

Many museums use dioramas to tell history. Before film was common, and CGI was even possible, dioramas were the best way to depict epic moments in history.

Dioramas, however, are static, and sometimes offer more information about the understanding of history in the era they were created, rather than the event they are portraying. In this exhibit, students will be able to look at different dioramas that have been used at Fort Ticonderoga since it opened as a museum. Students will need to ask questions such as:

Are these dioramas still relevant as a retelling of history? What do these dioramas tell us about the time when they were made?

Activity: Ask students to enter the exhibit and examine the dioramas first without reading any of the text in the exhibit. Students can be broken up into 4 groups with one group assigned to the diorama of Mount Independence, The Capture of Fort Ticonderoga, the Canajoharie Mohawk Village, and Henry Knox transporting cannons.

Have students use attached worksheet to record their thoughts about the diorama.

Have students then explore the exhibit more fully and read all of the information about their diorama, and other parts of the exhibit, then respond to questions 2-6 on the worksheet.

Extension: Back in the classroom, have a discussion about different ways that you use to tell history in class. If you divided students into groups and had them select different dioramas to study, have groups explain what they saw. Compare Dioramas to Film, CGI, and other visual ways of recounting history. Is there ONE best way to visually depict history? Why or why not? What visual methods can you use in the classroom to depict history?

C3 Framework Standards Addressed:

D2.His.4.9-12. Analyze complex and interacting factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.

D2.His.5.9-12. Analyze how historical contexts shaped and continue to shape people's perspectives

D2.His.8.9-12. Analyze how current interpretations of the past are limited by the extent to which available historical sources represent perspectives of people at the time.

D2.His.9.9-12. Analyze the relationship between historical sources and the secondary interpretations made from them.

D2.His.11.9-12. Critique the usefulness of historical sources for a specific historical inquiry based on their maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose.

On the Third Floor of the Soldier's Barracks, you'll find an exhibit called Diorama-Rama filled with dioramas and models that have been created over the years since Fort Ticonderoga became a museum. Go to the exhibit and **without reading anything in the exhibit**, study one of the dioramas closely.

1. What is your first impression of this diorama? What does this diorama make you think of the historic moment that it is trying to portray?
2. Now take some time to read all of the information in the exhibit, especially the description for the exhibit, and any information about the diorama you chose. Has your impression of this diorama changed? If so, how?
3. What do you think the builders of these dioramas did correctly?
4. What do you think they omitted or left out?
5. What do you think the builders misrepresented?
6. Pick an important event in the history of Fort Ticonderoga. It could be the same moment your diorama portrays, or a different one. Imagine you are a museum curator and you are tasked with creating an exhibit on a historic event at Fort Ticonderoga. How might you design this exhibit? Would you use a diorama to represent this event? Why or why not? What other methods might you use in the 21st century to tell the stories of history?