

The Citi exhibition

Arctic culture and climate

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Guide for teachers

Lead supporter



Supported by

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Kiliii Yuyan (b. 1979),
*Umiaq and north wind
during spring whaling.*
Inkjet print, 2019.
© Kiliii Yuyan.

Planning your visit

We recommend the following planning guidelines:

- Provide a focus for students to keep in mind as they explore the exhibition which you can follow up afterwards
- Do some preparatory work in school to develop the focus of the visit and familiarise students with the content of the exhibition
- Allow students some scope to explore and find objects that interest them

Curriculum Links

The exhibition can be used to support the following curriculum areas:

Geography/The world around us/Social studies: the Arctic, physical landscape, environment, human use of landscape/environment, sense of place, flora and fauna

Art and design/The arts/Expressive arts: artistic inspiration, art techniques, fabrics, textiles, embroidery, carving, patterns, symbols

PSHE/ PD&MU/Health & wellbeing: personal identity, human resilience, sense of community, collective response

Using this resource

This resource is designed to support your visit to the Citi exhibition *Arctic: culture and climate*.

It aims to be cross-curricular and offer opportunities to work the exhibition into different curriculum subjects. The resource is accompanied by a downloadable image bank of objects displayed in the exhibition.



Introduction to the exhibition

Global Climate Change is affecting the world at an unprecedented scale. Warming in the Arctic is more than twice the rate as lower latitudes. Scientists predict the Arctic will be ice-free in 80 years. Indigenous Arctic peoples have lived with climate variability and seasonal weather fluctuations for over 30,000 years. Through technological innovations, respectful relationships, and social resilience, they have persevered amidst environmental and social disruptions. The Arctic will experience transformational change over the next century that will affect us all.

Using the exhibition

In advance

Decide on a focus for the visit and the follow-up activities. Go through this with the students. Use the image bank to familiarise students with some of the exhibition content. Go through any exhibition activities with the students and accompanying adults beforehand.

On the day

Encourage adults to allow students to linger at objects which interest them and to discuss what they see and share ideas as they go round. Remind students to behave calmly and politely. Photography is allowed in the exhibition and students may also take photographs of relevant objects in the Museum's permanent galleries.

Afterwards

Use the information (written, drawn, photographed and/or discussed) gathered by the students in the exhibition/Museum galleries as a starting point for follow-up activities back at school.

The 'Big' questions

It is a good idea to have a big question for students to keep in mind during their visit to the exhibition. Here are some possible examples:

- Which did I think, and why, was the most interesting object in the exhibition?
- What did I learn about the Arctic that I did not know before?
- What sources of evidence does the exhibition include and how useful did I find them for learning about the Arctic?
- What else would I put in the exhibition to make it interesting/informative?

Exhibition themes

The exhibition is divided into eight sections.

Introduction

Arctic Peoples are living with climate change as the Arctic warms at over twice the rate of anywhere else. Research predicts that Arctic summers will be ice free within 80 years, affecting us all by altering global weather patterns and raising sea levels. For over 30,000 years Arctic Peoples have used adaptation, innovation and collaboration to live with slow, natural climate variability and seasonal weather. How might their resilience help us all face current climate change?

Welcome to the Arctic

The Arctic Circle, centred on the North Pole, is often seen as the southern border of the Arctic. This is not necessarily a useful boundary since Arctic Peoples live much further south than the Arctic Circle. The Arctic has two types of landscape: tundra (a treeless ecosystem) and taiga (coniferous forests). Today, four million people live within seven of the eight Arctic nations: Russia, USA, Canada, Greenland/Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland. There are no Arctic Indigenous Peoples in Iceland. Of those, 400,000 are Indigenous peoples from over 40 ethnic groups. They share many cultural traits and have been trading for thousands of years.



Serpentine sculpture of an Arctic bird
Kangiqliniq, Canada, 1970s
British Museum, London

At home with ice

For 30,000 years Indigenous Arctic Peoples have made hospitable homelands out of icy ecosystems. Ice is fundamental to all Arctic Peoples; for building shelters, enabling travel and providing access to rich natural worlds. Permafrost (frozen soil which acts as bedrock in the Arctic) is thawing fast causing roads to sink, structures to collapse and solid ground to give way. If the Arctic is ice free what happens to this cold centred way of life?

