

**EXPLORING OBJECTS FROM THE PAST:
READING MUSEUM HANDLING COLLECTION**



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ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

Reading Museum has an inspirational collection of over 1000 loan boxes, ranging from Medieval Abbeys to Geomorphology, which your school can borrow to use in your classroom to support your delivery of the National Curriculum in an exciting and hands-on way.

The original and replica items in these boxes explore a variety of topics such as history, art, zoology and many others.



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HOW TO BOOK OUR LOAN BOXES

You can search our loan boxes online here*:

[SEARCH OUR BOXES](#)

You will find prices and our sign-up form for loan box membership here*:

[SIGN UP](#)

If you wish to borrow a box ad hoc for a half-term, this is easily arranged by calling the Learning Team on 01189373400.

If you are not a member and you have seen a box you would like to borrow a box, you can contact the Learning Team by email: museum.education@reading.gov.uk



* <http://schoolloans.readingmuseum.org.uk>

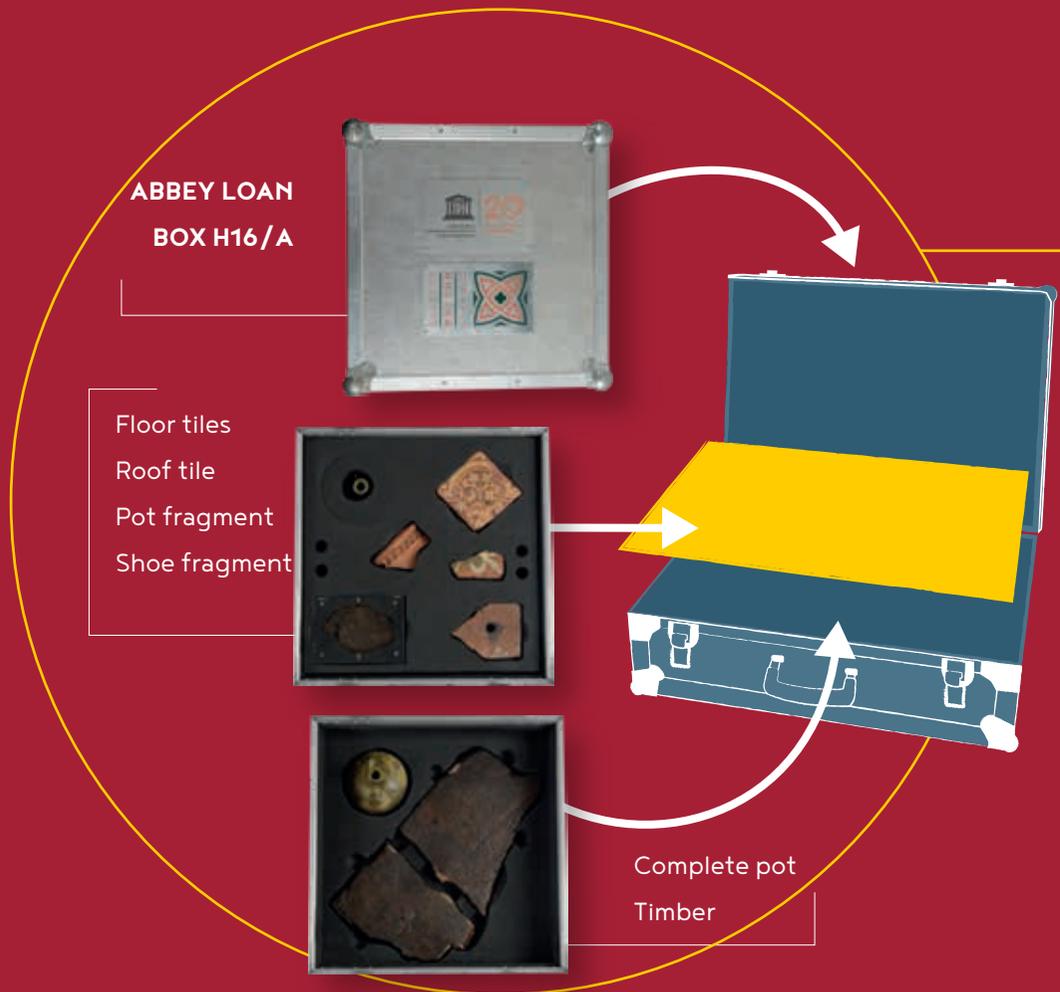
* www.readingmuseum.org.uk/explore/schools/how-much-does-it-cost

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OUR LOAN BOXES: HOW THEY LOOK

This is just one example of our fantastic loan boxes.

