Across Time & Space: Multicultural Representations of Girlhood is a survey of girl images from the beginning of recorded civilization to the present. These images have been drawn from many cultures and eras to see how girls have been represented in different ways. They provide us with interesting glimpses into the lives of girls around the world.

This educational guide is designed for classroom use with students in primary/elementary school, secondary school and university settings. All the activities are designed for ease of copy and distribution to your students. Also noted are links to both the UK National Curriculum (pg. 4) and the US Common Core (pg. 5).
Students can answer the following questions on their own or discuss in groups.

The following questions can be focused on one image, a selection of images, or all of the images from the Across Time & Space exhibition.

1. What does this image tell you about what life was like for girls in the era and part of the world its subject was created in?

2. What does the image tell us about the social roles and attitudes of girls in the era and part of the world its subject was created in?

3. What does the image tell us about the girl featured in its subject? Are there any clues about her personality? Make up a story about who she is and why she is being featured in this work of art.

4. Are there any similarities between yourself and the girl portrayed in the image?

5. Are there any differences between yourself and the girl portrayed in the image?
Analysis: Images

Analyze the three images on this page.

Using details from the images, and the exhibit, discuss, or write a paragraph on, how representations of girls have changed over time.

You could consider checking out the Girl Museum podcast Girl Speak! There are tons of episodes about girls in art throughout history that can help aid your discussion.
Activities

Activity #1: Vermeer’s Letter

Take a look at the painting *Girl Reading a Letter at an Open Window* by Vermeer.

Imagine you are the girl in the picture. Write the letter she is reading. Consider whom it might be from and how it might make her feel.

Swap letters amongst your class and reply to one another!

Activity #2: Girls and Games

Take a look at the images from 2nd century Roman Italy and 18th century India. They both show girls playing games. Games are an important part of childhood in many cultures.

Design your own game for children to play. It could be a board game, an outdoor game, a role-play game, or anything you can imagine.

You could even make your game and play it for real with your classmates!

Activity #3: Dazzling Dancing

Take a look at the image of the copper-dancing figure from the Indus Valley. Dance is an important aspect of girlhood, and dancers have been depicted throughout the art history of many cultures.

In groups or individually, choreograph your own dance. Think about the meaning behind the dance – is it in celebration of something?

You could perform your dance to your classmates or the rest of your school!

UK National Curriculum Links:

History KS1 & KS2:
- Know & understand significant aspects of history of the wider world
- Understand historical concepts such as continuity & change
- Changes within living memory

Art & Design: KS1 & KS2:
- Produce creative work
- Become proficient in drawing & painting
- Evaluate & analyse creative works
- Know about great artists, craft makers & designers, & understand the historical & cultural development

English KS1 & KS2:
- Use discussion in order to learn
- Ask relevant questions to extend their understanding & knowledge
- Write by in narratives, describing settings, characters & atmosphere
- Develop positive attitudes towards & stamina for writing by writing about personal experiences & those of others, writing poetry

PE KS1 & KS2:
- Perform dances using a range of movement patterns
Activities continued

Activity #4: Graffiti Activism
Take a look at the image of Banksy’s artwork of the little girl under an umbrella. Banksy uses his artwork to raise attention to social issues in the real world.

Design your own piece of art based around a social injustice you feel passionate about. It could be an issue in your local community or a global story you have seen on the news.

Display your final artworks around your school to raise awareness of the issues you’ve chosen.

Activity #5: Freeze Frame
Take a look at the 19th century French painting by Degas. The image’s ambiguous nature has confused viewers and art experts alike.

Write a story about Degas’s work, using the painting as a freeze frame to either begin or end your story. Imagine what might have led to this scene or what might follow it.

Remember to consider how the characters feel!

If you prefer, you could also use the picture to begin or end a poem.

Bonus points:
Share your activities with us to be featured on Girl Museum’s blog!

Email an essay, photos, and/or a video of your project to share@girlmuseum.org
Take a look at the image of the portrait of a young girl from 19th century New Zealand. The girl’s skirt, necklace, and the flower in her hair are meant to show aspects of her culture.

What objects would you use to represent your own cultural identity?

Take a photo of yourself surrounded by items that you feel portray important features of your culture.

You might also want to wear an outfit that you feel interprets your cultural identity.

You could put these images together in a book to share with your school and local community, or display them on a bulletin board.