

# Celebrating Athena's Birthday



**Key Stage 2 Explorer Pack Session**

**Support Notes for Teachers**

## **Session structure**

The session consists of a sequence of interactive activities which will enable the pupils to explore the sculptures of the Parthenon, the event depicted on the carved frieze of the temple and the reasons why the Athenians built the temple and decorated it with this frieze. We also touch on how an ancient Athenian might have responded to the frieze.

- **Introduction:** We start by introducing the pupils to the name of the temple, the different types of sculpture and whereabouts on the temple they were placed. This involves them learning the following terms: pediment, metopes and frieze; sculpture in the round 3-D sculpture, high-relief sculpture and low-relief sculpture. The pupils also learn that the pediments depict ancient Greek gods and goddesses, the metopes a battle between gods and centaurs and the frieze a large procession.
- **Activity 1:** The pupils are divided into pairs or threes and are given a photo of part of the sculpture. They have to find the part shown and answer some questions to consolidate their knowledge of the terms used during the introduction. Their findings are gathered together in a plenary session.
- **Activity 2:** The pupils now focus on the frieze which is believed to depict part of the annual Panathenaic (all-Athenian) Festival held in honour of Athena's birthday. It shows the procession which carried up on to the Acropolis a new peplos (dress) for Athena's ancient statue. Each group of pupils is given a bag containing a range of raw materials, for example, woollen cloth, bronze and wood. They are given a section of the frieze and are asked to identify objects on the frieze which would in real life have been made from the materials they can find in their bag.
- **Plenary:** The pupils report back on the objects they have found. We then explore with them the different people and animals, movement and noises they have seen on the frieze. These ideas are used to encourage the pupils to think about how they might have felt if they had been present in ancient Athens watching the procession go by.

## **Important Note: Object Conservation**

During the session pupils will be handling a range of materials drawn from the handling collection of the Education Department. We would very much appreciate it if pupils could wash and dry their hands before the start of the session to help conserve the materials being handled. We also recommend that pupils wash their hands after the session, particularly if they are due to go straight into their lunch break.

### **Ideas for preparation before your visit**

Key themes covered by this Explorer Pack session are the sculptural decoration of a Greek temple, temples as the means by which an ancient Greek city promoted its status and identity, the connection between religious worship and a citizen's sense of community. You may like to talk to the pupils about public buildings in their community and how these represent what is important or valued in the community. It would also be very useful to talk with them about festivals they may have attended, especially any that involve a parade, and explore with them the sights and sounds and feelings of the occasion.

During the session pupils will be investigating the sculptures of the Parthenon. It would be helpful if you could explore with them the appearance and different parts of an ancient Greek temple: steps, columns, pediments, metopes, the room inside the temple with its cult statue - most books about Greece will provide you with pictures and further information.

The session focuses on Athens, so you could show them where Athens is on a map and encourage them to find photos of modern Athens, pointing out the Acropolis and the Parthenon on top. Another good topic for them to explore before the session would be the Athenian victory over the Persians at the Battle of Marathon in 490BC.

### **Objects from Ancient Greece in the British Museum**

There are many objects from Ancient Greece on display in The British Museum.

A good starting point is the COMPASS website at [www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/compass](http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/compass) where you can search for objects from in the Museum's collection.

There is a children's COMPASS website at [www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/childrenscompass](http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/childrenscompass)

Below are a few key galleries which you may like to include as part of your visit.

#### **Gallery 15: Greece: 5th century BC**

Pottery, some sculpture and bronze objects from the same period as the Parthenon

#### **Gallery 69: Life in Ancient Greece and Rome**

An Athenian Festival (Case 24)

Pots and other objects connected with the Panathenaic Festival especially the athletics competitions which were part of the Festival every four years.

Gods and goddesses of Greece: The Gods of Olympus (Case 32), Sacrifice (Case 33)

### **Follow-up activities**

Back at school pupils could undertake further research into other temples in Greece and the wider Greek world such as Sicily, Southern Italy and Turkey: how similar are they, how were they decorated, what stories were shown in their sculptures? They could find out about what is shown on the other parts of the frieze in the Acropolis Museum in Athens and in the Louvre in Paris. They could use observational drawings or photos taken on the museum visit and from elsewhere to create a class display of the procession including colours and other objects now lost from the original sculptures. There are opportunities here also for drama and role-play as the pupils imagine they are watching the procession and taking part in the religious ceremonies which followed it. Such ideas could also be handled through writing tasks.

### **Training for teachers**

There is a linked training session for all teachers who attend an Explorer Pack session at the Museum. You will automatically be booked on this session when you book your school group in for one of the pupil sessions or when you book to observe a class from another school. The training session will offer an opportunity for you to learn how to use the Explorer Pack yourself so that you can return to the Museum with further groups and deliver the session independently using resources provided by the Museum.

### **Curriculum Links**

#### **National Curriculum for History at Key Stage 2**

Programme of Study: A European study of Ancient Greece

*Aspects of the way of life: arts and architecture; houses, cities and public buildings; citizens and slaves; education for girls and boys; language; medicine, health and hygiene; games and leisure including the Olympic Games; plays and the theatre; ships and trading; soldiers and warfare. Beliefs and achievements: the city states of Athens and Sparta; gods and goddesses, myths, legends, beliefs and customs; Pheidippides and the battle of Marathon; Pericles and the building of the Parthenon; the conquests of Philip of Macedon and Alexander the Great; great scholars and discoverers.*

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Please quote the reference *Celebrating Athena's Birthday: Key Stage 2 Explorer Pack Session* in all enquiries.