You will find many more on our website*: [LOAN BOXES](#)



EXAMPLE BOXES:

- VICTORIAN LOAN BOX H11/A -
- VICTORIAN HOME LIFE:
- NINETEENTH CENTURY -
- GEORGE III TO VICTORIA
- SUGAR HELMET
- LADY'S UNDERSKIRT
- PAIR OF GLASS CARVER STANDS
- CHANDELIER PARTS
- THE PEOPLE'S ALMANAC
- CORAL NECKLACE
- CHILD'S CLOG

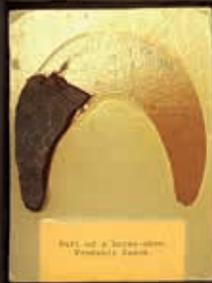
ABBEY LOAN BOX H16/A

- TIMBER
- FLOOR TILES
- ROOF TILE
- COMPLETE POT
- POT FRAGMENT
- SHOE FRAGMENT

MIDDLE AGES - EARLY TO 1300:

- ANGLO - SAXONS H4
- SPEARHEAD
- AXEHEAD
- SQUARE - HEADED BROOCH
- HORSE SHOE
- POTTERY FRAGMENT

OUR LOAN BOXES THE CONTENTS



**MIDDLE AGES - EARLY TO 1300:
ANGLO-SAXONS H4**

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HANDLING GUIDELINES

Many of our objects are original items that have been chosen with handling in mind. We have included some guidelines below to help you ensure that any damage or wear and tear is kept to a minimum.

You could ask the class if they know any rules for handling objects from the past.

GUIDELINES

Before starting the session, please examine the object in preparation for pupils handling the object. This will help in the monitoring of delicate, heavy or sharp objects.

Take care when carrying the box. Please hold the box with both hands and hold

the right way up. Test the weight of the box before lifting or moving it.

Supervise the handling of objects at all times.

Handle the objects over a firm, clean surface like a table using both hands.

When handling objects, it can work well to sit learners in a circle while they pass objects to each other one at a time, with both hands.

At the end of the session, please check that all objects and any accompanying materials are returned to the box correctly.

If an object doesn't fit easily, consider turning it around - all box shapes are cut to fit the objects precisely.



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HANDLING BOXES IN THE CLASSROOM

Before starting your session with the box, you may wish to use some of the following activities to help students understand what we can learn from objects.

MUSEUM IN YOUR POCKET

This activity is an excellent starting point to show how objects tell stories. Ask the pupils to show an item from their pockets (or bag or whatever they are comfortable with).

You may end up with a selection of objects, such as:

- A bus/train ticket
- An empty bottle
- A sweet wrapper
- A badge

Assemble the pupils into groups to look at their objects. What sort of things are they? What can they find out from these objects? (For example, the bus ticket tells us they travelled recently - do they travel a lot?)

See if they can build a picture of who the selection of items might belong to.

This activity is a good way to show the work of archaeologists piecing together the lives of people from the past by the objects we find.

MYSTERY OBJECT

When you open your loan box, choose objects from the past that pupils may not be familiar with and ask them to come up with their best idea of what it might be.

Questions:

- **Does it look familiar?**
- **What does it look similar to?**
- **Who do you think might use this?**
- **What is it made from?**

The pupils should discuss what they think the object is and give reasons for their decision.

Finish with a feedback to the class. Can they persuade others with their ideas? On the final reveal, were they right? Are there any surprises?



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SUGGESTED HANDLING SESSION

There are different ways to interact with objects from the past. It is up to you how you use these objects to inspire your students but here are some suggestions you may wish to consider.

Organise pupils into small groups with different objects. Groups could explore different themes, such as transport, work, worship or daily life.

Groups could look at one object in detail or look at several objects together, exploring them through their connected theme. Use the investigation sheet in Section 7 to start the children thinking about each object. This can be used individually or in small groups.

Allow groups to interact with and discuss the objects for 5-10 minutes.



Use the following questions to lead or inspire discussions.

OBSERVATION

What do you see?

What can you feel?

What shapes can you see?

What colours?

Can you see any patterns or decoration?

