I Got A Love Jones

GUIDE FOR COUPLES

This self-guided experience asks you to explore history and how you can use it to learn more about yourself and others.
How can history help you to better understand yourself and others?

What is the point of history? Is it just a record of dates and names? Or can history be used for something more? This self-guided experience through the Community Galleries asks you to think about history and how you can use it to help it reflect on yourself, your experiences, and your world view. How can this help you understand others?

This is designed for couples. There are six stops. Each stop asks you to consider a question(s) or an activity. Ask each other the questions and try the activities. You and your partner can do as few or as many stops as you like.

Below is a map of where you can find the locations.
The Golden Rule

Kehinde Wiley has often drawn inspiration from images that reflect the past but speak to the present. The idea for this painting likely comes from Leonardo da Vinci’s painting, St. John the Baptist, 1513-16, included in the collection of the Musée du Louvre in Paris. Wiley’s elevated and intimate portrait also draws attention to the absence of African Americans from historical and cultural narratives.

- Find the painting Saint John the Baptist by Kehinde Wiley. What three words would you use to describe this painting?
- Would you rather be infamous, or forgotten completely after you die? Why?
- Strike a pose. Each of you pose as if you are going to be featured in a Kehinde Wiley painting. You can take inspiration from the gallery around you or other works of art that you have seen before. Have your partner try to guess your inspiration.

We Need to Talk

Saul Williams emerged on the slam poetry scene in the 1990s. A grandslam champion at the Nuyorican Poets Cafe, Williams led the New York team in the 1996 National Poetry Slam competition.

- Find Saul Williams scroll called “Coded Language.” When is it from? What do you think the scroll was used for?
- Would you rather be in the tv adaption of your favorite book or the fictional world of your favorite book? Why?
- What is your favorite line of poetry, a saying, or a quote?

Good Time on the Mothership

The P-Funk Mothership is one of the most iconic stage props in the history of popular music. Figuratively, the Mothership emancipated the audience members and “transported” them to a plane free from racism and earthly constraints—it remains a symbol of the liberating power of music.

- Find the P-Funk Mothership. What do you think it is made out of?
- Would you rather always have to sing instead of speaking or dance everywhere you go?
- Get ready to perform. Based on your answer, you have to dance for thirty seconds or sing aloud a verse of your favorite song.
African American music heritage has undeniably shaped American popular music. Usher’s fourth studio album, Confessions, generated four straight number-one hits after its release in 2004. By 2008 it had achieved diamond status, with over ten million copies sold in the United States.

- Find the RIAA Diamond awarded to Usher Raymond for his Confessions album. What do you think it is made out of?

- Would you rather be personally fulfilled or professionally fulfilled? Why?

- Say a few words. Imagine that you have just been given the award for best ever visitor to the NMAAHC. Give your acceptance speech.

In 1940 playwright Abram Hill and actor Frederick O’Neal co-founded the American Negro Theatre (ANT) in Harlem. ANT grew out of the Federal Theatre Project, which had provided jobs and training for artists during the Depression. Throughout the 1940s ANT produced plays about African American life and challenged racial barriers in the American theater. It launched the careers of many actors who became prominent in the Civil Rights Movement, including Ruby Dee, Ossie Davis, Harry Belafonte, and Sidney Poitier.

- Find the large wall image of Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee. What thoughts come to mind after reading their quotes?

- Would you rather attend a movie or a play together? Why?

- Time to get into character. You both are actors trying to find something to wear to a cast party. You both need to choose one costume on display in Taking the Stage to wear. Stay in character as you both explore Taking the Stage to find your outfits. Once you make a choice, give a dramatic monologue explaining your choice.

The entire building is wrapped in an ornamental bronze-colored metal lattice, that pays tribute to the intricate ironwork crafted by enslaved African Americans in Louisiana, South Carolina, and elsewhere. The cutouts in the lattice are supposed to inspire visitors to connect the outside world with the stories and objects in the exhibitions.

- Go to the overlook on the fourth level outside of the Culture Galleries. You will see a cutout in the lattice that looks over the Washington Monument and the National Mall. What do you think this cutout is supposed mean?

- What historical era would you most, and least, want to go to?

- Strike a pose. Take a picture together. Take a selfie or ask if someone else will take a photo for you.
So, how can history help you to better understand yourself and others?

CONTINUE YOUR EXPERIENCE

- Enjoy a meal in the Sweet Home Café!
  Café Hours: 11am - 3pm

- Shop our Museum Store!
  Gourmet Chocolates from the Harlem Chocolate Factory
  Gifts from the Sheila Bridges Collection
  Frères Branchiaux Candles and Room Spray
  Clementine Hunter Homeware
  Love Poems by Nikki Giovanni
  For the Cook: The Spice Suite, Local Sauces & Seasonings, and Klancy Miller’s Cookbook, For the Culture

Museum Store Hours: 10am - 5pm

We want your feedback! please take this survey to tell us about your experience.