

British Museum Exercise – 40 pts (about 4% of the course grade)
SCIE258

Name(s): _____

Acknowledgment: this exercise was written by previous SCIE258 instructors, with some editing by the current instructor.

The British Museum is one of the premier museums in the world because of the breadth of the collection and the ways in which it was assembled. There is everything from Egyptian mummies to British history and society. The collection was so large that it, by sheer need for space, has spawned other museums including the Natural History Museum, Science Museum, British Library, and the Museum of Mankind.

Answer the following questions in as much detail as you can. The assignment is expected to require about two hours. Answers to the assignment must be based on information from the Museum exhibits. It is not permitted to consult online sources before, during, or after the Museum visit to obtain answers. Exception: You may consult Gribbin.

Please do this assignment on your own, or in teams of two. If you work as a team, note that you may not work with the same partner on more than one assignment (except where stated otherwise). It is possible that some exhibits have been closed, moved or altered since the assignment was finalized. If you encounter any problems, use your own best judgment to complete this assignment to the greatest extent possible and make a note of any difficulties encountered.

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1. Go to Room 24 (Wellcome Trust Gallery on Living and Dying) on the north side of the Rotunda (opposite the main entrance to the museum).
 - a. (1 point) How many pills/drugs are prescribed to by an average British citizen during their lifetime (see large, flat, rectangular Table display in the center of the room)?
 - b. (1 point) Why does the average British female take more pills at a young age vs. a British male? In other words, by the time a woman is 35 years old, she has taken more pills than a 55 year old male! Why?
 - c. (1 point) For a non-European (and non-US) culture (name the country/culture), how do people ward off disease/illness in their people (since their reliance on prescriptions is almost none)?
 - d. (1 point) For a *second* non-European (and non-US) culture (name the country/culture), how do people ward off disease/illness in their people (since their reliance on prescriptions is almost none)?

2. Go to Room 4 (Egyptian sculpture) on the west side of the Rotunda; find the Rosetta Stone. It is usually very crowded at the Rosetta Stone. Try to focus on reading the info at the display case; later, you can examine and touch a replica of the Stone in Room 1 (between cases 13 & 15).

- a. (1 point) What is the Rosetta Stone?
- b. (1 point) How old is the Rosetta Stone?
- c. (1 point) When and by whom was the Rosetta Stone discovered?
- d. (2 points) Why is the Rosetta Stone important?
- e. (1 point) What is the name of the *English* person that helped decipher the Rosetta Stone? (If you cannot find out, give the name of the French person who expanded upon the deciphering.)

3. Go to Room 1 (The Enlightenment) on the east side of the Rotunda. This is a fantastic exhibit, which is central to many things in this course. The Enlightenment was not just about science, as you will see in this exhibit, but more about a mind-set. The case numbers begin with number 1 to the far right as you enter the gallery and number 24 to the far left. In this room, don't just peek at the tops of cases; some have things below, and also peek at the sides of the rooms – there are around 200 cases in this space!

- a. (1 point) The Enlightenment Gallery is located in one of the oldest parts of the British Museum. What was the original purpose of this room? Who designed it? And where are the original contents now located? *Hint: see info podium in front of cases 1 and 3.*

Cases 1 through 4 deal with the Natural World.

- b. (1 point) In Case 1: In the 1700s, what were two main uses for plants?
- c. (1 point) In Case 1: Linnaeus classified plants into 24 categories. On what basis?
- d. (1 point) In Case 2: What was a goal of the 1768 voyage lead by Captain James Cook abroad the *Endeavour*?
- e. (1 point) In Case 2: What were two examples of things brought back from the expedition, *seen in Case 2*?
- f. (1 point) In Case 3: You will learn that Hans Sloane wrote a treatise called *Materia Medica*. In it he noted the use of the gemstone jade, and also of rock crystal. What did he think jade would cure if worn next to the skin? What would rock crystal do?
- g. (2 points) In Case 4: What was a key outcome of fossil collecting, realized during the Enlightenment and into the start of the 19th century?

Cases 5 and 6 deal with the Birth of Archaeology.

h. (1 point) In Case 5: Who were antiquaries?

i. (1 point) In Case 5: You will learn that pre-Enlightenment antiquarians tried to discover proof of the accounts of the ancient Greeks and Roman authors. Places like Avebury and Stonehenge did not fit into these accounts. What did Enlightenment archaeologists (such as William Stukeley) conclude instead?

j. (1 point) In Case 6: You will see some incredibly well preserved artefacts from peat bogs. What three types of thousands of years-old items were found that were still “so sharp as to cut their fingers”?

k. (2 points) In Case 6: What is the significance of finding fossils/artefacts in various strata?

Cases 11 through 14 deal with Classifying the World

l. (2 points) In Cases 11-14: During the Enlightenment Period, what was the purpose of classifying things?

m. (1 point) In Case 12: What is an orrery? What theory did it demonstrate?

n. (1 point) In Case 12: What is an astrolabe? What are *two* scientific purposes for which an astrolabe can be used?

o. (2 points) List one scientific item from each of the 4 cases numbered 167-170 (wall near case 12).

167:

168:

169:

170:

Cases 21 through 24 deal with Trade and Discovery

p. (1 point) In Case 21: When did Capt. Cook leave on his first famous expedition on the *Endeavour*?

q. (1 point) In Case 22: Who was the naturalist on Capt. Cook’s expedition on the *Endeavour* that went on to become a famous internationalizer of science in the 18th century?

r. (1 point) In Case 24, after what battle did the British come to possess many of the famous Egyptian artefacts in room 4, such as the Rosetta Stone?

4. Answer *one* of the following two questions. Use about half a page (150-200 words); the space below should be sufficient.

4a. (8) From what you have learned today, what are the central ideas that comprise the Enlightenment? Give a few examples to support your answer, based on what you saw in the museum today.

OR

4b. (8) What role did British empire-building play in the scientific revolution? Give a few examples to support your answer, based on what you saw in the museum today.

If you have the time and interest, explore some other parts of the museum: the Elgin Marbles (friezes from the Acropolis in Athens, Room 18); Egyptian mummies (Rooms 4, 61-66); Iron Age British archaeology including the Lindow Man (Room 50), the helmet from the Anglo Saxon warrior buried at Sutton Hoo (Room 41), and treasure hoards from Roman Britain collected from Hoxne, Mildenhall, and Thetford (East Anglia region, Room 49). Also Room 49 has cases on preventative medicine, medical treatment, hygiene/health, coinage, weights/measures, and use of science to examine the Ashwell hoard. If you don't have time now, consider coming back some other time.