

Take One...  
The High Street, Oxford

# ASHMOLEAN



JMW Turner (1775 - 1851) 'The High Street, Oxford' Oil on canvas, 68.5cm x 100.3cm. This painting is on display in Gallery 66, 19th Century Art. A zoomable image of the painting is available on our website.

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

These guidance notes are designed to help you use one painting from our collection as a focus for cross-curricular teaching and learning. A visit to the Ashmolean Museum to see your chosen object offers your class the perfect 'learning outside the classroom' opportunity.

## Starting Questions

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

- What is the first thing you spot in this painting?
- Look closely at the people in the painting. What does their clothing tell us about them?
- If you could step into the painting what do you think you would smell and hear?
- Where would you like to be in the painting and why?
- What do you think the weather would be like? What clues are there?
- You can visit this street in Oxford today. What do you think would be the same and what would be different?



Inspired by the National Gallery's  
Take One Picture programme

## Background Information

### The painting

This painting by JMW Turner commissioned by James Wyatt, an art dealer based at 115 High Street in 1809. His idea was to sell engravings of the painting in his shop. In a large collection of letters between Turner and Wyatt they discuss the number, character and costumes of the figures in the painting as well as details about the architectural features to be included. However, Turner decided that he would add the two female figures 'for the sake of colour'. JMW Turner did an initial sketch in December 1809 and delivered the finished painting in April 1810. Mr Wyatt was so delighted with the painting that he paid not only the agreed price of 100 guineas but also gave Turner some game and sausages!

The High Street, Oxford is unique in Turner's output and in the history of English art. It represents one of the most beautiful streets in Europe, a street which has materially changed little since Turner painted it. Although he painted many townscapes in watercolour, Turner never again attempted such a picture in oils.

Turner's depiction of the scene is highly accurate except that he has chosen to straighten the street to allow the viewer to see Carfax Tower in the distance.

### The artist

Acknowledged as one of the greatest landscape artists of all time, JMW Turner (1775-1851) painted over thirty finished watercolours of Oxford views, by far the most numerous group devoted to a single place in his entire output. He was familiar with the architecture of the city, having visited relations in the village of Sunningwell (five miles southwest of Oxford) during his childhood. John Ruskin, (1819 - 1900) was a great champion of Turner's work and bought a huge collection of his paintings. Many of these were eventually donated to the Ashmolean by Ruskin.

Turner died at his London home in Cheyne Walk on December 19 1851. He is buried at St Paul's Cathedral.

### The Ashmolean collections

Thanks to John Ruskin's donation, the Ashmolean has a large collection of works on paper by Turner. They are not usually on display as they are very susceptible to light damage. However, several other oil paintings by Turner, on loan from private collections, are on display near the High Street scene in Gallery 66, 19th Century Art. Teachers can also access a selection of Turner's watercolours of Oxford via our website.

Visit [http: www.ashmolean.org/education](http://www.ashmolean.org/education)



Turner has painted Carfax Tower in the distance at the end of the High Street. In reality the tower is not visible as the road bends. Why do you think Turner chose to include Carfax?



This digitally modified photograph was created recently by David Fisher showing the same scene as Turner with Carfax visible. © David Fisher Photography

## Ideas for creative planning across the KS1 & 2 curriculum

You can use this painting as the starting point for developing pupils' critical and creative thinking as well as their learning across the curriculum. You may want to consider possible 'lines of enquiry' as a first step in your cross-curricular planning. Choosing a line of enquiry area may help you to build strong links between curriculum areas.

