

Museums

Worlds of Wonder

Museums are wonderful places.

That doesn't just mean "terrific places." It means places that fill you with wonder—that surprise and amaze you. It also means places that *make* you wonder—about the world, about nature, about history, about people.

How do museums do that? No two museums do it in the same way. There are art museums, science museums, historical museums, and nature museums. There are museums that focus on a single subject, like music boxes or postage stamps, and there are museums that seem to go in dozens of different directions at once.

Here is a brief tour of five museums that are very different from each other. But all of them are full of wonders.





City Museum of St. Louis, Missouri

The first thing you should know about the City Museum of St. Louis is that it is located in an old shoe factory. It's no surprise, then, that this museum believes in preserving the past and recycling—making something new out of something old. There's also an amazing playground called MonstroCity that's made mostly of recycled materials from the city of St. Louis, including giant metal springs, a castle turret, and the body of a jet plane.

Artist Bob Cassilly designed the City Museum as a huge work of art. Take the Enchanted Caves. Where shoes once moved on conveyor belts through tunnels, children now run into petrified dragons and climb spiral staircases. In Art City, you can watch glass blowers at work, and make your own work of art, too. Then there's the museum *inside* the museum. It's called The Museum of Mirth, Mystery, and Mayhem and it's like an old-fashioned carnival. Finally, let's not forget the World Aquarium, home to more than 10,000 sea creatures, from stingrays to seahorses.

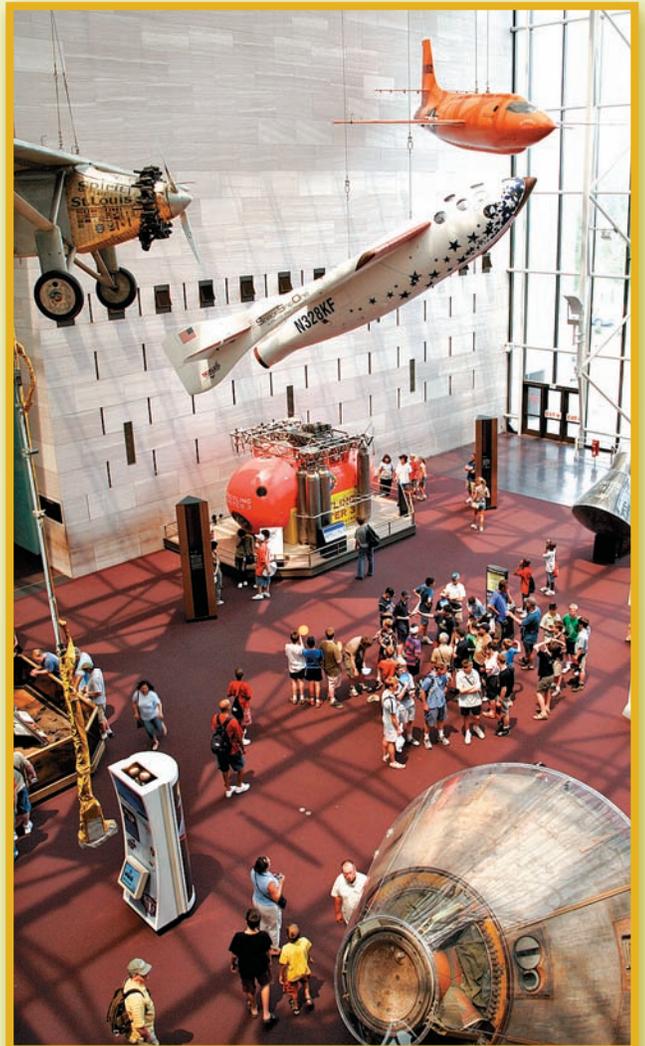
National Air and Space Museum in Washington, DC

Are you interested in space and flight? Have you ever wondered where the Wright Brothers' original airplane is? If so, then the National Air and Space Museum is the place for you. It has the largest collection of aircraft and spacecraft in the world.

Begin with the Milestones of Flight Exhibit. You'll see the *Spirit of St. Louis*, the first plane to be flown nonstop across the Atlantic Ocean by a solo pilot. Want some faster fliers? Check out the *Airacomet*, the first American jet, and the X-15, which flew six times the speed of sound! Upstairs you'll find the airplane that made it all possible: the *Flyer*, which Orville and Wilbur Wright first flew in 1903.