Seasonal lives

The lean season during the Arctic's dark winter months alternate with periods of abundance. As the snow melts, plants grow; producing berries, greens and mushrooms that support reindeer, caribou (wild reindeer) and migratory birds. Continuous daylight in summer generates sea algae growth which attracts seals, whales and walrus. Arctic Peoples use the abundance to carry them through winter. Community life and spiritual ceremonies are also seasonal but as global climate change disrupts seasonal patterns, established ways of life are compromised.

Embracing weather

Arctic Peoples have always had a profound relationship with weather. It affects every aspect of their lives: the food they eat, the clothing they wear, the stories they tell, how children are raised and family life. Until recently Arctic Peoples were able to predict, prepare for and harness weather to support their seasonal lives with certainty. Global climate change is making generations of knowledge obsolete.

Climates of the past

The first Arctic Peoples settled in Siberia at least 30,000 years ago. Before the 1970s, the Arctic climate shifted several times over 100s or 1000s of years. These naturally occurring shifts contrast with today's rapid human-caused climate change. The earliest Arctic Peoples responded to climate variability with cultural adaptation, material innovation and social collaboration. By studying their responses, we can understand how people live through such change and perhaps improve our response to today's global climate emergency.

Rapid change & a resilient north

Over the last 300 years, Arctic Peoples have responded to the challenges associated with European exploration, colonial governance and global trade through adaptation, innovation and collaboration, as well as resistance. Arctic Peoples have worked to maintain their autonomy and wellbeing. Today, they are confronting global climate change with this same resilience, so they can continue to live life on their own terms on the ice, in the cold and with the weather.

Installation

Creative installation by the Embassy of Imagination showcasing parkas made by Nunavut children and addressing the issue of climate change.

Curricular opportunities

Geography/The world around us/Social studies

Use the exhibition to find out about the landscape, environment and people of the Arctic. Investigate what objects tell us about life (human, animal, plant) and the landscape in this region of the world.

Spotlight objects:

See pages 1, 2, 3 and 4 in the powerpoint that accompanies this resource.

Follow up activities:

- Locate the Arctic on a globe/atlas. Locate the Arctic Circle and identify the eight modern countries which fall within the Arctic.
- Research the features of the Arctic landscape and environment. Consider the lives of Arctic Peoples in this environment. Compare these to another part of the world.
- Consider the impact of weather on Arctic life and the innovative approaches Arctic Peoples have developed in response.

Art and design/The arts/Expressive arts

Arctic Peoples have used artistic expression in many areas of everyday life and in the production of specific artworks.

Use the exhibition to explore how Arctic Peoples use artistic expression to create everyday objects, spiritual objects and contemporary art works. Look at the numerous materials from the environment used by Arctic Peoples to make beautiful and practical objects. Look at the work of Arctic artists and consider what themes are central to their work.

Spotlight objects:

See pages 5, 6, 7 and 8 in the powerpoint that accompanies this resource.

Follow up activities:

- Discuss the different artistic media and techniques used by Arctic peoples to create objects. What do these different media and techniques tell us about life in the Arctic?
- Create your own response (in small groups or individually) to the Arctic environment (humans, animals, plants, weather). Decide which visual medium you are going to use.

- Create an item of clothing. Compare clothing items from today, such as coats, hats, gloves or shoes, look at function and design. Decide on an environment (hot, rainy, cold, windy) and design a suitable piece of clothing for this environment.

PSHE/ PD&MU/Health & wellbeing

Indigenous Peoples have lived rich and resilient lives in the Arctic for over 30,000 years. The Arctic will experience significant change over the next 80 years – what happens there will affect us all.

Use the exhibition to explore life in the Arctic landscape and environment. Consider the impact of climate change on this life.

Spotlight objects:

See pages 9, 10, 11 and 12 in the powerpoint that accompanies this resource.

Follow up activities:

- A central concern for Arctic Peoples today is the rapid change in climate and seasonal weather. Investigate the causes, course and consequences of this change and compare it with climate change in other parts of the world.
- Discuss what responses have been made by people around the world to the impact of climate change. Consider how effective you think different responses have been. Why do you think this? Develop a local response around recycling or use of alternative materials.
- Select an object which you feel represents different aspects of the Arctic way of life. Create an annotated diagram identifying the different facets of Arctic life shown.



Print: *Playful Sedna* by Kakulu Sagiatok
Buffin Island, Canada, 1986
British Museum, London