

Explorer Station

Digging Deep!

Tour Fun for Adult
Visitors with Middle
and High School
Students

Let's make connections to history using artifacts from the museum's exhibits and inquiry-based discussion questions. To begin, jump-start a conversation with your child or student by asking open-ended questions about a specific artifact or set of artifacts. Instead of quickly glancing at an object through the glass and moving on, really look at it and think. The best part? There's no one right answer!

Ask a question to start:

- What do you notice about this artifact?
- What does this artifact remind you of?
- How might this artifact have been used?
- What words come to mind as you look at this artifact?
- What does this artifact make you wonder?

Now, have your child or student dig—deep! Restructure your questions to include words like *think*, *would*, *could*, or *might* to keep those critical-thinking skills moving.

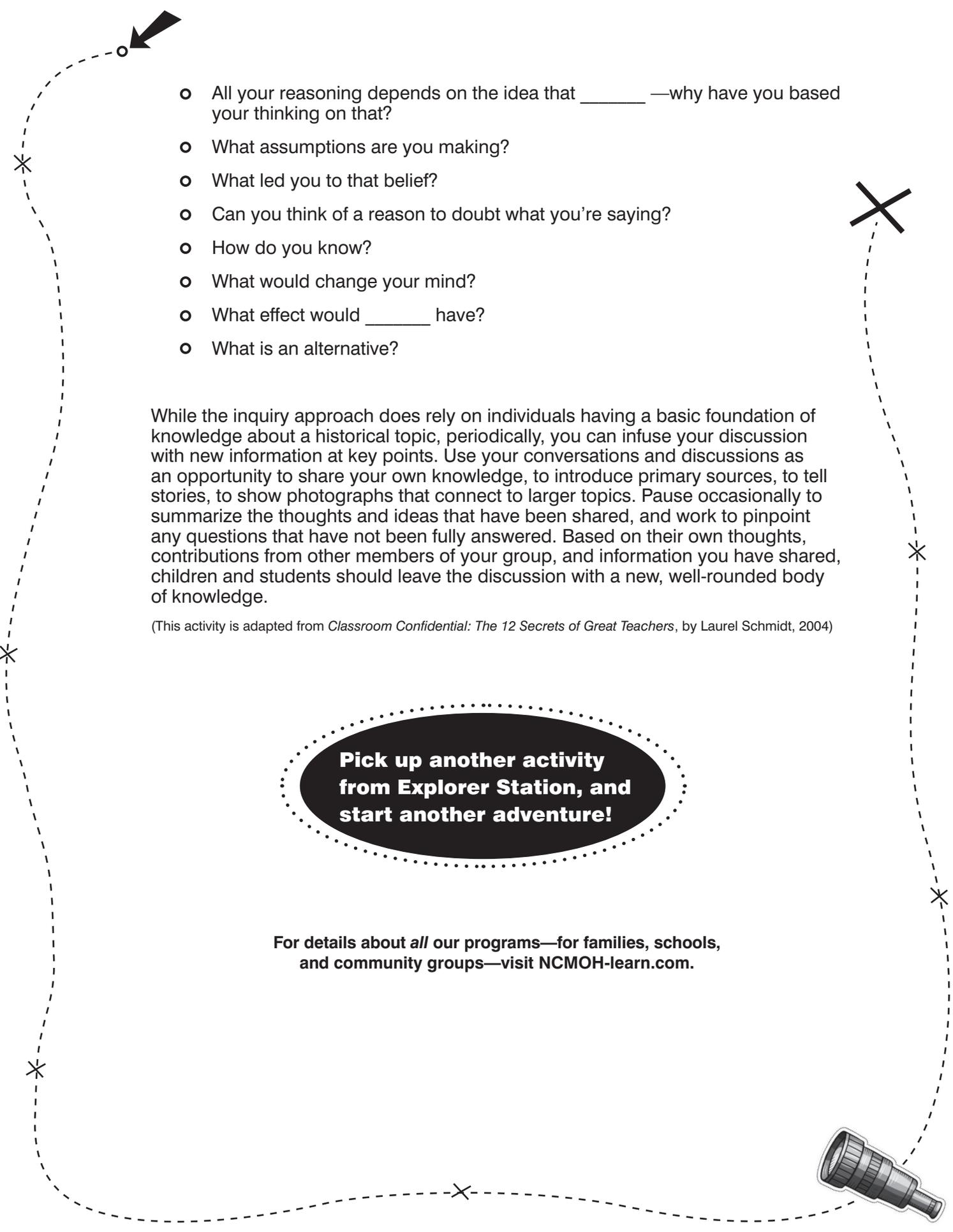
- Why do you think this artifact was created?
- How would you describe this artifact?
- What could be said about the time period when this artifact was used?
- Who might have used this artifact?

Next, dig even deeper! While no *one* answer is necessarily "right," make your child or student accountable for the answers they give by asking them to clarify or explain their lines of reasoning. If their answers are based on assumptions, have the student reconsider their answer by using different or opposite assumptions—make sure they know their answers are not "right" or "wrong"; the point is to get them to think about situations from multiple perspectives. Push your child or student—with "what if?" questions and get them to consider, "If *a*, then what does that mean for *b*?"—to really think about the answers they are sharing and the explanations behind them.

- That's an interesting idea. Can you tell me more?
- What do you mean by _____? Could you give me an example?
- Can you explain what you mean?
- Could you put that another way?
- What would you say to someone who said _____?

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- All your reasoning depends on the idea that _____ —why have you based your thinking on that?
 - What assumptions are you making?
 - What led you to that belief?
 - Can you think of a reason to doubt what you're saying?
 - How do you know?
 - What would change your mind?
 - What effect would _____ have?
 - What is an alternative?

While the inquiry approach does rely on individuals having a basic foundation of knowledge about a historical topic, periodically, you can infuse your discussion with new information at key points. Use your conversations and discussions as an opportunity to share your own knowledge, to introduce primary sources, to tell stories, to show photographs that connect to larger topics. Pause occasionally to summarize the thoughts and ideas that have been shared, and work to pinpoint any questions that have not been fully answered. Based on their own thoughts, contributions from other members of your group, and information you have shared, children and students should leave the discussion with a new, well-rounded body of knowledge.

(This activity is adapted from *Classroom Confidential: The 12 Secrets of Great Teachers*, by Laurel Schmidt, 2004)

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start another adventure!**

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