Next, let your imagination soar into space. This museum is home to *Sputnik I*, the first satellite to successfully orbit Earth, and the *Apollo 11* command module, which carried the first men to the moon. Here also are replicas of spacecraft that have flown to Mars, Venus, and Jupiter.

The Albert Einstein Planetarium lets you feel what it might be like to zoom through the galaxy. The Ride Simulator takes you on a virtual space walk. Finally, there is a real moon rock you can touch that the *Apollo 17* astronauts brought back.





Field Museum in Chicago, Illinois

You could spend days exploring the Field Museum in the city of Chicago. The museum contains more than twenty million items, including mummies, meteorites, and mammals. With so much to see, you might not have time to meet Sue. That would be a mistake.

Sue is the largest *Tyrannosaurus rex* skeleton ever found, as well as the most complete. Sue is forty-two feet long with more than two hundred bones—real bones, not plaster ones. All except for Sue’s second skull. It’s a case of two heads being better than one.

Sue’s five-foot-long skull was so big and heavy that the museum staff had to put it in a glass case by itself. They made a lighter model for the skeleton on display. You can put your nose just inches from Sue’s real skull—if you dare. You also can handle models of some of Sue’s bones, including a huge tooth and a rib. By the way, Sue was named after Sue Hendrickson, the woman who found “her” in South Dakota. No one really knows if Sue is male or female.



World Forestry Center and Discovery Museum in Portland, Oregon

A museum that's about trees? The World Forestry Center's Discovery Museum will make you appreciate forests more than ever before—including forests around the world.

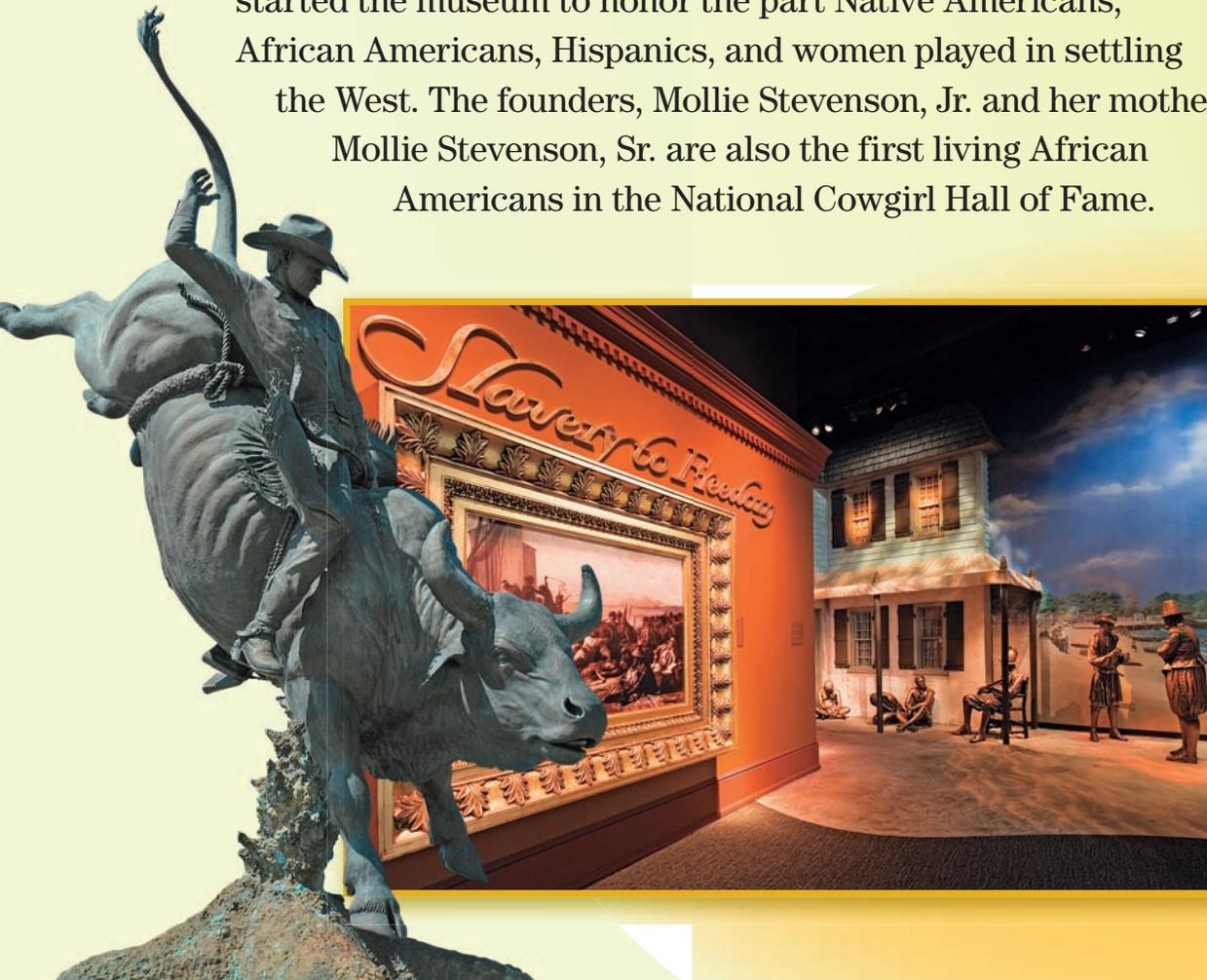
On the first floor of the museum, you can explore forests that grow in the Pacific Northwest. You can discover what lives under the forest and then take a ride to explore the tree-tops. On another ride you can learn how smokejumpers fight forest fires. The museum shows the many things that forests provide, such as wood, water, habitat, and clean air.

