What About Your Friends?

GUIDE FOR GROUPS

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

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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 groups (of friends or other). There are six stops. Each stop asks you to consider questions or an activity. Ask each other the questions and try the activities. You and your group can do as few or as many stops as you like.

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

1. Charting the Past, Present, and Future
2. Writing New Worlds
3. A Cosmic Concert
4. Heroes and Villains
5. Space is the Place
6. Looking Out at the Past, Present, and Future
Charting the Past, Present, and Future

Historian, sociologist, and scholar W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963) developed these hand-drawn infographic charts of African American life in 1900. Du Bois, a proto-Afrofuturist, displayed these charts at the Paris Exhibition in 1900, using graphs and data visualization to present a scientific method to analyze the past and present living conditions of an underrepresented people.

- Examine the charts. What do the charts tell us about the time period when they were made and used?
- What are the earliest memories of your group?
- Would you rather be in history books for something terrible or be forgotten completely after you die?

Considering Science and Fiction

Groundbreaking author and Afrofuturist icon Octavia E. Butler (1947–2006) emerged as a powerful voice in science fiction in the 1970s. Butler wrote stories aligned with Black cultural themes and with Black characters, often as heroic survivors in oppressive worlds.

- Examine Octavia E. Butler’s typewriter. Do we still use this technology today? If so, how is it different or the same?
- If you wrote a time traveling fiction series about yourself, where would you go and why?
- Would you rather be in a zombie apocalypse, dragon apocalypse, or arobot apocalypse?

A Cosmic Concert

These seven sonic architects embrace the principles of Afrofuturism, innovating popular music with the creation of new sounds and new genres, and utilizing technology to design seemingly infinite musical landscapes.

- Give your group three minutes. Everyone choose one object from one of the seven Sonic Architects. Share what object you chose and why you chose it.
- If a song played every time you entered a room, what would it be?
- Strike a pose. Pose as if you and your group are a famous band ready to perform at a cosmic concert. Have someone take a picture to capture the moment.
Heroes and Villains

On stage and screen, **representation matters**. It is important so that art and media can reflect the diversity of society. With the global reach of film and television, seeing heroes of color, or seeing Black villains who aren’t one-dimensional stereotypes, or seeing powerful women in roles typically occupied by men, these aspects of representation become even more powerful.

- Look around this section. How many movies, television shows, music videos, stage shows can you and your group identify? Have a contest on who has seen the most Afrofuturistic media.

- Would you rather be an unknown superhero or an infamous villain?

- It is time to save the world. Have your group pose as if you are team of superheroes or supervillains. Or if there is both, pose as if the superheroes and supervillains are about to get into a major battle. Have someone take the picture to capture the moment.

Space is the Place

Space is a dominant metaphor in **Afrofuturist** literature, music, and art, serving as a canvas to illustrate and project ideas about the future. It’s also the literal place where the exploratory dreams of Afrofuturists have become a reality.

- Look at the three articles of clothing on display in this section. What comes to mind for you?

- Would you rather go to a space of peace or stay and fight for change? Why?

- How do you make space for friends and community in moments that are challenging?

Gone but Not Forgotten

From the original comic book character created in 1966 to the 2018 blockbuster film and beyond, the **Black Panther** is the first and most enduring major Black superhero of the comic book world. The image of the Black Panther re-imagines the model of the comic book superhero, and the depiction of the independent and powerfully advanced Wakanda world reimagines how stories of Africa and African Americans are conceived and told to a global audience.

- Find the Black Panther costume worn by actor Chadwick Boseman (1976–2020). When and where is it from? What do you think it is made of?

- Would you rather live in a utopia as an average citizen or in a dystopia as the supreme ruler?

- Strike a pose. Take a picture from your favorite your pose from the movie. Take a selfie or ask if someone else will take a photo for you.
Recording the Past, Present, and Future

The first African American newspaper, Freedom’s Journal, was published in 1827. Ever since, African Americans have used the press to establish an independent voice for Black communities and advance the struggle for freedom and equality.

- Look at the paper cutter. What did it cut? How do you think it worked?
- Would you rather change the past or predict the future?
- How can you record your family’s history and culture?

So, how can history help you to better understand yourself and others?

CONTINUE YOUR EXPERIENCE

- Enjoy a meal in the Sweet Home Café featuring a special menu takeover by Executive Chef Ramin Coles.
  
  Café Hours: 11am - 3pm

- Shop our Museum Store’s thoughtfully curated selection of Valentine’s Day gifts.
  
  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.