

LEARN BEFORE YOU VISIT: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE MINI TIME MACHINE MUSEUM

This lesson is designed to prepare your students for the unique experience of viewing miniature dollhouses at The Mini Time Machine Museum of Miniatures. Set aside 30 minutes for this activity and review *Miniature Museum Manners* with your students.

OBJECTIVES

1. Explain the meaning and purpose of a museum
2. Outline the role of miniatures in society
3. Introduce students to a unique art form – miniature dollhouses
4. Provide an opportunity for students to describe, analyze, interpret and evaluate a miniature

VOCABULARY

artifact	exhibit	museum
collection	miniature	roombox
collectible	miniature dollhouse	scale

DEFINITIONS

ARTIFACT: Something created by humans usually for a practical purpose; *especially:* an object remaining from a particular period <caves containing prehistoric *artifacts*>

COLLECTION: Something collected; *especially:* an accumulation of objects gathered for study, comparison, or exhibition or as a hobby.

COLLECTIBLE: An object that is collected.

EXHIBIT: To show publicly, especially for purposes of demonstration e.g. <*exhibit* a collection of artifacts>

MINIATURE: Something much smaller than the usual size; A *miniature* is a copy of an object on a much smaller scale.

MINIATURE DOLLHOUSE: A *miniature dollhouse* is a work of art made to be looked at and enjoyed rather than a toy meant for play. It can be a scale model of a building.

MUSEUM: An institution devoted to the collection, care, study, and display of objects of lasting interest.

ROOMBOX: A display box used for three-dimensional miniature scale environments similar to a diorama.

SCALE: A proportion between two sets of dimensions (as between those of a drawing and its original). A distinctive relative size, extent, or degree <projects done on a small *scale*>

LET'S BEGIN

Photocopy the following pages and read the articles with your class. Use the questions provided to guide a discussion about a miniature (photo included).

wELCOME TO THE **BIG** WORLD OF SMALL DELIGHTS!



WHAT IS a museum?

Museums collect, care for, study and **exhibit** objects a society considers important and would like to save. There are many different kinds of museums with different kinds of **collections** for example, some are historic, some are scientific and others are artistic. Some museums are large, some are small. All kinds of communities have museums. Museums are respected and are generally a good source of information about objects, cultures and history.



The Mini Time Machine Museum is a museum of **miniatures**. The collection contains **miniature dollhouses, roomboxes** and other **collectibles**. The museum's **artifacts** are organized into three main galleries: The Enchanted Realm, History Gallery and Exploring the World Gallery. The Enchanted Realm is a magical place; here you will find miniatures and collectibles that are imaginary. The miniatures in the History Gallery are **artifacts** from the past. In Exploring the World Gallery, you will see examples of **miniatures dollhouses and roomboxes** from Europe, America and Asia.

WHAT IS a MINIATURE?

The word **miniature** means a copy on a much smaller **scale**. Miniature artists are amazing craftspeople. To make sure everything about a miniature is true-to-life, a miniature artist will research the history, style, and fashions of the place and time period he or she plans to reproduce in miniature. Most modern miniatures are built in 1:12 scale, that is, twelve inches in the real world equals one inch in the miniature world. The building, furniture, and objects that complete the décor, such as a vase of flowers or a photo on the wall, must be the proper scale so the miniature appears to be a real home.



Mexican Colonial Dining Room, by Peter Westcott, 1991.
Collection of The Mini Time Machine Museum



Red Roof Dollhouse, Moritz Gottschalk Company, c. 1928
Collection of The Mini Time Machine Museum

A miniature is truly brought to life not by the artist's craft alone, but by the imagination of you the viewer. When you visit, The Mini Time Machine Museum will guide your imagination on a journey back in time, around the world, and into imaginary lands.

People create miniatures for a variety of reasons. In the past miniatures were often display cabinets created to show off wealth and taste. Sometimes they were used to teach lessons. Travelling salesmen used miniatures as commercial samples. Architects build miniature models of homes. Toy dollhouses are miniatures. Some adults create miniature dollhouses as a hobby. Some cultures create miniature buildings and objects for religious purposes and some are works of art. The Mini Time Machine Museum has examples of all these kinds of miniatures.



Artist's Paint Box, by William Robertson, 1992
Collection of The Mini Time Machine Museum

ANALYZE, INTERPRET AND EVALUATE A MINIATURE



Danish Miniature Antique Shop, Unknown Artist, ca. 1900, Collection of The Mini Time Machine Museum

1. Look at the photograph of this miniature antique shop. What do you see? Take turns listing the objects that you see. (For example: "I see a globe." "I see a fancy chair.")

When you've run out of objects, go on to question two.

2. What is going on in this miniature? Take turns mentioning whatever you see happening, no matter how small. (For example: What are the people doing?)

When you can't find anything more, move on to question three.

3. How real does the miniature look? Is everything in a proper scale? Is this miniature true to life? Explain.

When you run out of responses, move on to question four.

4. Think about the objects and activities included in this miniature; what can you figure out about the culture and time period that this miniature represents? *As soon as you are ready, move on to question five.*

5. Does anything you have noticed in this miniature (for example: objects, events) remind you of something in your own life? Take turns answering.

As soon as you are ready, move on to question six.

6. Think back on your previous observations. What have you learned about the culture that created this miniature? What have you learned about the time period when this miniature was created? What discoveries have you made? Do you think this miniature should be saved in a museum? Why/why not?