On the second floor, a giant wall map tells about different types of forests worldwide. Then you can see for yourself. Take a train ride to the forests of Siberia and a boat ride to a forest lake in China. Ride a jeep to visit forest animals in South Africa. Look down on the canopy of Brazil's Amazon rainforest.

American Cowboy Museum at Taylor-Stevenson Ranch near Houston, Texas

Many museums are important for changing old ideas people may have. Through hands-on exhibits, talks, and even horseback riding, the American Cowboy Museum gives the true history of a popular legend. There is a lot we can learn about the American cowboy. For example, did you know that as many as one-third of all cowboys were African Americans? Many cowboys were Native Americans, and the first cowboys, or *vaqueros*, were from Mexico. And of course, “cowboys” also included women.

The museum is part of the Taylor-Stevenson Ranch, which is 150 years old. It has been owned by generations of an African American family. About fifty years ago, the family started the museum to honor the part Native Americans, African Americans, Hispanics, and women played in settling the West. The founders, Mollie Stevenson, Jr. and her mother, Mollie Stevenson, Sr. are also the first living African Americans in the National Cowgirl Hall of Fame.



MAKING THE MOST FROM

TRASH

Trash is a huge problem. We make mountains of it every day. But there are three things we can do to help fix the problem. First, we can **REDUCE** what we use. Second, we can **REUSE** things, rather than just throw them away. Third, we can **RECYCLE**. Often one thing can be recycled into something entirely different.

