

# A Trip to the Smithsonian

BD# 1

*How will Ms. DeJohn's class decide which museums to visit during a class trip to the Smithsonian?*

- 1 Ms. DeJohn stood at the front of the room. "Okay, everyone," she began, "as you all know, we'll be leaving for Washington, D.C. on Monday. We are going to spend some time this morning discussing what you would like to see when we visit the Smithsonian Institution. It will be possible for us to see only a fraction of all the Smithsonian has to offer, so we need to make some decisions about our priorities."
- 2 "We've done a little research as a class about the wide array of topics that the Smithsonian addresses in their museums. I know that during your free time many of you have also done some additional research on the Smithsonian's Web site."
- 3 Ty raised his hand. "How many museums are we going to have time to see?" he asked.
- 4 "That's a good question, Ty," replied Ms. DeJohn. "We're going to choose four museums. I'd like to hear some of your suggestions. What interests you most at the Smithsonian?"
- 5 "Can we go to the National Museum of Natural History?" asked Emma, consulting her notebook. "I'd like to see the dinosaur skeletons there."



- 6 "I want to see Anita and Arabella," said Calvin.
- 7 "Who?" asked Emma, turning around to look at Calvin.
- 8 "Anita and Arabella," he repeated. "They're the space spiders. A student wanted to know if spiders could spin webs in space, so NASA sent two spiders into space on *Skylab II*. Anita's and Arabella's bodies are housed at the National Air and Space Museum."
- 9 Ms. DeJohn began to list the students' suggestions on the board.
- 10 "If we go to the National Zoo," said Deepak, "we can see the three Sumatran tiger cubs. Only a few hundred of these tigers still exist in the wild, and they all live in Indonesia. Also the giant pandas, Mei Xiang and Tian Tian, are on loan from the China Wildlife Conservation Association. I think that getting to see them in person would be really amazing."
- 11 "I'd like to go to the Museum of African Art," said Imani. "My parents emigrated from Kenya when they were children, but I've never been there to visit. My family collects African art, so I'd like to learn more about it."
- 12 "I think we should go to the National Museum of American History," said Chris. "They have a cool exhibit on the Information Age. It has some of the very first computers and even has some of Alexander Bell's telephones and Samuel Morse's telegraph machines."
- 13 "I like the idea of the American History Museum, too," agreed Emma. "They have a 'hands on history' room where you can actually try things from history, like sending a telegraph or riding an old-fashioned high-wheeled bicycle."
- 14 Ms. DeJohn smiled at the class. "I must say that I am extremely impressed by how knowledgeable you all are. You've done your research. Now, all we have to do is take a vote, and we'll be on our way to the Smithsonian!"

## Vocabulary Skills

Write **S** if the possessive word is singular. Write **P** if it is plural.

- \_\_\_\_\_ students' suggestions
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ms. DeJohn's list
- \_\_\_\_\_ spiders' webs
- \_\_\_\_\_ the exhibit's location
- \_\_\_\_\_ the pandas' cage

In each row, circle the word that does not belong.

6. rare    unusual    typical    uncommon
7. portion    fraction    part    whole
8. emigrate    visit    move    relocate

## Reading Skills

1. Check the line beside the word or words that best describe what type of selection this is.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ fiction  
 \_\_\_\_\_ autobiography  
 \_\_\_\_\_ biography
2. How can you tell that Ms. DeJohn's class is excited about their trip to the Smithsonian?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
3. Why can't the class visit all of the Smithsonian's museums during their trip to Washington, D.C.?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
4. What does Chris want to see at the National Museum of American History?  
 \_\_\_\_\_

5. What problem does Ms. DeJohn's class have at the beginning of the story? How do they resolve it?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

6. Who are Anita and Arabella?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

7. Why do you think it might be interesting to visit a "hands on history" exhibit?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## Study Skills

Write the name of the reference source you could use to answer each question below.



