

Case Study: Jurassic Packs



Outline

Jurassic Packs are activity backpacks designed for family groups with children aged 7 – 11 years. They encourage families to explore the Museum's displays of prehistoric marine reptiles and investigate the role of palaeontologists, past and present.

Background

The backpacks were funded by the L'Oreal-UNESCO Ambassador Fund aimed at promoting women in science. The project is intended to raise the visibility of women working in science-based roles, especially in palaeontology, which is a particularly male-dominated field. The Museum has a number of women working in the Earth Collections, as well as partnerships with female palaeontologists in the University of Oxford Department of Earth Sciences. This fund provided an opportunity to highlight these important roles.

Audiences

These backpacks were designed for families with children aged between



7-11 years who are looking for something fun, but engaging and educational, to do during their visit to the Museum. The backpacks offer families an opportunity to explore and interpret the Museum collections

with a helping hand. They are led by narrator Mary Anning, a 19th-century female palaeontologist, who highlights some of her most famous finds amongst the displays.



Museum of
Natural
History



UNIVERSITY OF
OXFORD

Aims

The activity backpacks were created to promote and celebrate women in science – a significant aim of the L’Oreal/UNESCO fund. The backpacks highlight 19th-century palaeontologist Mary Anning, who made significant scientific discoveries, along with modern-day female palaeontologists. We aimed to ask children to put themselves in the shoes of a palaeontologist, find out what they did in the past, and see how the role has changed today.

Delivery

To create the backpacks, Education staff worked with experts from the Museum’s Earth Collections and a University of Oxford earth scientist, to ensure that the information about the marine reptiles was accurate and the activities represented real palaeontology. Four small activity bags were created. 3D prints of the real fossils allow families a hands-on experience, and they use real geological equipment to carry out their own measurements and tests. Families are also challenged to work out the order of fossilisation process, using beautiful cards illustrated by a local artist, who created unique drawings for the backpack.

Outcomes

The Jurassic Packs are available for families to borrow during Family Friendly Sunday activities, special events and the summer holidays. They are also offered to school groups to support a workshop or self-guided session. The packs have been available for two months so far (since April 2018) and have been used by over 140 families.

Reflection

Using Mary Anning as a character to narrate the story made the topic relatable for families, through the stories of an individual’s discoveries. Working with experts in the field of palaeontology allowed quick access to the latest information and impressive facts. Selecting an artist who already knew the Museum was beneficial, as they were able to understand our ideas much more quickly. Buying top-quality products and having the money to do this is essential to backpack maintenance and longevity. Unfortunately the callipers chosen for the measuring activity proved not to be up to requirements, so frequent maintenance is now needed.



Project contact

Carly Smith-Huggins, education officer
carly.smith-huggins@oum.ox.ac.uk