

# Exploration 3: Light

**GRADE LEVEL** 4 - 6th

**DURATION** Activity time: full day

**SETTING** Art museum and science museum

This activity calls for students to explore, analyze, and communicate about the exhibits on view at the California Academy of Sciences and the de Young, but you can use these strategies to explore any local art museum and science museum. Students compare and contrast galleries within the two types of institutions by studying the use of light in two very different contexts.

## MATERIALS

- Journal pages
- Pencils
- Clipboards (if preferred)
- Reservations to visit the de Young and the California Academy of Sciences:  
<http://deyoungmuseum.org/education/k-12-students>  
<http://www.calacademy.org/educators/field-trips>

## PROCESS

1. After arriving in Golden Gate Park, gather students in the Music Concourse between the de Young and the California Academy of Sciences.
2. Distribute the activity sheets for Exploration 3. Ask students to complete the top section: Date, Location, Weather, Something I Noticed on the Way Here, My Favorite Word Today.
3. Then introduce the theme of the lesson:
  - » **Theme: Light.** The form of energy that makes things visible; the brightness produced by the sun, fire, a lamp, etc.
  - » **Vocabulary: Exhibit design.** The process of planning and mapping how objects and specimens are placed in a space for public display
  - » **Skill: Analysis.** The act or process of studying something in detail and exchanging information and ideas.
4. As the students record this information, ask them to predict if the skill of the day will be used by artists, scientists, or both. Instruct students to note their prediction.
5. Share with students that the career for the day will be:
  - » **Career: Architect.** Someone who designs buildings
6. Inform students that while they visit the California Academy of Sciences and the de Young they will carefully study how specific exhibits are lit. They will discover how light directs our attention and how its placement is designed to lessen damage to the exhibits on view.
7. Provide students and chaperones at least two hours to visit the four different locations highlighted in the activity sheets. Be sure to designate a specific rendezvous time and ask all your students to reconvene at the band shell in the Music Concourse. Depending on the size of your group, you may wish to split your students between the de Young and the California Academy (and then, if there is time, swap locations) to help limit crowding in the galleries.
8. Instruct the chaperones to read the first activity with the students before entering the museums to ensure that everyone understands the instructions before beginning. Chaperones should point out to students that in each of the four spaces they will be visiting they will be using the same questioning strategy.
9. Before completing the day's lesson, ask students to respond to the reflection prompt: If you were an architect what type of building would you like to design—museum, sports arena, theater? What would you need to think about when designing this space? Would light be important? In what way?

