

Take One...
Lawrence of Arabia's doors

ASHMOLEAN

These guidance notes are designed to help you use one object from our collection as a focus for cross-curricular teaching and learning. A visit to the Ashmolean Museum to see your chosen object offers your class the perfect 'learning outside the classroom' opportunity.



Starting Questions

The following questions may be useful as a starting point for developing speaking and listening skills with your class.

- What do you think these doors are made from?
- What designs can you see?
- Are the doors symmetrical?
- Who could have made them? What skills would they need?
- What sort of building do you think they might come from?
- Spot the keyhole. If you looked through the keyhole what do you think you could see?
- If you could walk through the doorway where do you think you might go?
- These doors were brought back to England from Jedda by a famous man called Lawrence of Arabia. What can you find out about him?

These doors are on display in Gallery 28, Asian Crossroads.

A zoomable image of these doors is available on our website.

Visit www.ashmolean.org/learning-resources



Inspired by the National Gallery's
Take One Picture programme

Background Information

The Object

These doors date from the 1600s. T E Lawrence acquired them during a trip to Jeddah in 1921 and had them sent to England. The wood used to make the doors almost certainly comes from India. The style of decoration was once seen all over the Western Indian Ocean region. However, it is also possible that the carving was done in Eastern Africa before being sent north to Jeddah where they were installed in a merchant's house. These doors show how raw materials and manufactured items travelled around the Indian Ocean rim. In the 1920s Jeddah was in Hijaz, now in western Saudi Arabia. The doors have only been on display at the Ashmolean since 2009. Before that they were too tall to be displayed.

In 1925 Lawrence bought a tiny isolated cottage at Clouds Hill, near Wareham in Dorset. The lintel over the door now bears a Greek inscription which translates as "Why Worry". Food at Clouds Hill was very simple - mostly bread and cheese with a cup of tea and there was no electricity. Lawrence was concerned about heath fires and built a swimming pool not just for swimming in, but as a safety reservoir in case of fire. Lawrence installed the decorative doors in the pool house doors. It is still possible to visit Lawrence's house in Dorset and his grave in the churchyard at Moreton, nearby. Nothing remains of the pool house and the pool is now in the neighbours garden and has had to be covered to stop deer and other animals falling in! When Lawrence died his brother gave Clouds Hill to the National Trust. The doors and many of Lawrence's other belongings were given to the Ashmolean.

The Owner

Thomas Edward Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia) was born in Wales in 1888. His family moved to Oxford in 1896 and Thomas went to Oxford High School and then studied History at Jesus College. In 1911 D.G. Hogarth, Keeper of Antiquities at the Ashmolean, encouraged Lawrence to join an archaeological expedition to Carchemish, led by F. Petrie. When not excavating, Lawrence explored the area and learned to speak Arabic. When WW1 broke out in 1914 Lieutenant Colonel Lawrence became an official intelligence officer. He worked closely with Emir Faisal (later King Faisal) during the Arab Revolt against the Turks in 1916. Emir Faisal gave Lawrence the clothes pictured here and overleaf. Lawrence figured out that it was probably a bit of a hint that wearing Arab dress might help him to persuade Arab leaders to join his campaign.

In 1935, he left the Royal Air Force and lived at Clouds Hill. Sadly, a few weeks after leaving the service, Lawrence suffered severe head injuries in a motorcycle accident close to the cottage and died in the nearby in Bovington Camp hospital on 19 May 1935.

Neither the doors from the swimming pool, nor Lawrence's robes were on display as the doors were too large and the museum didn't have enough cases to display fragile textiles. Cloth is particularly vulnerable to light and humidity. The silk undershirt, robe and headdress are embellished with gold thread. It is particularly exciting that the museum is currently able to display not only Lawrence's robes and headdress but also his dagger, sandals and a white sapphire ring.



Portrait of T.E. Lawrence by Augustus Edwin John. Painted in August 1929 at Freiern, near Fordingbridge. Painting not currently on display.



This headdress and dagger were a gift to T. E. Lawrence by Emir Faisal. On display in Gallery 5, Textiles. Lent from All Souls College, University of Oxford.



This dagger, similar in style to T. E. Lawrence's, is on display in Gallery 30, The Mediterranean World.

Ideas for creative planning across the KS1 and KS2 curriculum

You can use this object as the starting point for developing pupils' critical and creative thinking as well as their learning across the curriculum. You may want to consider possible 'lines of enquiry' as a first step in your cross-curricular planning. Choosing a line of enquiry area may help you to build strong links between curriculum areas. After using strategies to help children engage with the object and using questions to facilitate dialogue about the object, you can work with the children to develop lines of enquiry that will interest them.