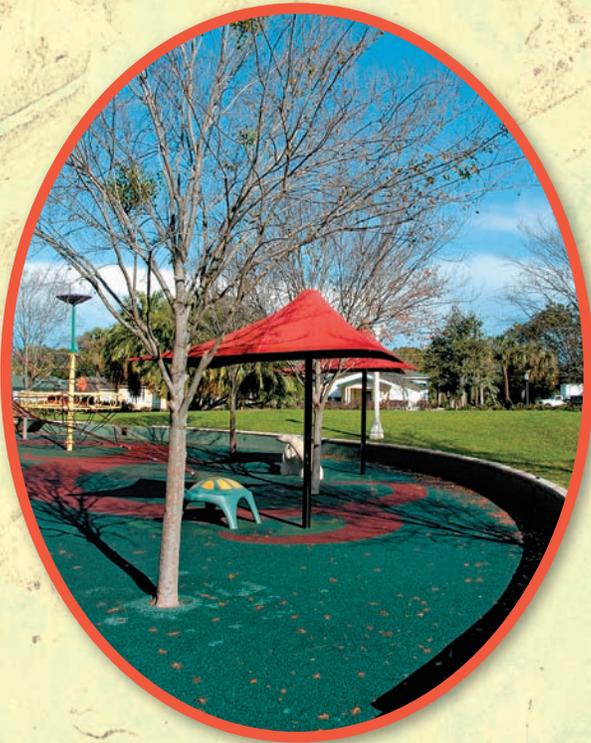
Flakes to Fleece

Did you know that plastic bottles can have a second life as a fleece jacket? Here's how. The plastic bottles are cleaned and chopped into flakes. Later, the flakes are melted down and squeezed into threads. Like wool, the threads are spun into yarn and woven into fleece. The fleece can be sewn into a jacket, hat, or a warm pair of socks. It takes about twenty-five two-liter plastic soda bottles to make a jacket.



Tires to Playgrounds

Where do all the old tires go? The lucky ones are recycled into firm but bouncy playground surfaces. Maybe you have felt how comfortable it is to walk in a rubber-soled shoe. Well, someone had the idea to chop up old tires and mold the rubber pieces into a squishy rubber surface for playgrounds. It saves children from being hurt, it recycles rubber, and it's fun to play on! So go ahead and bounce!



Milk Jugs to Chairs

Have you ever noticed the number two inside a triangle on the bottom of a milk jug? That symbol means the milk jug could have another life as a chair. Type two plastic, also called HDPE, gets recycled into all kinds of sturdy furniture. It looks like painted wood, but it will last longer. You can even buy trash cans made from recycled plastic. How fitting is that?



Dinosaur Bone

by Alice Schertle

Dinosaur bone
alone, alone;
keeping a secret
old as stone

deep in the mud
asleep in the mud
tell me, tell me,
dinosaur bone

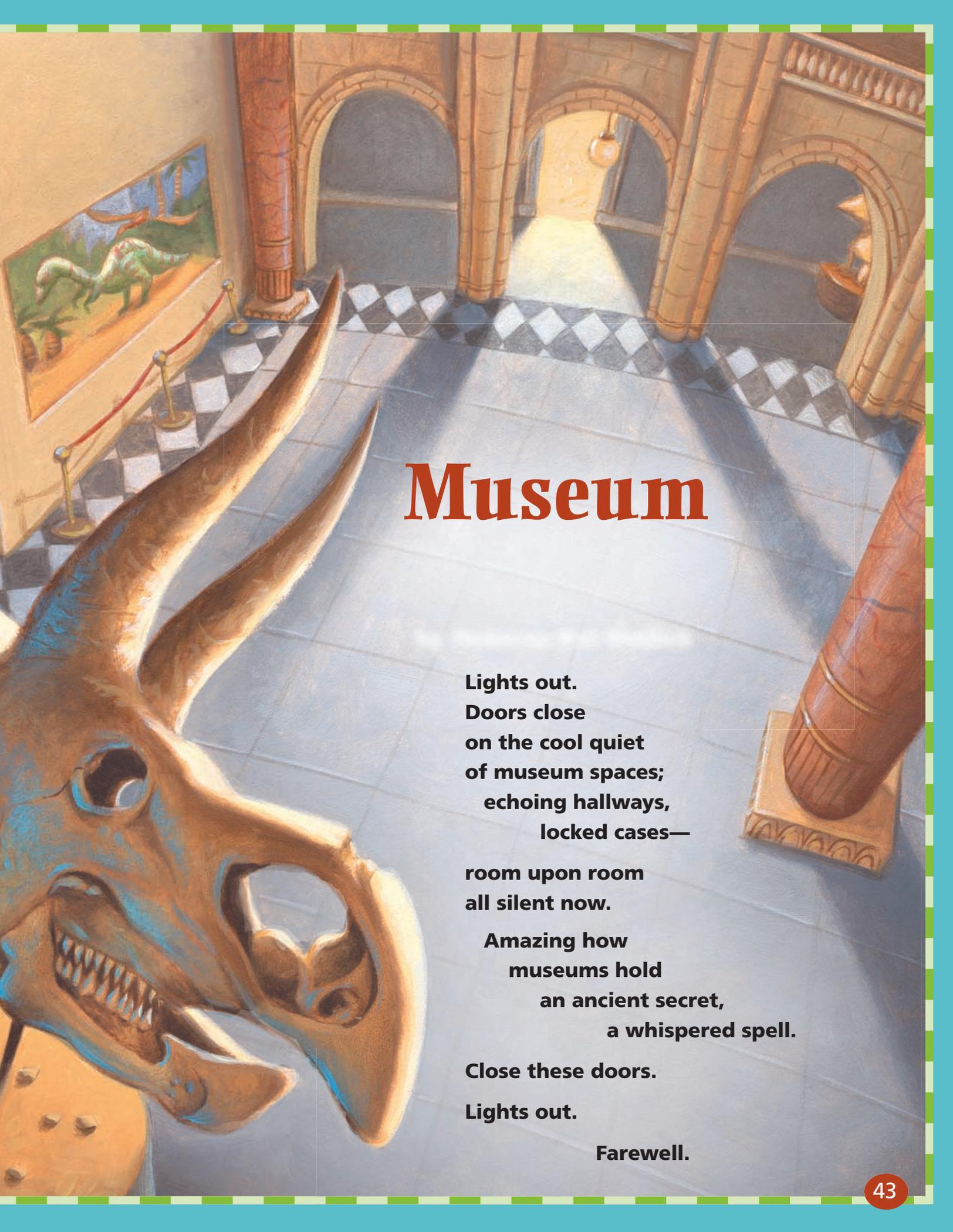
What was the world
when the seas were new
and ferns unfurled
and strange winds blew?

