

Using Dioramas to Tell Stories

GRADES:

K - 12 (refer to suggested modifications at the end of this document)

DURATION:

Varies depending on the level and amount of research. This can be easily a whole week project (or more), but it can also be simplified to be completed over a couple of days.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Children will learn new ways to present information;
- Children will develop their research skills.

MATERIALS:

- Internet connection for visiting necessary websites
- Diorama Planner Worksheet (included)
- Materials for constructing their diorama, including but not limited to: box (like a shoebox), construction paper, yarn, tape, glue, cardstock, colored pencils, ribbon, or fabric. You are only limited by your imagination!

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Museums tell stories in a variety of ways. They use objects, text, sounds, images, dioramas, and living history interpreters, just to name a few. Before we can tell a good story we need, well, a good story! Museum storytelling starts with quality research with both primary and secondary sources. In this activity we will conduct historical research and then present our “story” by using a diorama. Dioramas are a three-dimensional representation of a concept.

ACTIVITY OUTLINE:

1. Watch the video [“How Museums Tell Stories: Diorama Make-a-long”](#).
2. If children are unfamiliar with historical research you can do the activity [“History Happened Here,”](#) which is a good introduction to research.
3. Children chose a historical topic. This could be something they are currently learning in school or something they are interested in. The topic could be a person, event, place, or time period. Some examples are: The Underground Railroad in Ohio, Ohio: The Mother of Presidents; The Wright Brothers, etc. Have the child think about what types of historical topics would make good dioramas.
4. Introduce the Diorama Planner Worksheet. Children will use this to help guide their research and diorama completion.
5. Children visit [Ohio History Central](#) to conduct additional research on their historical topic. They can add their notes to the diorama planner worksheet.
6. Children then visit [Ohio Memory](#) to find primary sources they can use to find more information on their historical topic as well as items they can use in their diorama. Note: For a more successful search, particularly for younger students, you should click “Exclude full text sources” under the search bar. They can add their notes to the diorama planner worksheet.

Learn at Home – Using Dioramas to Tell Stories

7. After their research is complete, children can begin planning their diorama. Using the diorama planner worksheet, children will draw their diorama idea. Let them be creative! They can build their diorama in a container like a shoebox, or have a free-standing diorama like in the video.
8. After they have sketched out their diorama, they can list the types of materials they will need. Found objects around the house work great! Empty containers, ribbon, construction paper, fabric, markers, etc. Let imaginations run wild.
9. Now that they have gone through the research and planning process it is time to create. Younger children may need your help with some tools such as scissors or permanent glue.

ADAPTATION FOR EACH GRADE:

- The depth of the instruction and research can be intensified according to the grade level. Similarly, the depth research should also be defined accordingly. Kindergarten through 3rd graders might focus on diorama creation. 4th and 5th graders can conduct basic research on Ohio History Central and Ohio Memory, but their complexity should increase for other grades.
- 4th and 5th graders can begin making inferences, but by the time students are in high school they should be able to pull out a more nuanced view of the historical topic beyond just telling the facts.

EXTENSIONS:

1. After the diorama is complete, the children can make a presentation, focusing on their research and planning process and then culminating with a tour of their diorama. This could also be done via a video conferencing software such as FaceTime or Zoom so they share with family and friends.

ONE MORE THING:

Let us know how it went! Tag us on social media in a picture of your diorama or email us at education@ohiohistory.org.



Diorama Planner Worksheet

MY HISTORICAL TOPIC:

INFORMATION FROM OHIO HISTORY CENTRAL:

1.

2.

3.

INFORMATION FROM OHIO MEMORY:

1.

2.

3.

Learn at Home Resources – Diorama Planner Worksheet

DIORAMA SKETCH:

MATERIALS NEEDED:

