

Ard-Mhúsaem
na hÉireann
National Museum
of Ireland

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Who's Fooling Who



Follow this trail
through the Museum

Which is true and which is false?

Don't Cheat!

Make your guess before checking the labels



10

30

40

1

Counting numbers or pace marks



Location:
Look outside!

- Answer 1:** These white numbers were used to teach soldiers to count. When the Barracks opened in the 18th century, boys as young as 8 years old were allowed to join the army, and had not yet learned to read, write, or count past ten. By 1710, there were over 1500 soldiers living in this barracks, so the best place for so many to learn was outside. Along with their duties of marching and drumming, the young soldiers would all learn how to count to 100 together.
- Answer 2:** The black and white numbers seen all around Clarke Square date back to when this Museum was an operational military barracks. The numbers are pace marks, and they help the soldiers keep in line with each other as they march around the square. While it is now known as Clarke Square, after Thomas Clarke, it was originally known as Palatine Square.



2



Used as a navigation device or used to track the stars

Location:
Curator's Choice
(First Floor)

- Answer 1:** This is an astrolabe, an astrologer's instrument used to track the stars, tell horoscopes and make predictions. These types of devices became very popular in the 19th century with rising belief in the occult, or supernatural forces or entities that exist outside of perceptible reality. This trend was a reaction against growing knowledge and explanations of the world advanced by the Scientific and Industrial Revolutions. This astrolabe was made by Hector Grey & Sons, a renowned instrument-making firm based in Dublin from 1820 to 1890.
- Answer 2:** This is an astrolabe, which was used by sailors and navigators to determine longitude and latitude when they were on land or at sea. It could also be used to tell the time. Astrolabes were also used by astronomers to determine the position of celestial bodies, like the sun and moon, in the sky. This astrolabe was made for Dr. Franciscus Paduanicio, who was the physician to Rudolf II, Holy Roman Emperor in the late 16th century.



3

Tea for 10 or pottery shop advertisement



Location:
Out of Storage
(First Floor)

- Answer 1:** Frederick Vodrey, an English potter who had a shop and studio in Moore Street in Dublin, owned this giant teapot over 100 years ago. It was put in the window of his shop as an advertisement. Back then, many people couldn't read so shop owners had to use visual aids to inform people what their shop sold. This teapot could easily be seen from the street and would inform people immediately that this was a pottery shop.
- Answer 2:** This teapot belonged to the O'Donnell Family of County Monaghan, who had twelve children. This type of huge teapot became popular in the 19th and 20th centuries in Ireland. After ceramics became mass-produced, and therefore more affordable, families such as the O'Donnells bought large teapots like this as it was the cheapest and most convenient way to serve tea - you could serve everyone at once, and no reheating!



4

Bunting or decorative cloth piece



Location:
Out of Storage
(First Floor) Drawer 1

Answer 1: This is a stomacher from 1750. A stomacher is a V-shaped piece of decorative cloth that was worn over the chest and stomach by men and women in the 16th century. Later this was worn only by women. They would have been stitched onto a women's dress. The purpose of a stomacher was to cover up the corset that would have shown through the bodice. The decorative function of a stomacher is on full display in this example - finely brocaded thistles and carnations are embroidered onto the satin.

Answer 2: This bunting was handstitched by an older women's community group to decorate their town of Bruff, Co. Limerick in 1809. It was made to mark the golden jubilee of King George III, who was then King of Great Britain and Ireland. The flowers are to symbolise two of the countries of Great Britain - thistles for Scotland and roses for England.



5

Toys or tomb figurines



Location:
Out of Storage
(First Floor)

- Answer 1:** These stone toys, made of limestone, belonged to a boy named Charles Flanagan who lived in Co. Wexford in the late 1800s. They were carved to replicate older medieval toys, owing to the Celtic Revival. This was a period of increased interest in ancient Irish pastimes and traditions. The nationalist ethos of the era meant that the popularity of Irish produced toys made only from Irish-sourced materials, like limestone, soared.
- Answer 2:** These objects, dating back to 600 and 900 C.E., are from China. They would have been buried in the tomb of an aristocrat because of the ancient Chinese belief that your soul split in two after death. One part went into the afterlife while the other stayed on Earth. These figures were believed to keep the Earth-bound spirit company while the horses and other forms of transport were believed to lead the procession into the next life.



