

The Ashmolean's collections provide an unique source of inspiration for creative writing. These fascinating objects transport us to different times, cultures and places from over 8,000 years of world history. Objects and pictures capture our imagination and provide rich source material for imaginative thinking, curiosity and creativity. Many have fascinating histories of their own, but can also have resonance and meaning for each person who experiences them. They offer innovative opportunities for learning and imagining as students investigate and re-tell these histories and create new stories of their own. The Ashmolean's collections are an inspiring stimulus for storytelling and writing to develop characters, describe settings and create plots. The following starting points can be used with any object in the museum.



Ceremonial Suit of Samurai Armour
Photo courtesy of the Fellows of Magdalen
College, Oxford

Looking

- Which words describe this object?
- Describe its texture and colours.
- What materials is it made from?
- How old do you think it is? Why?
- Are there any markings?
- Is it complete or damaged?
- Why do you think it is in the Museum?
- What is special or unusual about it?

Imagining

- Who might have made and used it?
- Who might have owned it?
- What did they use it for?
- How important was it to them?
- What type of room, building or place did this object come from?
- If the object could talk, what would it say?
- What part could this object play in a story?
- Invent new things it could be used for.

Creative warm-up activities



Showing at Tattersalls, Robert Polhill Bevan (1865-1925), oil on canvas WA1957.14.3

- Choose two objects. Write the name of each one at opposite ends of a page. In the middle, list all the connections between them, real or imagined.
- What am I? Find an object in the gallery and write a quick riddle about it.
- Write a 50 word mini-saga about a picture.
- Create an imaginary 'For Sale' sign or advert for an object or write an imaginary museum label.
- Find a picture with two or more people in it. Work as a pair or group, give each person a character from the picture. Role-play their conversation.
- Speed write for one minute about a picture or object.
- Choose an object and write as many metaphors and similes as you can about it.
- Fill an imaginary box with museum objects giving each one you choose unusual and magical qualities.

Beginning to write

- Write down every idea and thought that comes to you about an object or picture: words, phrases, sentences, pieces of dialogue, images, a feeling, memory, smell or taste, the name of a character, a description of a person or place.
- Share ideas with a partner and ask them questions about their object or picture.
- Choose your favourite ideas and work with them. Is there a phrase that would make a good title or opening line of a story or poem?
- Create a storyboard showing what part the object plays in the story.
- Imagine being the person who found this object many years later. Where and how did you find it? How did you discover what it was? What happened once you found out?
- Find out more about the historical and cultural context of your object and use it to write a story full of details about the time.
- Tell a story from the point of view of a person linked with an event involving the object.

Online learning resources:

Information sheets about objects and pictures including downloadable images

<http://www.ashmolean.org/learning-resources>

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