Does it smell of anything?

DEDUCTION

Who might have used this?

What is it for?

How does it work?

What is it made from?

Is it broken or whole?

What is it?

REASONING

Who owned it?

What would you be doing if you used this object?

Why is it made from these materials?

How was it manufactured/made/created?

Where was it used?

GENERATING YOUR OWN QUESTIONS

Do you have any questions that you want to know the answers to?

How can you find the answers?

What kind of research should you do?

Can you write out a research plan?

The objects can be rotated

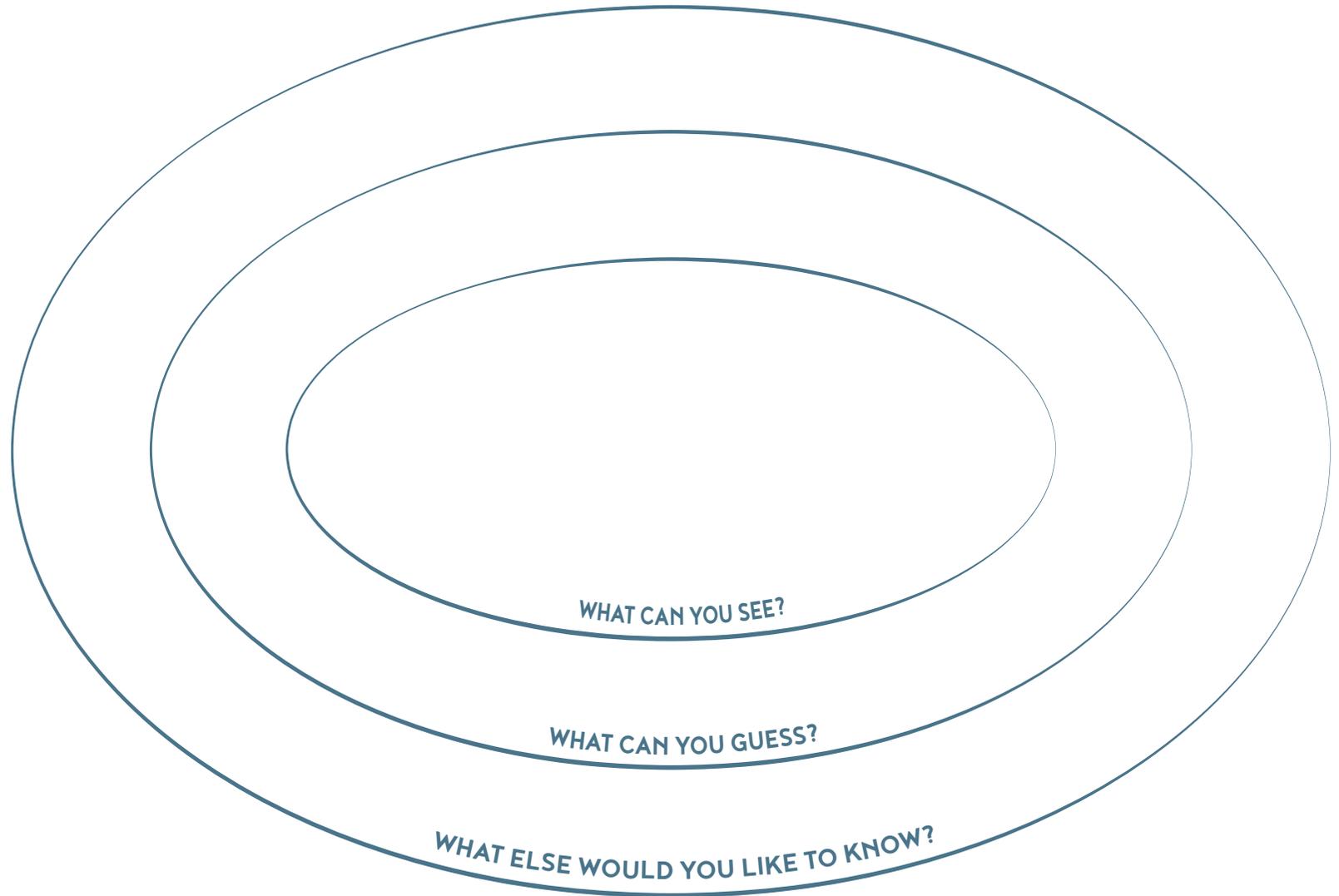
through each group and you can finish with a whole class feedback to share ideas, thoughts and discoveries.