6

Storage container or one-person carriage



Location:
Out of Storage
(First Floor)

Answer 1: This large object, called a palanquin, is a very elaborate storage container. It is from Japan and dates back to the Edo period. At that time, powerful and wealthy lords called daimyo ruled much of the Japanese countryside. To show off their wealth, they bought expensive objects like this palanquin. This would not have been kept in the house at all but would have been placed in the stables. It was used to store the expensive saddle and bridle that would be put on the daimyo's horse during festivals, parades and other ceremonial occasions.

Answer 2: This object is called a palanquin. It is a one person carriage from Japan. Cushions would have been placed inside where the passenger would sit. Usually six hammals, or servants, would have carried the palanquin on their shoulders, with two at the front, two at the end, and two resting. They would swap when they got tired. It was not a very fast mode of transportation: you could only travel about 30 miles between sunrise and sunset, but it was a way of showing off your wealth and status.



7

Talking point or reminder of family virtues



Location:
Silver and Metalwork
(First Floor)

- Answer 1:** This is an ostrich egg mounted in silver by the Dublin silversmith, Thomas Bolton. It dates to the late 17th century. At this time, an item such as this was seen as incredibly luxurious and exotic. Travel was limited (and Dublin Zoo hadn't opened yet) so most people had never seen anything like this. Therefore, this was mounted as a precious curiosity that would have been on display in a grand house to show off to guests as a sign of the owner's knowledge of science and culture. It also would have served as a talking point at gatherings.
- Answer 2:** While ostrich eggs were uncommon in Ireland in the 17th century, they were not especially rare and were certainly not seen as luxurious enough to have them mounted in silver on their own merit. However, the coat of arms of the McArdle family, who owned the egg, shows an ostrich against a silver background. In heraldry, an ostrich symbolises faith, contemplation, and willing obedience. The McArdle family had this egg mounted as a reminder of their ideals and would have had it on display at their family home.



8

Communal centerpiece or space-saving server



Location:
Silver and Metalwork
(First Floor)

Answer 1: This silver centrepiece would have held gravy in the centre bowl and people could dip their bread, meats and cheeses into the gravy during a feast. Communal eating became popular amongst aristocrats after the French Revolution as they became suspicious of potential poisoning by rebels and deceitful acquaintances. By communally eating your food, you could be certain the food was safe as the host and guests were all eating from the same dish.

Answer 2: This silver centrepiece is called an 'epergne,' from the French 'epergner' meaning to save. It was used at a dining table to serve food and was intended to enhance the splendour of the banquet table through its ornate decoration and expensive materials. The dish is designed to save space on the table when serving dessert: the little dishes are detachable to allow you to pass the sweetmeats, or confectionaries, around the table.



9

Smuggler's chest or bridal coffer



Location:
Furniture
(Second Floor)

Answer 1: This chest was discovered in a shipwreck off the coast of Connemara, believed to have been a smugglers' vessel. Smuggling was common off the west coast in the 18th and 19th centuries. The chest (a treasure piece in its own right) would have stored the precious items stolen by the smugglers, such as jewellery and gold. Notice the numerous locks on the chest to keep the treasure secure and to avoid any of the ship's crew stealing any of the goods for themselves.

Answer 2: This is called a 'bridal coffer' and is originally from Persia. It was a tradition in the 18th century for pieces of art to be created to celebrate a marriage. These objects were frequently elaborate, marking as they did the joining of a couple, while also demonstrating alliances between powerful families. Particularly significant were cassoni, such as this one, large storage chests typically used to hold the bride's dowry.



10

'Glass harp' or music room piece of furniture



Location:
Furniture
(Second Floor)

- Answer 1:** This object is known as a “glass harp.” The glass harp is said to have been invented by Irishman Richard Pockrich in 1741 and was a popular musical instrument well into the 19th century. The glasses were initially played with sticks and later by the finger technique, whereby the glasses were stroked with a moist finger to play a melody. Advertisements from the time show the numerous and various overtures and concertos the inventor Pockrich was able to play on this instrument.
- Answer 2:** In the 19th century, music rooms became popular with the upper classes. Rooms were designed and furnished to enhance the music, support the performer and create an ambiance for the audience. This side table opens up to double as storage for drinking glasses during musical recitals, performed on the harp and piano. After dinner, guests would retire to the music room for one such performance, and some sparkling wine.

Opening hours

Sunday & Monday: 13:00 – 17:00

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Answers:

1. Answer 2
2. Answer 2
3. Answer 1
4. Answer 1
5. Answer 2
6. Answer 2
7. Answer 1
8. Answer 2
9. Answer 2
10. Answer 1



What did you think of the trail? Tell us here!

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