Objective:

- Students will look at objects and displays in the History Gallery. As they fill in the charts for the letters of the alphabet, students will determine the significance of each entry: the importance based on why it was needed, how it was used, who used it, what the person did, when it was used, how it fit into the history of California, etc.

- Students will know and understand how museums use artifacts such as photographs, maps, and other items to explain the importance of people, events, and developments in history.

Pre-Museum Activity

1. Choose one or two items to use as examples for students; for example, a stapler and a report card. Introduce the items one at a time. Ask students to tell you why and/or how this item is used and why it is important for the classroom (for example, the stapler is used to keep pages that are related together, the report card is a record of student’s grades/progress). Accept any reasonable explanations and answers and help students to form their ideas into brief conclusions about the item’s significance to the classroom.

Have students work in pairs or small groups. Tell students to imagine that their classroom is a display in a museum to show future visitors how children learned in California schools (maybe 50 to 100 years from now). The students should look around the classroom and make a list of about ten items that they see and use. They then should decide why each item is significant (why it’s needed, how it’s used, who uses it, why it’s important in the classroom, etc.). Let students share some of their findings and help them to write brief conclusions based on their ideas. You may want to use the A to Z concept or give them copies of the forms (or they can make their own forms) to get used to the idea of finding items A to Z.

Before the Visit

Tell students that they are going to the Oakland Museum of California. They will see many different displays and photographs, maps, objects, and other artifacts that will help them to understand some of the people, places, and things that shaped California’s history. The History Gallery is organized by time periods of history and those people, artifacts, events, maps, etc. that represent each time period in California. There are also audio and visual aids to help visitors understand California’s history.

Make sure students realize that museums cannot collect everything, but they do collect and display many things that tell about California’s past. Students might think about what they find most interesting, unusual, and important as they go through the Gallery. (Students can record this on the bottom or back of the worksheets; these notes can be individual or group ideas.)
Vocabulary

Make sure students understand the following words and ideas that they may see in the Museum and on the worksheet:

- Artifact
- Significant/important
- Time periods (dates, such as 1820–1848)
- Periods of history (named periods, such as Mission era, Gold Rush)
- California history
- Audio
- Before the other people came (Native Americans)
- Cultures
- Modern
- Exhibit
- Gallery
- Display
- Conclusions

Museum Visit

Have students use the A to Z form for their Museum visit. Students should work in pairs or small groups to encourage shared discussions and interactions as they choose what to put on their charts. Coordinate your pair/group assignments with the adult chaperones that will accompany your class on the Museum visit. (Each student can have his or her own copy of the form and should fill it out with shared input from the student’s partner and/or group.)

Students can choose objects, people, maps, events (for example, Gold Rush), photos, artwork, and so on based on information they find on labels, charts, and audio clues in the History Gallery. The forms have space for students to draw a picture of objects (not people or maps) to help them remember the objects. These do not need to be very detailed. They are designed to aid students in their search and are not to be graded.

You can direct students to put one or two entries for each letter. They should also tell where they found the entries (by date or period of history).

The Museum prefers that students use pencils rather than ink pens for recording so please remind students of this before they get started.

A few notes: Be flexible with their alphabet choices. People’s names can be placed by first or last names. They don’t necessarily have to have one entry for every letter of the alphabet. For some letters they may find several examples and for other letters they may not find any X and Y are combined because there are no X entries. Students may not know and/or be able to find out what the objects are, why they are important, or how they were used. They can fill in this information for those objects they are not sure about when they return to school.
Organizationally you can have groups or teams each concentrate on only certain parts of the Museum (for example, some in Before the Other People Came, some in Gold Rush, some in Spanish Mission/Rancho era). They can then report back to the class after the visit. Or you could have groups or teams start at different parts, then rotate throughout the entire History Gallery, allowing a certain amount of time for each section. Either of these ways (or your own combination) ensures that everyone won’t be trying to look at the same things at the same time within limited spaces.

Collect student worksheets at the Museum, before you leave, so they don’t get misplaced. Students will use them for activities once you return to school.

After the Visit

Have students look over their worksheets and notes, and think about what they saw and learned about California’s history. Allow them to share their overall impressions and which parts they liked (or didn’t like) with brief explanations and reasons. They can also share their notes and ideas about what they felt was important, interesting, and/or what they think might have been left out or could have been included.

You can ask students to use dictionaries, encyclopedias, computers, or other sources of information to fill in the spaces for items they did not know about. You can also have them work in groups to see if anyone else knows or have them try to ask parents or other adults if they know about the objects. It is not necessary to fill in every space on the forms. The activity is designed to get students to connect the objects and other items in the displays with how they show and tell about California’s history and development.

Teams can share some of their collected information. Listening to see if other teams found the same things and/or different things for the letters. If teams could not (or did not) find entries for some letters, other groups can share their results.

Projects/Activities

- Put together a California A to Z display or book for the class. Assign students (or let them volunteer for) certain letters of the alphabet and use one or two of their entries for each letter. If students need more information, use Museum resources and/or other reference materials (online references, encyclopedias, books, etc.) to find photos, drawings, or more information about the people, artifacts, and entries they want to include.

- You might have teams or groups think of words or phrases that relate to and/or tell about California’s history (such as California, Gold Rush, Golden State, missions, etc.). Students can make a poster, booklet, or another form of display for the classroom. If a word or phrase has more than one of the same letter (for example, California has two a’s), students can share with other groups for entries (or it can be a collective class activity).
Helmets made of metal were worn by early Spanish explorers.
Immigrants came to California from near and far.
Swords and scabbards provided protection for early Spanish settlers.
Tule boats carried early Native American travelers.
Ohlone people lived near the coast.
Railroads connected east and west and made travel easier.
Yreka Herald newspapers reported news.

- Students can use information from their ABC forms to write poems about California. They can write several different types of poems, depending on what you have learned in class up to now. Two examples are presented below.

*Haiku example:* [5 syllables, 7 syllables, 5 syllables]

The tule boat glides
Quietly along the stream
To bring the men home

*Acrostic poem example:*

Going to California
Often hoping to get rich
Losing money and their dreams
Deciding not to leave