

The Bay Bridge Troll.

Instructions for Teachers Before the Museum Visit

Get a copy of *Three Billy Goats Gruff* (it is available in book form, can be found on the Internet, and also is in video form) to share with students. This will introduce them to the concept of trolls. You might also want to find other troll stories to share.

Introduce the idea of what a troll is. A supernatural creature from early legends. Make sure students understand that it is not based on a real person, but is imaginary. [Please read the short paragraph on student sheets, it contains a few facts that are not included here]

While the troll for the Bay Bridge was put on for good luck, trolls in legend were often slow-witted, sometimes dangerous, and rarely helpful or friendly to human beings. In this case **the Bay Bridge Troll mixes several supernatural figures** (maybe fairies, gargoyles, etc.). This troll serves a good purpose (which is actually *unlike* most trolls!), it is designed in the image of a troll from a popular story, and its characteristics are a blend of several different types of supernatural beings. It certainly makes for a good story and was designed mostly for fun. When it was designed, it was not intended to be noticed by the public, but a reporter was on the scene, saw the troll and the story became news.

Share the information on the worksheet with students to give them an overview before they visit the museum. You might add other information (from above or based on your own research) if you think it will add to their experience.

Museum Visit

Have students look for the “twin” of the bridge toll. It is located in the Bridges section under the large clock. Have them complete the second worksheet [marked *at* the Museum].

Make sure students use only pencils for work done at the museum.

After the Visit

Review the information from the worksheets with students. Allow time for them to share their ideas and the things they found interesting/important at the museum.

Follow-up activity:

Students can draw their own troll for a bridge. They should think what kind of “magical” powers it might have. Then students can write a short story to tell about its powers and/or its adventures.

Sources of information

The Mercury News online article from August 30, 2013 provided more details about trolls and the Bay Bridge Troll. An article from Road Warrior blogs, August 28, 2013, was the source for information about Bill Roan and his design.

Student information—Before the Museum Visit

What is a troll?

Trolls come to us from medieval Scandinavian legends written more than one thousand years ago. They appeared frequently in Norse mythology. According to the legends trolls were often extremely old, had great strength, and were master builders and skilled craftsmen. Some trolls lived under bridges. They didn't like light—sometimes turning into stone when exposed to sunlight. Trolls that lived under bridges usually lived alone. They were not considered very smart and they could be hard to get along with. Trolls were sometimes mischievous—playing tricks on people they met. Travelers who wanted to cross their bridges were sometimes required to pay money or perform tasks as “payment” for crossing the bridge.

How did the Bay Bridge get a troll?

On October 17, 1989, the Loma Prieta earthquake knocked a 50-foot piece of the east span off its supports and onto the deck below. While the bridge was being repaired, after the earthquake, a group of ironworkers created the Bay Bridge Troll. The troll holds a long wrench and was attached to the side of the bridge near the part that collapsed to bring good luck.

Who made the troll?

Bill Roan, a local blacksmith, designed the troll and sculpted it along with several of his co-workers. After the bridge collapsed he suggested that the repaired bridge needed a protector, like a gargoyle (an imaginary creature believed to scare evil spirits away), that he could make out of steel. He reportedly modeled the troll after the troll who lived beneath the bridge in the Norwegian fairy tale, *Three Billy Goats Gruff*, a story where three goats outwit a troll in order to cross a bridge.

Student worksheet—Completed at the Museum

Find the copy of the troll (it is located under the large clock). Look at it carefully. Answer these questions about the troll:

1. Size: Is the troll larger, smaller, or the same size you thought it would be? Explain why you thought it would be different, IF you thought it would be larger or smaller.
2. What does the troll seem to be carrying? Why do you think it is carrying this?
3. What does the troll seem to be doing? Why do you think so?
4. What stands out for you (gets your attention) about the troll?
5. Anything else you see or feel or think about the troll.

Look at other parts of the bridge exhibit. Write down two (2) or three (3) things you find interesting and/or important. Explain why you chose them.