How to use this activity booklet?

There was a parallel evolution of Indian Arms and Weapons with the evolution and growth of the human race. From being basic tools of protection and defence, they grew into beautiful works of art over time.

This booklet has activities which are based on the collection that is displayed in the arms and armour gallery on the second floor of the National Museum.

Keep a record of objects that you see in the gallery and when you go back home, you could learn more about them from books.

This gallery is filled with objects from different times of Indian history. You might be in 25th millennium BCE in one cabinet, and jump over to the 15th century CE in the next!

Prepare to be amazed by this varied collection!

Enjoy!

PS: Answers given at the end of the booklet. But don’t peep yet! See how many you can get without the help of answers.
Activity 1: Let’s begin right at the beginning.

Many years ago, the world was a scary and dangerous place. But people did not have homes or arms for protection!

That is when our earliest ancestors came up with a brilliant idea of making weapons from stone.

Walk to the first cabinet on your left, and you will see these early weapons inside:

This is a blade, used on a spear for hunting.

This is a harpoon, used for fishing.

This is an arrow head, used with a stick for hunting.

This is a hand-axe and this is how one can hold it to use.

Can you find a hand-axe in this cabinet?

Can you think of what it was used for?
Activity 2: The ‘big’ world of ‘little’ weapons

Over time, our ancestors began to settle down and raise families. There were kids, so there were weapons for kids too.

Can you look around and find where these kiddie weapons are?

(Photo of weapons from the cabinet)

Can you imagine the sound these swords make in a fight?

Chose a word that would describes this sound best. Fill the circle with that sound

( This image changes to an illustration)

If you are still unsure, go home and try having a mock-battle with your kitchen spatulas. And notice the sound.
Activity 3: Let’s design an Armour

Did you know, people made armours from animal hide, wood, bamboo and even cloth! :o

When you go back home, try wrapping a quilt around your body. That’s what it probably felt like to wear a cloth armour!

Cloth Armours were made by putting layers and layers of cloth to make it as thick as possible.

But things changed with the metallic armours.

Here is a blank human figure and different parts of a metal armour.

Can you identify and mark which part goes where? Take clues from the armours you see in this gallery.

There is one that belonged to the Mughal King Aurangzeb! Look at the labels and try to find which one.
Activity 4: Things a great shield could do

Have you ever wished to have a shield like the one Captain America does?

Our ancestors actually did have such strong shields!

Look at this Dowry Shield. Can you try and find where it is displayed?

Can you think of the many uses of this shield?

Write down some of your guesses. An answer might be in the question itself:

1. ……………………

2. ……………………

3. ……………………

4. ……………………
Activity 5: The journey of a shield

Can you spot this object in the gallery?

Once you do find it, look at it closely.

Do you see dents and marks on it? What do you think it means?
Are these battle scars? Was this shield used in a real battle many years ago?

Think about it!

Don’t forget to notice these lions. What do you think is the purpose of these 4 knobs on the shield?

This is the back view of this shield, may be this can give you an idea about the knobs.
Activity 6: Daily-use Dagger

Try to find this object in the gallery.

Can you also find the label for this object and document it?

Name:
Province
Time period

Now look at this painting.

It is from a book called “Badshah-nama”, made under the orders of the Mughal King Jahangir.

This book had paintings of everything that Jehangir did in his lifetime.

Can you spot a similar dagger with any of the people in this painting? Circle it when you do locate it
Activity 7: The mystery of the mace

Now that you have found swords and daggers, let’s get you a mace. How about this one?

It is a curious shape, isn’t it? Does it look like any fruit that you have eaten recently?

Write down here: ........................................

Join the dots and find out what fruit it is:

There are more maces in this room that look like fruits and vegetables. Join the dots and find a mace that looks like this vegetable.
Activity 8: Reading a weapon

Have you ever seen swords that have things written on them?

They sure look pretty.

Wouldn’t it be great if you could read them?

Well now you can!

Try finding this sword of Aurangzeb in the gallery

It has a Persian line written in beautiful golden handwriting (This kind of writing is called Calligraphy).

The top part reads from top to bottom:

“La Fathaillaalila Saif–illa Zulfiqar”

This Means: ‘There is no braver than Ali (God). There is no sword except Zulfiqar’.

Now here are some Persian words in calligraphic handwriting.

