

Mystery objects

Suitable for students aged 7-14.

Activity 1

Students work in two groups. Give the first group a set of images of objects from our collection. The group explores and researches the images. They then write a museum label for each object containing as much information as possible but without including the object name. They could include:

- What it's made from
- Who used it
- How it was used
- How it works
- Why it was revolutionary

The second group must match the labels to the correct objects.

Activity 2

Students work in two teams. Give each team an image of an object from the resource, and a small piece of information about it. The students look carefully at each object and invent three fictional but believable names, uses and owners for the object. They give these to the other team, along with the real name, use and owner of the object. The other team then thoroughly examines the object image and decides which of the four descriptions is correct.

This can be extended by giving students access to secondary sources (books, internet, questioning an expert etc) to help with their investigations.

Older students can simply be given the real name and date of their object and asked to research its use themselves. Older students must also focus particularly on making sure their fictional names and uses are in keeping with their knowledge of the historical period.

These sources make particularly good mystery objects:

The steam whistle - ageofrevolution.org/200-object/steam-whistle/

Faraday's Electric Generator - ageofrevolution.org/200-object/faradays-electric-generator/

Difference Engine No.1 – ageofrevolution.org/200-object/difference-engine-no-1-or-the-gem-of-all-mechanisms/

Chloroform inhaler - ageofrevolution.org/200-object/chloroform-inhaler/

Tipstaff used to arrest Dic Penderyn - ageofrevolution.org/200-object/tipstaff-used-to-arrest-dic-penderyn-during-the-merthyr-rising/