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OBJECT INVESTIGATION

Looking at objects can help us understand the people who made and used the object. The questions below look at objects in an order - observation, estimation and inquiry. Look, guess and find out more!



NOTES ON OBJECTS



TIMBER

This is a section of timber found during excavations that were undertaken at the site of the Reading Abbey Wharf during the period of 1979-86. The Abbey Wharf lies on the river Kennet and this piece of timber and others like it were used to revet (support) the bank of the river, which allowed boats to moor close to the wharf side. This plank would have been positioned horizontally and is made of oak.

SHOE
LEATHER

This example may well have been a turnshoe that is, a shoe which was assembled and stitched together inside out, with the flesh side of the leather facing outwards and the grain inwards. On completion of the stitching, the shoe was turned the right way around, with the flesh sides inwards and the grain side outwards. This method of construction was common in the medieval period. Many shoe fragments and leather off-cuts were found when the Abbey Wharf site was excavated, suggesting that tanning and leather working took place in the area.

Tiles like these were widely used in church buildings in the medieval period. Clay for tiles was dug up in the autumn and left in the open air to weather for a few months, perhaps being dug over once or twice. To make an individual tile the tiler would press a lump of clay into a square mould. Surplus clay was scraped off the top and bottom and the surfaces were smoothed out. Then the blank tiles were decorated.

**FLOOR
TILES**



Horse shoes have changed very little over the centuries! Horses must only have been the property of the well-off in Anglo Saxon society, but it is not exactly clear what horses were used for during that period. One of the borders of the Bayeux tapestry appears to show a donkey pulling a plough and a horse pulling a harrow. Many think, though, that oxen would have been more commonly employed for these jobs.

**HORSE
SHOE**



FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES

There are a range of follow up activities to use with your class to explore your loan box further.

Listed are some ideas to help get you started.



DRAWING AND WRITING

You can describe your objects through drawing and writing about them. Try to pick up on all the tiny little details you may not always notice in a quick look!

DRAWING

- Draw a still life of your objects
- Make line drawings
- Make tonal drawings
- Draw using your opposite hand
- Draw without taking your pencil off of the page
- Take a quick look at the object then look away and try to draw from memory.

WRITING

- Create a story to go with your chosen object

- Connect each object in the box into a story
- Write a poem about your object (how is a poem like a drawing? It describes the subject)
- Write a detailed description of your object for a report
- Write a postcard to the museum describing what you noticed about the objects

ANIMATION

- Create a storyboard including your objects
- Make a set for your story
- Create characters from your story (perhaps your objects are the characters)
- Animate it using free software for tablets or phone.

ROLE PLAY

You can use the loan box and a visit to the museum as inspiration to create characters for a roleplay. You can create a storyboard, write a script and assign characters.

- Who will be in your roleplay?
- What characters could you create?
- What could be important to your characters in relation to your historical topic?
- Do all your characters have to be people?
- What would your objects say if they could speak?

CREATE YOUR OWN LOAN BOX

To create the Reading Museum loan boxes, we looked at objects in our collection and put them together in a theme, such as Medieval, Prehistory or Roman. Once we had chosen a few objects, we collected the information about them and put them together on an

information sheet with pictures of the objects. When we place them in the boxes, we use a material called plastezoate which we can cut to shape. This fits the object perfectly and holds it safely in position. Use the following questions to help create your own loan box.

- What theme are you studying?
- What objects would you include in your box?
- What sort of information would you share about them?
- Is this a box for schools, how could you include the most important information?
- What kind of photographs should you take of objects?
- What should be on the bottom layer?
- What should be at the top?

Plan out your objects to go in your box. If you don't have them to hand, what could you make them from? Materials: Card, tissue paper, glue, scissors, cloth, scrap, magazines, photos, (anything, really). Use a cardboard box to create your loan box.

CLASS MUSEUM

If you don't want to make a loan box, you can make your own class museum!

You can include:

- Photographs
- Drawings
- Objects
- Information
- Posters

What is the theme of your museum? Work in groups to choose your objects, drawings and photos that you wish to include in your mini-museum around your chosen time.

What will the setting of your museum be? Is it an old Victorian style museum or something more sleek and modern? There are lots of different ways of displaying objects. How will you display yours?

