# Ancient History Stage 6 – museums, history and future careers – the Chau Chak Wing Museum



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## Outcomes

A student:

* analyses and interprets different types of sources for evidence to support an historical account or argument **AH11-6**
* discusses and evaluates differing interpretations and representations of the past **AH11-7**
* communicates historical understanding, using historical knowledge, concepts and terms, in appropriate and well-structured forms **AH11-9**
* discusses contemporary methods and issues involved in the investigation of ancient history **AH11-10**

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## Content

This learning sequence integrates the following components from each of the 6 areas of the Investigating Ancient History – The Nature of Ancient History section of the syllabus.

* Option 5 – Cultural Heritage and the Role of Museums
* the role of museums in acquiring, collecting and storing artefacts and cultural materials
* the contributions of museums to our understanding of ancient ways of life and the question of whose past is represented in museum displays and exhibitions
* Option 6 – The Treatment and Display of Human Remains
* the condition of human remains and how they were preserved, discovered and/or removed from where they were found
* methods and results of scientific analysis and modern preservation of the remains
* the ethical issues relevant to the treatment, display and ownership of the remains.

## Learning sequence 1 – pre-visit to the Chau Chak Wing Museum

**Note –** before you take your students to the Chau Chak Wing Museum, have a class discussion about the role of museums. Students should consider the following as being the main functions of museums:

* educate about the past
* accumulate ancient artefacts for a curious public
* ‘protect’ artefacts taken from poorer, developing countries or societies
* help understand past societies and world events.
* Before you visit the museum, your teacher will lead a class discussion on the following question: What is the role of a museum? [Brainstorm](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Card/542#.Y1iSll_HvVk.link) what makes a place a museum and consider the possible roles and purposes of museums.
* Working with a partner and then a small group, use [Think-Pair-Share](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Card/645#.Y0T6nSd9SKs.link) to discuss the following questions
* How and why have museums changed over time?
* How do museums acquire their collection of artefacts?
* Who do you think would work in a museum?
* View the following videos and briefly explain how each person’s role in the museum contributes to our understanding of ancient ways of life
* [Madeline Robinson (2:02)](https://bcove.video/3DE8l70)
* [James Tan (1:14)](https://bcove.video/3DTMwkb)
* [Craig Barker (1:20)](https://bcove.video/3xYMlAj)
* [Maria Duczynski (1:45)](https://bcove.video/3Bs7Ji4)
* Watch the video introducing the [Chau Chak Wing Museum (1:46)](https://bcove.video/3SjEa94), The University of Sydney, with Dr Craig Barker and Dr Melanie Pitkin. Revisit and build upon your brainstorm about museums and what purpose they serve.

### Examining artefacts in the museum

**Note –** teachers need to be familiar with the virtual tour of the museum. Each artefact has a short video (around 2:30 minutes each), a description, and questions for students to answer. There are also other photographs of displays throughout the museum to help students become familiar with the layout of displays and how the space is used. The virtual tour is not suited to students with visual impairment and an alternative activity may need to be provided.

Use the [interactive virtual tour](https://app.situ360.com/30a92f/9467/61633/public) of the Chau Chak Wing Museum to visit the following artefacts and in pairs answer the questions. As a class propose other questions that could be asked of each source to verify their authenticity and value to the museum.

* Rhyolite axe, Darug
* What was its purpose?
* How was it made?
* Why did it survive?
* Artefact 2 Tetradrachm
* How did it survive?
* Why might Athens be emphasising military symbolism, and peace, on its coins?
* Artefact 1 Lekythos
* What were the funerary and burial practices of the time?
* Were men and women treated differently in death?
* Nicholson Collection Padiashi
* Why was there a later body placed within Merura’s coffin?
* What earlier, more destructive methods were used to uncover mummies within coffins?
* Why have methods and ways of displaying human remains changed?
* Tap handle from Pompeii
* How was water collected and distributed in Pompeii?
* How was it made and where did the metal come from?
* Axes from the Tiwi Islands
* What is the meaning of the symbolism?
* By what means could the origins of the stone and ochre be identified?
* Marble statue of the Greek god Hermes
* How might such a statue have survived?
* What could the location of its find reveal about the statue?
* Funerary inscription
* What does this inscription suggest about the relationship between former slave and master?
* What were the legal and social status differences between a freedwoman and slave?
* Marble bust from Hellenistic period
* What experts would be needed for such restoration?
* How might its origins be discovered?

As a class, discuss the questions raised for each artefact. Choose one object from the videos and discuss:

* What specialists would you consult to learn more about it?
* How could its provenance (origin) be established?
* What scientific methods could be used to discover the origins and provenance of the artefact?

**Note –** students may need guidance when searching the Nicholson Museum collection.

* Choose an artefact from the [Nicholson Museum collection](https://www.sydney.edu.au/museum/discover-our-collections/nicholson-collection.html) within the Chau Chak Wing Museum that did not feature in the object video. Find one that relates to a topic you are studying in class.
* Look carefully at the artefact and attempt to answer the following questions (not all questions may be relevant for your selection of artefact)
* What is it?
* Describe the artefact.
* What is it made from?
* Where and when was it found?
* What was its purpose or function?
* Why do you think it survived?
* Was it preserved by chance or purpose?
* What is its significance?
* Do we know its provenance?
* What does it tell us of its original society?
* Should the artefact be put on display? Why?
* What don’t we know? How might we find out?
* What other questions need to be asked?
* Does this object belong here? Justify your response.
* Many famous and valuable objects in world museums have been looted, stolen or sold or simply taken from other countries. Use the sources below to complete the following table.

