

'The Hunt in the Forest' c. 1470  
by Paolo Uccello (1397-1475)

tempera and oil on panel with traces of  
gold, 73.3 x 177cm

A zoomable image of this painting is available  
on our website to use in the classroom with an  
interactive whiteboard or projector.

[www.ashmolean.org/learning-resources](http://www.ashmolean.org/learning-resources)



### Starting questions

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

- What catches your eye first?
- What is happening?
- What are the people doing?
- How many different animals can you see?
- What colours can you see?
- What time of day is it?
- If you were in the painting what would you hear and smell?
- How does the painting make you feel?
- What do you think might happen next?



## Background information

### The painting

This decorative and lively painting of a hunting scene is one of the treasures of the Ashmolean Museum's collection of Italian Renaissance paintings. It is a scene of motion and noise.

Hounds leap, horses rear, men gesture and appear to call out in a darkening forest. There are crescent moons on the horses' trappings; these may symbolise Diana, the classical goddess of the hunt and reflect the crescent moon just visible in the night sky. These hidden meanings and the unreality of the scene contribute to the mystery and charm of the painting. The hunt at night is an imaginary scene, full of energy and activity.



### The artist

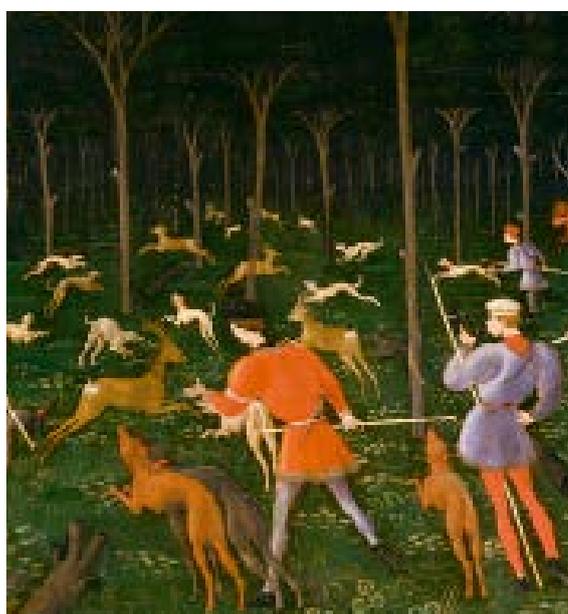
Uccello was a painter of animals, landscape and an early practitioner of mathematical perspective. He mapped out a grid on the panel's surface as a guide for his design, fixing a central vanishing point. The huntsman's spears, the cut branches and logs, the area of water and the decreasing size of the figures and trees, create a sense of depth and motion in the scene.

Uccello's approach is highly decorative with bright clear colours set off against a dark background; the foliage of the trees was once picked out with gold which would have given a magical quality to the painting.



### The historical context

The Hunt in the Forest is a rare and unusual survivor of a domestic painting depicting a non-religious (secular) contemporary subject. The scene was probably painted as a wall decoration for the home of a sophisticated and wealthy patron. It is a highly original painting both as a nocturnal landscape and as a brilliantly structured composition.



# Ideas for creative planning across the KS1 & 2 curriculum

## Scientific and technological understanding

- Use the painting to support work on light and shadows.
- Locate the moon in the painting using the zoom function on the web image. Create moon phase diaries and observe the changes over a period of weeks.
- Habitats - consider the different habitats in the painting; e.g. pond, woodland floor, forest treetops. What animals and plants would live in these habitats? If possible carry out pond dipping and other mini beast hunts.



Year 1 pupil exploring materials using objects seen in the painting

## Historical, geographical and social understanding

- Use clues from the painting to decide on historical setting.
- Discuss the Renaissance period and its impact on society and cultural change at the time.

## Understanding English, communication and languages

- Use the painting to inspire a range of creative writing tasks e.g. storyboard/ cartoon strips, extended writing, script writing, poetry based on descriptive and sense vocabulary.
- Discuss hunting and develop persuasive writing skills for and against. (Upper KS2)

## Mathematical understanding

- Look at repeated patterns, shapes and forms
- Look at geometric perspective

## Understanding the arts

- Take a detail from the painting, enlarge and recreate it using digital or mixed media.
- Look at primary, secondary and complementary colours.
- Design and make puppets of a chosen person or animal from the painting. The puppets can then be used in a drama activities based on stories inspired by the painting and scripts and storyboards created.
- Identify plants from the painting. Collect specimens of similar plants for observational drawing.
- Create your own soundscape of the painting by collecting all the sounds you would hear if you were in the painting. Practice and perform the soundscape with voices, clapping, stamping etc or using non-tuned musical instruments.
- Introduce a variety of possible 'soundtracks' for this painting. Get the class to decide which piece of music best suits the mood of the painting and why.
- Create dance and movement inspired by the magical setting in the painting.
- Working in pairs or small groups pupils choose characters from the painting and pose in context – freeze frame. Simple props or costumes could be made and used.
- Create short plays based on stories inspired by the painting.



Detail from a collaborative collage created by year 3 pupils

## Tips for introducing paintings to a class

- Reveal the painting section by section over a number of days. Each time a new detail is revealed the children can make predictions about what might be in the rest of the picture by looking at the details.
- Display the painting in the classroom for a number of days with a tape recorder or 'graffiti wall' for children to add comments or questions about the painting. Once the pupils' comments and questions have been gathered a class discussion could follow on.
- Introduce the painting to the whole class in a question and answer session designed to take the pupils into the painting as outlined on page one.
- Show the painting to the class for a minute or so and then cover it up or taken away. Ask the children to remember what they could see.
- Show the painting to one or two willing volunteers. They should then describe what they have seen to the rest of the class. Pupils could then draw what they have heard described to them and then see how well the versions match up.

## Take One Picture inspires...

Take One Picture encourages teachers to use a painting imaginatively in the classroom, both as a stimulus for artwork, and for work in more unexpected curriculum areas. Many curriculum areas can be delivered using a single image as a starting point.

The challenge is for each school to use the painting as a focus to develop culturally enriching, engaging, relevant and practical learning opportunities across the curriculum.

“ I liked Take One Picture a lot. In fact me, my nan and my mum went to the Museum so I could show them the real painting. ”

Sam, aged 6

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Education Department  
Ashmolean Museum  
Beaumont Street  
Oxford OX1 2PH  
T. 01865 278015  
E. [education.service@ashmus.ox.ac.uk](mailto:education.service@ashmus.ox.ac.uk)  
[www.ashmolean.org/learn](http://www.ashmolean.org/learn)