1. Where is Indonesia?  
 \_\_\_\_\_
2. How does the telegraph work?  
 \_\_\_\_\_
3. What does the root *tele* mean?  
 \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is another word for *additional*?  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Dictionary  
 atlas  
 Thesaurus  
 Encyclopedia

# The Mega-Museum

*What are some different types of museums you have visited?*

<sup>1</sup> The Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., covers so many subjects and contains so many objects that you would have to call it a super-museum. In fact, its collection of artifacts and memorabilia is so vast—more than 143 million items—the Smithsonian needs 17 separate museums to hold everything! Even more incredible is that the museums are free to the public because the institute is funded and managed by the United States government. Even though the Smithsonian is an American institution, it was because of an Englishman's generosity that it exists today.

<sup>2</sup> In 1829, wealthy British scientist James Smithson died and passed his enormous fortune on to his nephew Henry Hungerford. However, Smithson stated in his will that if Henry died without having any children, all the money would be donated to the U.S. government. He wanted the government to establish an institution "for the increase and diffusion of knowledge."

<sup>3</sup> As it turned out, Hungerford did not have any heirs, so the money—\$500,000 in 1835, which would be equal to nearly \$9,000,000 today—came overseas to America. Congress debated for many years about how exactly the money should be used, but in 1846 President James Polk signed a bill into law that founded the institution.

<sup>4</sup> Today, almost 24 million people visit the Smithsonian museums each year, including the National Museum of Natural History, the National Portrait Gallery, the National Museum of American Indians, and the Anacostia Museum for African American History and Culture. The Smithsonian also runs the National Zoological Park. Among the zoo's 3,600 animals are two giant pandas, an endangered species that is rarely exhibited anywhere outside of China.

<sup>5</sup> Another part of the Smithsonian Institution is the National Museum of American History, which covers all aspects of our history and

culture. The museum displays fun artifacts, including sports memorabilia like Michael Jordan's basketball jersey, Muhammad Ali's boxing robe, and the goggles Gertrude Ederle wore when she swam across the English Channel.

<sup>6</sup> There are also serious exhibits, like "The Price of Freedom," which shows objects from the wars in which the United States was involved. Among the many important artifacts you can see at this museum is the original Star Spangled Banner. This unique flag is the one that flew above Fort McHenry and inspired Francis Scott Key to write our national anthem.

<sup>7</sup> One of the most popular Smithsonian sites is the National Air and Space Museum. This is where you can see the *Spirit of St. Louis*, the plane Charles Lindbergh flew across the Atlantic Ocean. The museum also houses the Wright brothers' airplane from 1903, as well as the *Columbia* space module, which landed on the moon carrying Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin. You can even see a rock that was brought back from the moon!



## Vocabulary Skills

Write the words from the passage that have the meanings below.

1. objects that are worth remembering

Par. 1

2. enormous; wide-reaching

Par. 1

3. financially supported

Par. 1

4. the act of scattering or spreading out

Par. 2

5. moved to action

Par. 6

Circle the homophone that correctly completes each sentence below.

6. Henry Hungerford did not have an \_\_\_\_\_ to whom he could leave his wealth. (heir, air)
7. James Smithson \_\_\_\_\_ on his fortune to his nephew. (past, passed)
8. The Smithsonian is located in our nation's \_\_\_\_\_. (capital, capitol)

Divide the words below into syllables using a slash (/).

9. a m p l e
10. n o b l e
11. g e n t l e
12. s i m p l e

## Reading Skills

1. Approximately how many items are there in the Smithsonian's collection?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Do you think that the Smithsonian Institution will continue to accumulate more artifacts? Why or why not?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. How is the Smithsonian's National Zoological Park different from its other museums?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. What body of government decided how Smithsonian's money would be used?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Name two items you could find displayed in the National Museum of American History.

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Does this selection take place in reality, or is it a fantasy? How can you tell?

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Check the word or words that best describe what type of passage this is.

\_\_\_\_\_ how-to

\_\_\_\_\_ informative

\_\_\_\_\_ biography