

Diorama Observation

GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS

This observation activity is designed for use with any environmental diorama in the Museum. Completing one worksheet sequence will take 10 to 15 minutes. We recommend using the worksheet in these halls:

Birds, reptile, amphibians:

[Hall of Birds of the World](#)

[Hall of Reptiles and Amphibians](#)

[Leonard C. Sanford Hall of North American Birds](#)

Mammals:

[Akeley Hall of African Mammals](#)

[Bernard Family Hall of North American Mammals](#)

[Hall of Asian Mammals](#)

[Irma and Paul Milstein Hall of Ocean Life](#)

Materials for Each Student

- One or more printed [diorama worksheet](#)
- Pencil
- (Optional, but recommended) A portable surface to work on, such as:
 - A clipboard or piece of stiff cardboard
 - A science notebook ([version of the worksheet](#) formatted to cut and paste into a composition book)

Instructions for Using Student Worksheets

1. Students choose (or are assigned to) a diorama and decide on a particular part of the diorama to focus their attention on: an animal, part of an animal, part of the environment around the animal, or part of the background. Students should not sketch the entire scene; they should sketch only the chosen part.
2. Students take 3 to 4 minutes to silently observe and sketch on their own. If they are not confident about drawing, the teacher reassures them that (1) the goal of sketching is not to create a beautiful picture, but to guide them to observe more closely than they would otherwise, and that (2) they will not be required to show their sketch to anyone if they don't want to. Towards the end of the silent sketching period, students write a title on the "plaque" below the drawing.
3. Students share what they focused on in pairs or small groups. They are not required to share their sketches, but rather simply talk to their classmates about what they noticed.
4. If time allows, the teacher leads a whole-group discussion in front of the diorama about what students focused on and observed, with an eye towards surfacing as many different students' perspectives and ideas as possible with minimal teacher editorializing. Teacher guides students' attention to the diorama labels if questions arise about the scene.

Students may complete this sequence multiple times at different dioramas or using different parts of the same diorama. They should receive a new worksheet for each round.

Recommended Resources

- Article: [Discovering Dioramas](#)
- Article: [Interview with an Artist](#)
- Video: [Restoring Dioramas](#)
- Activity: [Make an Ecosystem Diorama](#)