Last February our students had the chance to participate in the "School-Work Project",

working as tour guides in the Royal Palace Museum.

They were divided into groups of three people and "worked" for four hours in the

afternoon, from 2 p. m. to 6 p.m. Their task was to welcome every visitor, lead him/her

and give some information about what was shown in the museum. Therefore, they were offered

first of all the opportunity to immerge themselves in what can be called "the real world", but also

to be in contact with people, all kinds of people, to be good at dealing with them, talking to them,

to be able to share the others' feelings and imagine what was like to be in their situation, to detect

non-verbal messages in order to gain a better understanding of a visitor's needs.

The students were supposed to use skills which go beyond the classroom, such as the ability to

deal with "emergencies" or to make decisions on their own.

All students involved in this experience agreed that what they had learnt last year was so important to them.   
The idea of the Project was to encourage a constructive approach to studying "Art" rather than see the subject as a series of tasks to be done or obstacles to be overcome; to facilitate the study of Art into

thematic and interdisciplinary itineraries, to allow a deeper insight into particularly interesting issues,

such as 'Myths', for example.

The personal involvement of the students was the starting point which proved to be relevant and

motivating both last year, when they were asked "to choose" some Rooms or works of art, but also

during this year's experience, which enabled them to integrate their studies in a different area, the

museum, and to provide further learning outside class. The students were offered an environment

in which they were stimulated, a place where they could "enjoy" themselves, but also learn and

discover something new and, above all, coping with real situations.

The staff of the museum was very kind and friendly.

They provided the students with badges in order to distinguish themselves, but also useful background and

theoretical information connected to works of art or artists.

The students were told something interesting about the people who lived there and the meanings of some

paintings, for example.

In general, the students liked what they were asked to do.

Here are their short comments on the experience which they defined "useful", because it was the first

time they had been 'tour guides'; "quite interesting", although they had no time to eat a 'decent'

meal; "educational" because even if there were few visitors (some university students or groups of

young students who went to the Royal Palace just for fun because they had never seen it before, or

a family from Bolzano), they could spend the afternoon walking through the Rooms of the Palace and

watching the beautiful paintings or frescoes.

This experience was also defined "stimulating", because it made the students be more interested in

the history of Genoa and the artistic production during some centuries; it allowed them to have a direct

knowledge of what means to work in a museum; "interesting" as far as concerns their relationship with

unknown and adult people; "beautiful", because they learnt some more information about the Palace,

its history, the history of the famous families who lived there or the names of very well-known people

who spent there some time of their lives; "amusing", when an Italian family asked to take a few photos

which had statues and paintings in the background, or when some classmates of theirs went to the

museum not to visit it, but simply to meet them. A "challenging" experience because it allowed them to

improve the relationship with people,to overcome their fears and shyness, to nurtur self-confidence. It was

really rewarding when a group of art teachers from Padova said to them: "We congratulate you on your

'job'!"

The experience was also defined "particular", because the students got the chance to improve the skills

of communication which were given a prominent role and because they were asked to speak outside school

about what they had learnt at school. It is significant to point out the importance of effective

communicative ability: active skills rather than passive knowledge and the use of language as a tool for real

communication.

In short, the students agreed that the experience offered them opportunities for social interaction, but also

one more occasion to visit the Royal Palace, it gave them the chance to practise language, to express

themselves in their own words, to make themselves understood, to make use of their own resources

and consequently to develop self-confidence.

In conclusion, taking into consideration the students' opinions, the experience proved to be very useful

for their growth as "pupils" but especially as "people".