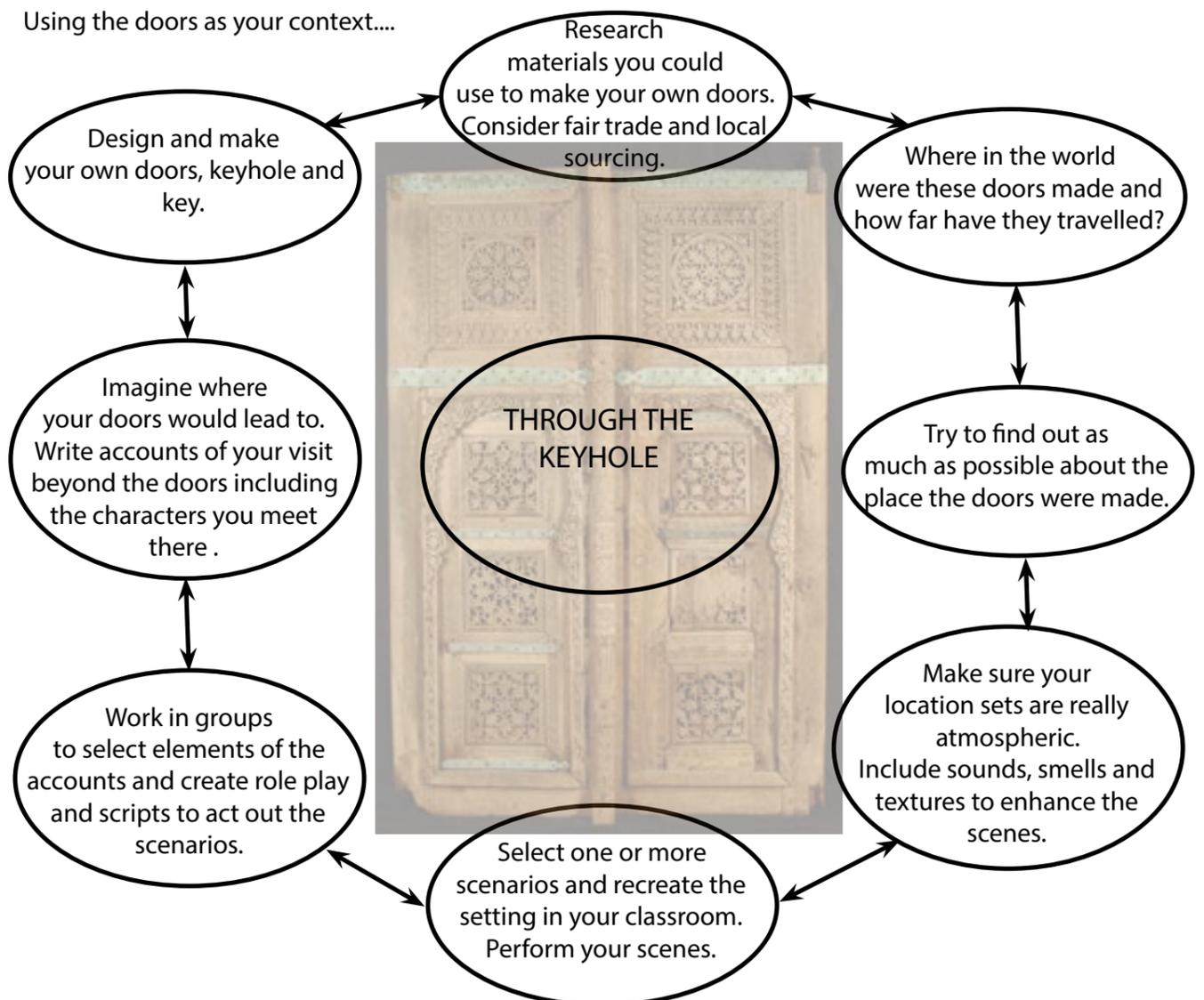
Here are a few suggestions of possible 'lines of enquiry' using this painting:

- Lawrence of Arabia.
- Jeddah - the Arab world. Geography, history, religion, culture and language.
- Pattern.
- Materials; wood, sustainable forestry.
- Beyond the doors...

Using one or more line of enquiry as your starting point, consider how you can work in a number of curriculum areas to build strong and effective cross-curricular links.

Using 'Through the keyhole' as a line of enquiry

Here are a few ideas of how you can develop a range of learning opportunities to engage pupils with this line of enquiry. Each activity can link with the others to build on pupils' learning across the chosen theme.





'The Emir Faisal' by Augustus John. Painted in April 1919. Not currently on display.

Tips for introducing objects to a class

- Display an image of the object in the classroom for a number of days with a tape recorder or 'graffiti wall' for children to add comments or questions about the object. Once the pupils' comments and questions have been gathered a class discussion can follow on.
- Cover the object and allow the children to feel it. Can they work out what it is without seeing it?
- Show the object to the class for a minute or two. Remove the object and see what they can remember.
- Introduce the object to the whole class in a question and answer session designed to develop the pupils' speaking and listening skills as outlined on page one.
- Work in pairs sitting back to back. One child describes the object and the other draws.
- Collect as many pictures or examples of similar objects from different time periods and explore the similarities and differences. Then try to sort the objects according to age.



Inspired by the National Gallery's Take One Picture programme

Take One...Inspires

Take One... encourages teachers to use an object, painting or other resource, imaginatively in the classroom, both as a stimulus for artwork, and for work in more unexpected curriculum areas. Work in many curriculum areas can be inspired by using a single object as a starting point.

The challenge is for teachers to use objects to develop culturally enriching, relevant and practical learning opportunities across the curriculum.



Lawrence's robes on display in Gallery 6, Textiles. Lent by All Souls College, University of Oxford.

"Thank you for a wonderful and stimulating day at the Ashmolean. I came away buzzing, full of ideas."
Feedback after a recent Take One...INSET

Please contact us or visit our website for more information about our programmes including training opportunities

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