Can you pick one that suits your personality and try reproducing it in the space given?

The arrows will guide you in writing them. (Remember it is right to left)
Activity 9: Naming a sword

This is a 300 year old sword from the gallery that belonged to a king from Mysore called Tipu Sultan.

Each part of a sword has a name. Can you guess the correct ones in the image and put them in order? The first one is done for you, as help:

1. Hilt
2. Point
3. Scabbard
4. Blade
Activity 10: Armed Gods

Look at the image below. This is of a brave goddess Mahishasura Mardini from East India. How many weapons can you spot in her ten hands? Write them down here:

You can also see this object in the Late Medieval gallery on second floor.
Activity 11: Coins, Kings and Warfare

Look at the coin very carefully. What do you see?

Write down about what you think the man is doing and what weapon he is using.

Also, see this coin in the Coins gallery of the museum.

Can you make a coin for yourself depicting any of the objects in this room?

Here is your blank Coin. Design it as you wish:
Activity 12: Who made these weapons?

You have seen many swords, many daggers and many shields by now. But have you ever wondered who made these?

Did you know that the people who made swords are called “SIKLIGARS”.

A sword maker’s job looks something like this:

These sword smiths had come to the National Museum to make swords and daggers right here! Can you look around the gallery and find what they made and gifted us?

Compare it with the old swords and daggers. Do they look similar? Or better? Write down what you feel:
Activity 13: Canons – The Tanks of the Past

Try to look for this object in the room. When you find it, think about the questions that follow:

Have you ever seen cannon this small?
Why is it so small? Was it for kids, too?
How powerful would they be, if they were so small?

These canons are small in size because they were mounted on top of animals, and were carried to long distances for warfare.

Below you see many animals, circle the ones you think carried cannons on their backs:
Answers and End-Notes

Activity 1: Let’s begin right at the beginning.

A stone axe

A Copper Axe Head

Activity 2: The ‘big’ world of ‘little’ weapons

Here is a little sword cum spear used for training of children, do you see the display case now?

Activity 3: Let’s design an armour

Armours had to offer protection, as well as be flexible and light so as not to hamper movement. Metal armours served this function well, and were made of different types such as Scale Armour, Mail Armour, Lamellar Armour, etc. Go home and try to find out what these types look like.
Activity 4: Things a great shield could do

Answers: Strength  Durability  Light Weight

Rhinoceros skin was the most preferred material to make shields with. It was light weight, durable and easy to decorate with paint.

Many purposes of a Shield:

The one shown here is called a Dowry Shield from Rajasthan. It was a tradition among Rajputs to offer dowry with the bride in such shields.

The same shield was also used to weigh objects like gold or wheat. If you notice closely, you will find little holes drilled on the side to which ropes were attached and a balance was constructed.

After a victorious war, important members of the army were also presented with shields.

Activity 5: Journey of a shield

The knobs that one finds on top of all the shields hold a strap on the backside. The strap acts like a handle. There was also a cotton pad that acted as a support. Here is how one holds a shield from the back:

Activity 6: Everyday Daggers

This weapon is called a “Jamdhar” and was introduced in India by the Mughals. The one you saw in the gallery is decorated with the image of Hanuman.

It was the most popular weapon carried by man, as seen in the painting from Badshah-nama.

This painting, by the way, was of a real event involving real people. Much like a photograph.
Activity 10: The Winds of Change

A gunpowder flask was tied at the waist with the belt, so that it was easily accessible.

Activity 12: The Hunt for the Hidden Animals

You would notice that the most commonly depicted animals in all arms and armour here are:

A) Lion  
B) Horse  
C) Ram

Do you notice that there is a tendency to depict only strong and masculine animals, not something like a timid rabbit or a monkey?

Try to figure out why. Don’t worry, there is no such thing as a “wrong” answer. 😊

Activity 13: Naming a Sword
Activity 14: Armed Gods

This coin belongs to a great king called Samudra Gupta who lived some 1600 years before us. He was a talented man and liked to represent himself engaging in many activities such as music, poetry and even hunting such as this one.

Activity 15: Coins, Kings and Warfare
Tell Us How You found This Activity Book

It was Informative       Yes  No
I had fun               Yes  No
I want to do more activities Yes  No
I know more about Indian Miniature Paintings now Yes  No

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