



PRE-VISIT LESSON GUIDE

This lesson is designed to prepare your students for the unique experience of viewing miniature dollhouses at The Mini-Time Machine Museum of Miniatures. In preparation for your visit to The Mini-Time Machine Museum set aside 30-40 minutes for this activity and review *Miniature Museum Manners* with your students.

OBJECTIVES

1. Explain the meaning and purpose of a museum
2. Outline the role of miniatures in society
3. Introduce students to a unique art form – miniature dollhouses
4. Provide an opportunity for students to describe, analyze, interpret and evaluate a miniature

VOCABULARY

| | | |
|-------------|---------------------|----------|
| artifact | exhibit | museum |
| collection | miniature | room box |
| collectible | miniature dollhouse | scale |

DEFINITIONS

ARTIFACT: Something created by humans usually for a practical purpose; *especially*: an object remaining from a particular period <caves containing prehistoric *artifacts*>

COLLECTION: Something collected; *especially*: an accumulation of objects gathered for study, comparison, or exhibition or as a hobby.

COLLECTIBLE: An object that is collected.

EXHIBIT: To show publicly, especially for purposes of demonstration e.g. <*exhibit* a collection of artifacts>

MINIATURE: Something much smaller than the usual size; A *miniature* is a copy of an object on a much smaller scale.

MINIATURE DOLLHOUSE: A *miniature dollhouse* is a work of art made to be looked at and enjoyed rather than a toy meant for play. It is a scale model of a building.

MUSEUM: An institution devoted to the collection, care, study, and display of objects of lasting interest.

ROOM BOX: A display box used for three-dimensional miniature scale environments similar to a diorama.

SCALE: A proportion between two sets of dimensions (as between those of a drawing and its original). A distinctive relative size, extent, or degree <projects done on a small *scale*>

LET'S BEGIN

Photocopy the following information and read the articles with your class. Use the questions provided to guide a discussion about a miniature dollhouse (photo included).

WELCOME TO THE BIG WORLD OF SMALL DELIGHTS!

WHAT IS a MUSEUM?

Museums collect, care for, study and **exhibit** objects a society considers important and would like to save. Visitors are not allowed to touch the **artifacts** because everyone must help preserve the objects for the future. Museum exhibits may be permanent or temporary. There are many different kinds of museums with different kinds of **collections** for example, some are historic, some are scientific and others are artistic. Some museums are large, some are small. All kinds of communities have museums. Museums are respected and are generally a good source of information about cultures and history.

The Mini-Time Machine Museum is a museum of **miniatures**. The collection contains **miniature dollhouses, room boxes** and other **collectibles**. The museum's artifacts are organized into three main areas; the Enchanted Realm, History and Antiques and Exploring the World. The Enchanted Realm is a magical place; here you will find miniatures and collectibles of woodland creatures, snow villages, fairy castles and a witch's compound. The miniatures in the History and Antiques Gallery are artifacts from different time periods. In Exploring the World, you will see examples of miniature dollhouses and **room boxes** from around the world. The museum's collection is an historic art collection.

Many museums offer programs and activities for people of all ages. When you visit The Mini-Time Machine Museum volunteer docents will guide you through the museum and explore the exhibits with you. You will participate in activities, enjoy videos and use gallery guides to help you discover and learn about the big world of small delights- miniature dollhouses!

WHAT IS a MINIATURE?

The word **miniature** means a copy on a much smaller **scale**. The Mini-Time Machine Museum's collection includes 160 **miniature dollhouses** and room boxes made for special purposes. As early as the 16th century miniatures were created to show a family's wealth. These early miniatures were called baby houses or cabinet houses. By the end of the 18th century some dollhouses were used to teach young ladies how to manage a home, kitchen or classroom. With the start of the Industrial Revolution (approximately 1760-1850), factories began mass producing toys, including dollhouses and miniatures for furnishing them. If you travel around the world you will find a variety of small scale houses created for religious purposes such as the Spirit houses of Thailand. By the 20th century artist and craftspeople began to create miniature dollhouses and room boxes that are works of art. The Mini-Time Machine Museum has examples of all these kinds of dollhouses.

Miniature artists are amazing craftspeople. To make sure everything about a miniature is true-to-life a master miniature artist will research the history, style and fashions of the place and time period that he or she will reproduce in miniature. Most miniatures are built in 1/12 scale, twelve inches

in the real world equals one inch in the miniature world. The building, furniture, even the paintings and objects that complete the décor, a vase of flowers or a newspaper, must be the proper scale to match the real-life house.

A miniature can be a small copy of an actual object but many miniature artists like to use their imagination and create a fantasy world. For example, The Mini-Time Machine's *Greene and Greene* miniature is a copy of the historic Gamble house located in Pasadena, CA but the museum's *Forget-Us-Not Fairy Castle*, it looks like a real castle but it's an imaginary place where fairies and wizards live. A miniature is truly brought to life not by the artist's craft alone, but by the imagination of you the viewer. When you visit The Mini-Time Machine Museum the miniatures will guide your imagination on a journey back in time, around the world and into imaginary lands.

ANALYZE, INTERPRET AND EVALUATE

One

Look at the antique miniature pictured in this photograph. What do you see in the miniature? Take turns listing the objects that you see (For example: "I see a vase of flowers." "I see a fancy chair.").
When you've run out of objects, go on to question two.

Two

What is going on in this miniature? Take turns mentioning whatever you see happening, no matter how small. (For example: Someone is feeding a dog.)
When you can't find anything more, move on to question three.

Three

How real has the artist made things look? Is this miniature true to life? Explain.
When you run out of responses, move on to question four.

Four

Think about the objects and activities included in this miniature; what can you figure out about the culture and time period that this miniature represents? *As soon as you are ready, move on to question five.*

Five

Does anything you have noticed in this miniature (for example: objects, events) remind you of something in your own life? Take turns answering.
As soon as you are ready, move on to question six.

Six

Think back on your previous observations. What have you learned about the culture that created this miniature? What have you learned about the time period when this miniature was created? What discoveries have you made? Do you think this miniature should be saved in a museum? Why/why not?