These cross-curricular resources are designed to accompany the War Games exhibition. In addition to an activity for your visit, you will find pre and post visit lesson plans to ensure you gain as much as possible from your experience. The exhibition explores the relationship between conflict and children’s play, providing an insight into the ways toys have been influenced by warfare and geopolitical changes.

With toys and games including Risk, GI Joe and classic British toy soldiers as well as photographs and archive documents, War Games represents differing sides of conflicts and the acquisition of territories from around the world. This exhibition reveals the sometimes surprising links between play and wider attitudes towards domination, and delves into the secret history of toys as tools of propaganda and espionage.

The V&A Museum of Childhood’s War Games Perspective web pages have varied responses to the exhibition and essays from a range of contributors.

www.museumofchildhood.org.uk/war-games

**At a glance**

**Age**  
KS3 +

**Subjects**  
History, Geography, English and PSHE

**Learning Outcomes**

- To identify relevant details in objects to aid historical enquiry and use these to draw appropriate conclusions.
- To develop skills of inference.
- To analyse the difference between reality and fantasy and apply this to the concept of war. There are opportunities here to discuss war and its impact on soldiers and civilians.
- To understand the ways in which objects, such as toys, can provide us with knowledge of other times and other places.

**In this Pack**  
Teacher’s notes, example lesson plans, image of RISK game, War Games trail, object profile sheet and world map.

**Assessment Opportunity**

Group presentation in consolidation lesson – as well as assessing for content, a formal English Speaking and Listening level/grade could also be given. This visit could also lead to students making individual presentations if required.

**Fitting it in**

The War Games exhibition provides myriad response opportunities. It would be a beneficial visit in a cross-curricular capacity between History, Geography and English. The interactive elements of the exhibition are vast, and so it would form a strong introductory experience for discussions on war, childhood, propaganda or changing attitudes to war. You may wish to supplement these plans with additional lessons in preparation or IT usage.

**Why?**

Students can access important ideas and information through objects that are familiar to them. The War Games exhibition aids inference skills, chronological understanding and identification of fantasy and reality. These resources may lead you to create others based on your own group’s reaction to the objects.
Example Lesson Plan

Preparation

In preparation for the visit students must analyse an object within a historical or geographical context and discuss the concepts of fantasy and reality.

Key words such as: **territory, terrain, borders, boundaries, population, displacement, infer, fantasy, reality, enquiry, conflict, analysis, communism, capitalism, empire and propaganda** should be displayed in the classroom to ensure students are ready to gain as much as possible from their visit.

### Objectives

To identify details in objects to help answer historical enquiry.

To analyse the differences between reality and fantasy and apply this to the concept of war and land acquisition.

### Starter

Ask the students to record their response to the question— *What do you think about children playing at war?* Give a strict 1 minute response time. You will return to their response in your conclusion. Students should leave 4 lines under their response for this purpose.

### Main Body

Introduce the RISK image to the class (http://www.ea.com/risk-ipad may be useful as an introduction to the game). Think, pair, share discussion on the RISK image, perhaps record as a mind map on the board to gain a whole class overview.

Useful words: world, land, countries, strategy, intelligence, tactics.

Using students’ feedback, model how to use an object from the museum to answer an enquiry question. Try to form a checklist that students can use to analyse any object on their visit, for example:

- Is it educational? If so, what skills does it teach?
- When, where and why was it made?
- What inferences can you make about the owner? (Age, sex, class, background, ideologies)
- Can it tell us anything about either ourselves, or how we view other people and other places?
- Use three words to describe it.
- Does it represent a real or fantastical idea of war and acquiring territory?

Return to the RISK image and ask *To what aspect of History/Geography could it be linked?* Discuss as a class whether the RISK board game is a positive or negative reflection of war. In pairs, divide paper centrally and record positive and negative ideas of war. Spin paper and students swap positive to negative and negative to positive response. As a class define reality and fantasy. Swap papers with positive and negative ideas on between pairs. Circle aspects of fantasy and return to the original pair. Two minutes for pairs to discuss findings – do they agree?

### Conclusion

Referring to the RISK image ask the question— *Does this game represent a reality of war or fantasy?* Students should be able to argue for both sides – it represents hierarchy, tactics, borders, acquisition, strategy, reasons for wars BUT it also is clean (death is implied but not shown), and the opposing colours can suggest an unclouded good v evil aspect of war.

Ask the class to consider why there is a mixture of fantasy and reality surrounding the concept of war and acquisition of territories and briefly discuss some of these ideas. Introduce the exhibition to the class and outline what is expected of students during the visit and the final project they will produce – see consolidation lesson for details.

Students return to their starter question response and answer the question again. Pair and share their findings.

### Resources

- Paper, stationery, key words, image of RISK board game.
Example Lesson Plan
Visit

During the visit students will work as individuals and as groups researching and then analysing information from the Museum’s War Games exhibition. To ensure students have plenty of time to complete their work, we suggest that all student groupings are created prior to your visit. It might also be beneficial to have had an additional IT lesson to research the relevant wars you will be covering.

Objectives
- To identify toys/games that relate to a certain time period.
- To interpret the message behind three toys/games
- To analyse the toy/game and evaluate whether the message is fantastical or realistic.
- To think about objects as potential sources of geographical and historical data.

