in the box have been chosen to coincide with the early 20th century time period of Roedde House.
3. Discuss the general questions on the “Learning from Objects” sheets. Discuss the criteria for filling out the worksheet. Detailed, accurate descriptions will be expected. Point form notes may be appropriate.
4. Take out the items and encourage pairs of students or small groups to observe the objects carefully and then fill out the “Learning from Objects” investigation sheets.
5. After analysis of their artifact, students present their findings to the class, either orally or visually. Alternatively, the groups may trade artifacts for analysis.
6. Students might also try to come up with the contemporary version of the artifact, if there is one.

# Appendix: Learning from Objects

Questions about Physical Features:	
What does it look like, feel like, smell like, sound like?	
What colour, shape, and size is it?	
What is it made of?	
Is the object complete or is it part of something larger?	
Has the object ever been changed?	
Are there signs of wear?	
Questions about Design:	
Does the object do its job efficiently?	
How is it decorated? Why is it decorated?	

<b>Questions about Construction:</b>	
How has the object been made?	
By hand? By machine? In a mould? In pieces?	
Has it been glued or glazed or soldered?	
Has it got extra bits -- rivets, a handle, fasteners?	

<b>Questions about Function:</b>	
What was the purpose for which the object was made?	
How has the object been used?	
Has the use changed? Is it still useful? Why or why not? If not, why has it gone out of use?	