Overview: What is a Museum?

The following will help you explain to your class where you're going on your field trip. Use this guide to help explain what a museum is and why they exist.

Before the Visit
Discussion questions to ask your class:

When you think of a museum, what's the first thing that comes to mind?

What's the purpose of a museum?

How many kinds of museums exist?

Do you think museums are meant to be fun, educational, or both?

Why do people start museums?

Why do people work at museums?

What kind of schooling do they need?

What does a museum have in common with a school?

What kind of objects are in museums?

What does it take to preserve objects in museums?

If you had a museum, what would you have in it?

What do you expect to see at the Museum of World Treasures?

Helping define the purpose and vision of the Museum of World Treasures:

Museums are started for various reasons. The Museum of World Treasures was started because of one person's passion. Our founder, Dr. Jon Kardatzke, loves history. In order to inspire others, he started the Museum. Other reasons to start museums include: preservation of history of a specific place or time, protecting natural treasures, protecting national treasures, to teach the public about a specific topic, or to inspire the public through art or performance.

Each museum is unique and special. A museum, by definition, is an institution that cares for and maintains a collection and puts that collection on display. The collection can range from art to scientific specimens, and everything in between. The Museum of World Treasures is called an encyclopedic museum: we host a variety of items and our collection scope (the things we accept as donations or loans) is broad. We hope that everyone can learn from our collection and exhibits, and that is why we exist.

There are several types of museums including: history, art, science and nature, anthropology, archaeology, biography, technology, children's museums, botanical gardens, zoos, and aquariums. Encyclopedic museums like the Museum of World Treasures have collections that represent multiple places and times. We want people to be transported to other places and times by viewing our collection and experiencing the exhibits.

The items in the Museum are cared for by a curator. An exhibits curator helps put the items on display and interprets what they are. An educator helps people understand the items and the exhibits. These three roles are very important in the museum world, especially the curator because the collections are the main reason museums exist. Without proper care of artifacts, museums can be in legal trouble. It's also very important to keep track of where the artifacts are stored and displayed, and the kind of conditions they're exposed to. With proper care, artifacts can last for generations and allow people for hundreds or thousands of years to understand what the past was like. It's better to see items from history than to read about history in books. It makes the past come to life, and makes it real. In order to understand why the world works the way it does, we must first understand what it was like in the past. This is why museums exist.

After the Visit

Discussion questions to ask your class:

What exhibits did you find exciting, interesting, boring, informative, or awesome?

What items were you surprised to see?

How does the Museum care for different items?

Was there anything you wanted to see but didn't get to?

If you could change the Museum, what would you do?

What item would you add to the Museum's collection? How would you care for it?

What would you tell someone if they wanted to take a trip to the Museum?

If you worked at the Museum, what your job be?

Next time you go, what will you be most excited to see again?