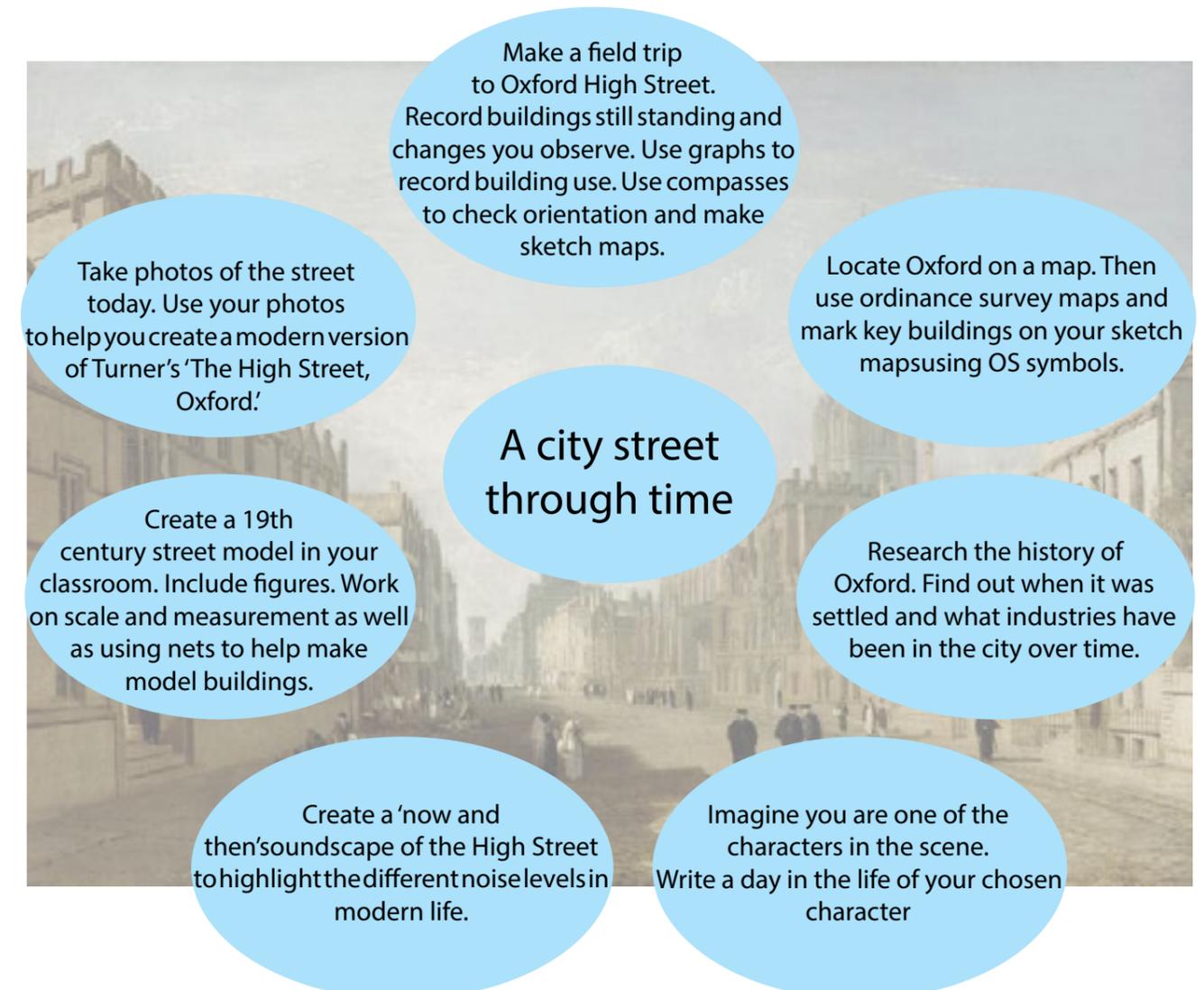
After using strategies to encourage looking and engagement with the painting and by using questions to facilitate dialogue about the painting you can work with the children to develop lines of enquiry that will interest them.

Here are a few suggestions of possible 'lines of enquiry' using this painting:

- A city street through time - local history study plus geographical skill building.
- Oxford - a city of learning. The University and education in the past. The change in access to schooling for women.
- Construction and Architecture.
- Painting techniques and media.

## Using 'A city street through time' as an example of a line of enquiry

Here are a few ideas of how you can develop a range of learning opportunities to engage pupils with this line of enquiry. Each activity can link with the others to build on pupils learning across the chosen theme.



## Tips for introducing paintings to a class

- Reveal a 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 based on what they can see.
- Display a 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 can follow on.
- Introduce a painting to the whole class in a question and answer session designed to take the pupils into the paintings as outlined on page one.
- Show a painting to the class for a minute or so and then cover it up or take it away. Ask the children to remember what they could see.
- Show a painting to one or two willing volunteers. They should then describe what they have seen to the rest of the class. Pupils could draw what they have heard described to them and then see how well the versions match up.
- Play 'painting I spy' using a painting.

"The training I received at the Ashmolean has really opened my eyes on how much learning can come from just one item. I'm really looking forward to applying what I've learned with my new class, developing their thinking and understanding in a cross-curricular and creative way."

Yr 3 ITE student, Oxford Brookes, after a recent TOP course.



This is the spire of the St Mary the Virgin Church. It is possible to visit the church as a class but you cannot book to climb the tower and would have to split your class into smaller groups to climb the tower. The maximum number of people allowed up the tower is 20. Contact the Education Officer by phone (01865 279110) or email (smv.heritage@gmail.com) for more information about school visits.

## Take One...Inspires...

Take One...encourages teachers to use a painting or object imaginatively in the classroom, both as a stimulus for artwork, and for work in more unexpected curriculum areas. Work in many curriculum areas can be inspired by using a single image as a starting point.

The challenge is for teachers to use the painting to develop culturally enriching, relevant and practical learning opportunities across the curriculum.



Inspired by the National Gallery's  
Take One Picture programme

Please contact us or visit our website for more information about our programmes including training opportunities

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)