Here are some resources showing the different ways that museums create displays*:

BRITISH MUSEUM

PITT RIVERS MUSEUM

READING MUSEUM

Take photos of anything you make and email them to:
museum.education@reading.gov.uk

*http://www.britishmuseum.org/about_us/management/human_remains/collection_and_display.aspx

*<https://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/education>

*<https://www.readingmuseum.org.uk/your-visit/permanent-galleries>

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RECOMMENDED BOXES

You can support in-class learning with activities in the museum. We have a range of excellent sessions relating to different aspects of Reading's history. The following sessions list some boxes that could be booked to support follow-on activities in the class.

SESSIONS

Victorian Schoolroom

H11 - Nineteenth Century - George III to Victoria : Victorian Home Life

H400 - Nineteenth Century - Queen Victoria : Victorian School

Victorian Child at Work

H11 - Nineteenth Century - George III to Victoria : Victorian Home Life

H39 - Nineteenth Century - George III to Victoria : Victorian Fire and Light

H51 - Nineteenth Century - George III to Victoria : Industrial Revolution

H132 - Nineteenth Century- George III to Victoria : History of Medicine

Victorian Toys

H130 - Nineteenth Century - George III to Victoria : Childhood in History

H152 - Nineteenth Century - George III to Victoria : Pastimes

H196 - Nineteenth Century - Nineteenth Century : Children's Toys and Games





Huntley & Palmers

H46 - Nineteenth Century - George III to Victoria : Road Transport

H151 - Nineteenth Century - George III to Victoria : Stephenson's Rocket

H169 - Nineteenth Century - George III to Victoria : Canal Lock

H326B - Huntley & Palmers

Roman Life

AH16 - Ancient World - Romans : Roman Social Life

AH17 - Ancient World - Romans : Roman Cooking Grid

AH20 - Ancient World - Romans : Replica Roman Carpenter's Tools

AH29 - Ancient World - Romans : Roman Home

Prehistory

PH2B - Prehistory - Early Man : New Stone Age

PH6 - Prehistory - Iron age

Bayeux Tapestry

Handbuilt Tiles : Pertt; Bayeux Tapestry Tiles

H123 - Warfare and Soldiering

H1 - Middle Ages - Early to 1300 : Vikings

Royals in Reading

H7A - Middle Ages - 1300 to 1500 : The Middle Ages

H8 - Sixteenth Century - Tudors : Tudor Home Life

H16 - Middle Ages - 1300 to 1500 : Reading Abbey Religions - Christianity

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

BOOKS

Abbey

The Royal Abbey of Reading by Ben Baxter

Excavations on the Reading Waterfront Sites 1979-1988

by John W. Hawkes and P. J. Fasham

The Town of Reading and its Abbey by Cecil Slade

Reading Abbey by Jamieson B. Hurry

Romans

Silchester: City in Transition by Michael Fulford and

Amanda Clark

Silchester: Life on the Dig by Jenny Halstead and

Michael Fulford

A Guide to Silchester: The Roman Town of Calleva

Atrebatum by Michael Fulford

Victorian Reading

Huntley & Palmers of Reading, 1822-1972

by T.A.B. Corley

Late Victorian Wokingham by Paul King, Peter Dawe

and Julia McLaren

WEBSITES

<https://www.readingmuseum.org.uk/explore/schools>

<https://www.readingmuseum.org.uk/explore/schools/school-loan-boxes>

<https://www.readingabbeyquarter.org.uk/>

<http://collections.readingmuseum.org.uk/>

<http://www.huntleyandpalmers.org.uk/ixbin/hixclient.exe?a=file&p=huntley&f=huntley.htm>

<http://www.berkshirehistory.com>

<http://www.localhistories.org/reading.html>

<https://www.reading.co.uk/reading-history/>

<https://www.readingmuseum.org.uk/schools/information-for-teachers/resources>



GALLERIES IN THE MUSEUM

The Story of Reading Gallery

Look here for information about Reading Abbey.

The Green Space

A gallery about the insects, animals and wildlife from the local area.

The Silchester Gallery

An exploration of the Roman City of Calleva that used to occupy Silchester.

The Huntley & Palmers Gallery

A collection showing the history of the famous Huntley & Palmers Biscuit Company.

The Window Gallery and Art Gallery

Artwork from the Reading Museum Collection is displayed here.