

History Lives

Preschool–Grade 5

At living history museums children can see people doing the work of blacksmiths, tin workers, shoemakers, weavers and others. They can see how things used to be made and learn how work and daily life have changed over time.

What You Need

Visitor brochures and museum maps

Sketch pad and pencils, or camera

What to Do

* Plan a visit to a living history museum with your child. Write or call the museum ahead of time to obtain information brochures and a map. Well-known living history museums are located in Williamsburg, Va., and Old Sturbridge Village, Mass., but smaller museums can be found in many other places across the country. If you can't visit a museum, travel there by reading books or conducting "virtual" tours on the Internet.

—Talk with your child about the information in the brochures and what he can expect to see at the museum. Make sure that he understands that what he will see is life the way it was once actually lived—not make-believe.

—Help your child sketch something in the museum and put it in his history log. Tell him that drawings were the way events were visually recorded before there were cameras.

—Use your camera to make a modern record of history and create a scrapbook with the photographs of what you saw.

—When you get home, ask your child what his favorite object or activity is and why. Talk with your child about what it would have been like to live in that historical place in that period of time. Your family might pretend to be living in the historical place. Try spending an evening "long ago," without using electrical lights and other appliances such as TVs and microwave ovens. How is life without those luxuries different from your life today?

Let's Talk About It

Ask your child: (Sample Questions)

How were days spent in the period of time you experienced?

What kind of dress was common, or special?

What kinds of food did people usually eat, and did they eat alone or in groups?

What kind of work would you have chosen to do as an adult?

If a living history museum were made of life today, what would people of the future see and learn there?

Would you rather live long ago or now? Why?