

Students participating in the Chamber of Art and Wonders tour will explore the idea of collecting in a reproduction of a 17th-century Dutch collector's cabinet. Use the suggestions below, either before or after your museum visit, to encourage further inquiry in the classroom.

ACTIVITIES

- The collector's study is lined with painted portraits of important people, which were meant to inspire the collector as he worked. Do we still do this today? What kinds of people do we keep images of in our homes? Have students draw portraits of people who are important to them, and hang them around the classroom to inspire the class all year.
- Students might be surprised at the variety of items that they will encounter in the Chamber of Wonders, from paintings to beetles to a twelve-foot alligator! Ask your students whether they think all of these things belong in an art museum. Why or why not? Have them choose sides and have a debate.
- In preparation for your museum visit, hold a discussion with students on the topic of collecting. Talk as a class about the things that you collect. How did everyone's collections start? What is the most interesting collection your students have ever seen? See how many different collections your class has as a group. Where does everyone keep them? How do they display them? If students can't have collections, you could ask similar questions about singular items that are especially important or meaningful to them.
- Have students write about an object that they own that is especially valuable to them. Ask them to explain what it is about this object that makes it so special -- is it a souvenir from a place that they enjoy, or a token from a favorite sport or hobby, or is it perhaps something related to a topic that they find fascinating? Did they receive it from a special person? As a follow-up activity, they can make or decorate a box or other container to hold their prized object. Tell students to make sure that their choices of design and decoration for this container should tell others something about why the object is so special to them.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Cabinets of Curiosities, Patrick Mauries
Albertus Seba's Cabinet of Natural Curiosities,
Albertus Seba

Prudy's Problem and How She Solved It, Carey
Armstrong-Ellis (children's book about
collecting)

