

Medieval Realms: Objects as Evidence



Secondary Gallery and Handling Sessions
Support Notes for Teachers

Session structure

Handling Session

The handling session will take place in the Clore Education Centre at the Museum. The session opens with a general introduction to the key aspects of the medieval period covered during the session. Pupils will then split into small groups for the handling part of the session. Using a range of medieval objects the pupils will have the opportunity to explore what these objects tell us about life in Medieval Britain. The session will close with a whole group plenary where pupils will give a short verbal feedback to the rest of the group on their set of objects.

Gallery Session

During the gallery session pupils will work individually within the medieval galleries at The British Museum to undertake data collection tasks relating to particular key aspects of life in Medieval Britain (*Saints, Relics and Pilgrimage* or *Knighthood, Arms and Armour* or *Entertainment and Food* or *Clothing and Adornment*). The medieval galleries contain a wide range of material and pupils will have to locate objects relevant to their particular theme and then use key questions to help them find out what the objects is, when it was made, what it was used for and what it tells us about life in medieval times. The work books contain space for the pupils to record their observations so that the information can be taken back to school for follow-up work.

Important Note: Object Conservation

During the course of the handling session the pupils will handle a range of objects drawn from the collection of the Department of Medieval and Modern Europe at The British Museum. The Museum would, therefore, very much appreciate it if pupils attending the workshop could wash and dry their hands before the start of the session to help conserve the objects being handled.

As some of the handling objects are composed of metal we recommend that pupils also wash their hands after the session, particularly if they are due to go straight into their lunch break.

Medieval Britain

Key themes covered by this workshop are

- Saints, Relics and Pilgrimage
- Knighthood, Arms and Armour
- Entertainment and Food
- Clothing and Adornment

Before the day of your visit you may like to explore with the pupils the sort of vocabulary associated with each theme. For example, for the first theme pupils will find it useful to be familiar with the terms saint, relic and pilgrimage as well as words such as shrine and reliquary.

Both the handling and gallery sessions will involve the pupils in working with objects. It would be useful before the visit for the pupils to revise their understanding of the range of primary and secondary sources of information used by historians to construct histories of the past. Pupils should already be familiar with the use of secondary material in textbooks together with primary sources such as medieval documents and literature, and this session will enable them to think about how objects, as a primary source of information, enable us to further explore and understand the past.

Medieval objects in the British Museum

There are many objects from the medieval period on display in the British Museum.

A good starting point is the COMPASS website at www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/compass where you can search for medieval objects in the Museum collections.

Below are some key cases in Gallery 42: Medieval Europe which you may wish to focus on during your visit.

Gallery 42: Medieval Europe

Romanesque Art 1100-1250 (Cases 3 and 4)

Gothic Art 1250-1500 (Cases 5 and 6)

Medieval Coinage (Case 7)

Medieval Jewellery (Case 9)

Religion (Cases 10 and 13)

Secular Life (Cases 11 and 12)

Arms and Armour (Case 17)

Follow-up activities

Pupils who have taken part in the gallery session will have gathered information from across the gallery relating to the key themes listed above. On their return to school groups of pupils who worked on the same theme could prepare poster presentations on their particular theme for display in the history room. They could also prepare a short verbal presentation to accompany the poster for the benefit of other pupils in their history group so that each group has an opportunity to exchange information on the particular theme they were exploring at the Museum. As part of this process pupils could draw on the information gathered as part of their museum visit and also undertake further focused small group research on their theme back in the classroom. The COMPASS website includes images of medieval objects relating to the key themes explored in both sessions. Pupils could use a number of these images to create a picture board explaining how the objects link to each theme.

Curriculum Links

National Curriculum for History at Key Stage 3

Programme of Study - Britain 1066-1500

A study of major features of Britain's medieval past: the development of the monarchy, and significant events and characteristic features of the lives of people living throughout the British Isles, including the local area if appropriate.

Attainment Target - themes covered include: *characteristic features of past societies and periods, select and combine information from different sources, appropriate use of dates and terms.*

Contact Details

The Education Department

The British Museum

Great Russell Street

London WC1B 3DG

Telephone 020 7323 8511/8854

Facsimile 020 7323 8855

Email education@thebritishmuseum.ac.uk

Please quote the reference *Medieval Realms: Objects as Evidence Secondary Gallery and Handling Session* in all enquiries.