Table 1 – arguments for keeping or returning artefacts

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sources | Arguments for returning artefacts | Arguments for keeping artefacts |
| [The British Museum is full of stolen artifacts (9:33)](https://ed.ted.com/best_of_web/NXeF5ZKg) |  |  |
| [The Parthenon Sculptures](https://www.britishmuseum.org/about-us/british-museum-story/contested-objects-collection/parthenon-sculptures) |  |  |
| [British Museum is world’s largest receiver of stolen goods](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/nov/04/british-museum-is-worlds-largest-receiver-of-stolen-goods-says-qc) |  |  |

* Participate in a [continuum line](https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/barometer-taking-stand-controversial-issues) from
* all items in all museums must be returned to their original owners, to
* museums should keep all their items no matter the origin or method of collection.
* Use the information from the continuum line activity to write an extended response to the question: Should all items in all museums be returned to their original owners? In your response
* refer to at least 3 sources
* demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of continuity and change over time
* demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of different perspectives of individuals and groups in the past
* communicate a high level and sustained argument.

**Note** **–** extension activity. Have students select an object from the Nicholson Collection that did not originate from Australia and answer the following:

* What is it and where did it come from?
* Do we know when and how it was acquired?
* Should this object be returned to its original country? Put forward arguments both for and against its return.

### The changing role of museums and human remains

* Read about the background of the [Nicholson Collection](https://www.sydney.edu.au/museum/discover-our-collections/nicholson-collection.html) and visit the museum, or access the [museum’s collection online](https://www.sydney.edu.au/museum/) and locate 3 artefacts or objects that suggest an earlier and different role of the museum. Examples could be the stuffed Tasmanian Tiger and various preserved remains in jars.
* Do these items still suit a modern museum? With reference to the sources you have selected, provide an argument both for and against retaining these older exhibits.
* In the 19th century, Egyptian mummies were often unwrapped at public meetings, damaging the human remains and not following scientific methodologies. Consider [The Victorians Were Mad for Mummies](https://curiousrambler.com/the-victorians-were-mad-for-mummies/) and [Museum Invites Visitors to Unwrap A Mummy, Virtually](https://www.fastcompany.com/3028219/museum-invites-visitors-to-unwrap-a-mummy-virtually) and as a class discuss
* why mummies have been unwrapped and what historians hope to learn about ancient life
* the ethical issues around the treatment of the mummy remains when they are unwrapped
* any differences between using imaging technology to virtually unwrap a mummy and what was done in the Victorian period.
* Watch [Dr Melanie Pitkin Artefact 2 (1:42)](https://bcove.video/3QTmrFn) and write a response to the following questions
* What methods has the museum now taken to be more careful and respectful in the treatment and display of the Egyptian mummies?
* Whose mummy is inside the coffin and what does this tell us about how attitudes towards the preservation of antiquities have changed?
* How have scientific developments of methodologies changed the examination and display of Egyptian human remains?

## Assessment task

### Outcomes

A student:

* communicates historical understanding, using historical knowledge, concepts and terms, in appropriate and well-structured forms **AH11-9**
* discusses contemporary methods and issues involved in the investigation of ancient history **AH11-10**

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### Content

* the role of museums in acquiring, collecting, and storing artefacts/cultural materials.

### Task

You are a mentor for a new staff member at the Chau Chak Wing Museum. Your job is to support them becoming a part of the acquisitions team. An aim of the museum is to expand the collection beyond its current Mediterranean focus.

#### Part 1

Write an annotated procedural text that discusses the decision-making process the staff member can use when they are presented with an artefact that someone wishes to donate to the museum. The annotations should discuss the thinking behind the decision-making process. Consider the purpose of the museum and its collection along with:

* the origins of the item and how it has arrived at the museum
* the nature of the item (what it is and what it tells us about the past)
* the possible impact on the reputation of the museum if a poorly verified item is displayed
* if accepted, how the item would be displayed.

#### Part 2

Provide a worked example of how the text would be used to assess a specific item of your choosing that will become part of the Chau Chak Wing Museum’s collection. You must:

* select a specific item, from an existing museum
* write a 300-word justification to be presented to the board of the Chau Chak Wing Museum explaining whether the item will be accepted and the reasoning behind this decision.

### Marking guidelines

Table 2 – marking criteria

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Criteria | Grade |
| Comprehensively discusses a range of contemporary methods and issues involved in the acquisition of museum artefacts  Communicates historical understanding and information logically and coherently in a well-structured form | **A** |
| Thoroughly discusses multiple contemporary methods and issues involved in the acquisition of museum artefacts  Communicates historical understanding logically in a well-structured form | **B** |
| Description of some contemporary methods and issues involved in the acquisition of museum artefacts  Communicates historical knowledge in a well-structured form | **C** |
| Limited description of contemporary methods and issues involved in the acquisition of museum artefacts  Attempts to communicate historical knowledge | **D** |
| Outlines methods and/or issues involved in museum acquisitions  Limited communication of historical knowledge | **E** |

## References

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