Were the mountains fire?
Were the rivers ice?
Was it mud and mire?
Was it paradise?

How did it smell,
your earth, your sky?
How did you live?
How did you die?

How long have you lain
alone, alone?
Tell me, tell me,
dinosaur bone.





Museum

Lights out.
Doors close
on the cool quiet
of museum spaces;
echoing hallways,
locked cases—

room upon room
all silent now.

Amazing how
museums hold
an ancient secret,
a whispered spell.

Close these doors.

Lights out.

Farewell.



Come to the MUSEUM!

Museums often advertise to tell people about new or special exhibits. Create an ad for a real or imaginary museum. You might design your ad as a jingle to sing on the radio, a billboard, or a poster. Include in your ad three facts about the museum a visitor would need to know. Your ad might tell where the museum is located, when it's open, and what its special exhibits are. You could also include quotes from people who have visited the museum. For example, "Ed Crowe" might say: "I think this is the best museum I've ever been to!"

Meet Sue, the largest and most complete T-rex skeleton ever found!

"It's thrilling!"
exclaims Lisa

"Awesome"
Joe agrees

Sue is 42 feet long with more than 200 real bones. Sue resides at the Field Museum in Chicago.

The advertisement features a photograph of the Sue the T-Rex skeleton exhibit at the Field Museum in Chicago. The skeleton is displayed in a large hall with people viewing it. The text is overlaid on the image in various colors and fonts, including purple, white, and blue. A speech bubble contains a quote from Lisa, and another contains a quote from Joe. A separate text box provides facts about the skeleton's length and location.

Impossible?

NOT!

The poem below is about exploring with words. However, some of its words are missing! The words in the box have the prefixes *im-* and *in-*. On another sheet of paper, use each word to fill in the blanks. Check the spelling of the prefix and base word that make up each word.

inexpensive injustice independence
incredible immeasurable

Climb to the top of Mount Everest
And take in the _____ view.
Explore the sea's _____ depths
With Captain Nemo and his daring crew.

March with Martin Luther King Jr.
to protest _____ in our nation.
Listen to Thomas Jefferson speak
Of _____ and unfair taxation.

Impossible! Improbable! Is that what you say?
Well, that's incorrect! You can do it today.

Exploring can be _____.
It doesn't have to cost you a dime.
All you need are two simple things:
An interesting book and some time!

Answers: incredible, immeasurable, injustice, independence, inexpensive



EXPRESS YOURSELF!

Is your school or community doing what it can to recycle its trash? Do you see ways that recycling could be improved? Express your opinion, or yours and a partner's, in a letter to a leader of your school or community.

Tell what's working or, if necessary, include your own ideas to improve recycling efforts. For example, maybe each classroom could have a bin for recycling paper. Coming up with suggestions helps support your opinion.





WRITING TIPS

- Begin your letter by giving an example of the problem.
- State your opinion of the situation.
- Be positive about how the problem could be handled.
- Suggest possible solutions and offer to help.