Starter
As a whole group explain the trail leaflet and recap class project success criteria. Visit your preparatory work using the RISK board game in the first section of the exhibition, ensuring that the concepts of fantasy and reality are revisited. Split the class into their groups, each assigned to work on one particular war and its territories and terrain. The wars covered in the exhibition are: The Boer War, World War 1, World War 2, the Cold War and First Gulf War.

Explain and model the map outline where students will plot the changing territories from their assigned conflict using the exhibition objects in relation to WHEN they were produced and investigate WHAT they show us about attitudes to war, the enemy and land acquisition.

Main body - investigation
Working, as individuals or pairs, students should identify a toy/game from before, during and after their assigned war. They will need to consider objects from before, during and after the war. Encourage students to use information displayed throughout the exhibition, using the trail, object profile sheets nd map provided. They should note down object numbers so they can source images and information from the V&A website, http://collections.vam.ac.uk.

They will need to make notes to answer the enquiry question – What do these objects tell us about the (assigned) war, the acquisition of land, and the broader geographies of the conflict? e.g. Where does the conflict take place, how widespread are the consequences? To what extent are civilians caught up in the conflict? What are the geographies of the battlespace? The downloadable student resource trail contains a list of questions for the students to consider for each object so they should be encouraged to be independent.

Main body – peer-teaching and group work
Encourage students to investigate “A line in the Sand: the battle for Iraq” during their visit and follow this up in the consolidation lessons. The game allows players to act out real events and strategies of the First Gulf War (Operation Desert Storm) which will enable students to investigate the ideas of war and land acquisition independently. It can be played in a variety of ways, either in a basic form concentrating on military forces, or an in-depth ‘diplomatic’ format. This reflects the reality of the war’s complex play of geography, economics, politics and religion and will stretch students’ understanding.

Conclusion
Students discuss and share what they think was the most revealing or interesting object they saw at the exhibition. Try to complete as many face to face interactions, as time allows, so students have shared as much as possible.

Resources
- Workbooks, War Games trail, object profile sheet, world map - students may wish to create their own maps using images, colours and exaggerated representations of lands acquired.
Example Lesson Plan
Follow Up

This follow-up lesson is an opportunity for the class to present their findings to one another, and discuss the enquiry question with evidence gathered from their visit. You may wish to arrange to peer-teach in parallel teaching groups if you have willing colleagues.

This lesson can be used as preparation for presentations or the creation of board games depending on your class dynamic. Students could be given an additional lesson or use of an IT suite to prepare their presentation prior to this consolidation lesson.

Objectives
To consolidate the learning at the exhibition.
To answer the enquiry question.
To present their findings to each other in an appropriate and detailed manner.

Starter
Split the class into pairs and give them scrap paper, using just description ask students to draw their partner’s favourite object from the museum and then swap.

OR
Split the class into pairs and ask them to sum up the Museum visit in 30 seconds without pausing or using fillers, using as many objects as they can recall. If any students excel at this perhaps invite them to do it in front of the class and give a reward.

Main body - Peer teaching and group work
Reassign the students into groups including one student who has studied each war or area. Working together the students should make a group map for all of the wars. They should aim to teach their group about their findings as the map takes shape. It should also be documented whether each toy shows the reality or fantasy of war.

Students should then discuss and plan their presentation/board game for the next lesson and assign roles. For the presentations their focus should be the question: What do the objects teach us about war and the acquisition of land? They should use a cross section of the group’s findings. Students should be able to see a cycle of objects glorifying and then showing realistic understanding of wars. Some of the objects, including RISK, show this cycle within their very aim, as more land acquired means longer borders to defend.

Able students may wish to ask the additional question– Why are wars glorified and land acquisition sanitised when we know their harsh realities? If creating a board game, the groups can discuss its rules, layout and their ideas on fantasy and reality in the game.

Presentation
Think about toys/games from the exhibition that are map based, what these might tell us about geography and conflict and why there are so many toys/games of this kind. Students then take it in turns to present to the class on the question– What do these objects teach us about war? They will use their leaflets, maps and images of objects as teaching resources.

Each group should prepare for a short Q&A session after their presentation to stretch their understanding; you may have to lead this depending on your class dynamic.

• Why did you choose that object?
• Which was your favourite?
• How do fantasy interpretations of war help communities?

Board game creation
Students should work in their groups to create the game, but should be prepared to justify their choices, for example: colours, pieces, dice, board layout/content, rules and motives.
Conclusion

Return to the question from the preparation lesson—*What do you think about children playing at war?* Class discuss this in light of their further understanding. You may wish them to record their final thoughts on the page from the preparation lesson so students can see their own progress.

Ask students to write anonymously one word on a post it to complete the phrase *War games are...* and they can hand them to you at the end of class. Look over them and see if there are any patterns linked to reality, fantasy, positive, negative etc and feed this back at the start of the next lesson. You could write the phrase on a display and put all of the post its on it or take the most popular word used in response as a prompt for further investigation.

Resources

Students' research from the exhibition, preferred presentation format (ICT) and board game making materials (coloured pens, paper etc).
RISK
A popular strategy game which mirrors the development of war on a global scale and focuses on the acquisition and occupation of territories.
Object Profile sheet

Object name ____________________ Object number ____________________

Year made ________________ Location made ____________________

What is it? Why was it made?
Is it educational? If so what skills or ideologies does it teach?

What inferences can you make about the owner?
(age, sex, class, background, ideologies)

Use three words to describe it - these can be immediate reactions or thoughts.

Does it represent a realistic or fantastical view of conflict and land acquisition?

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