The horse
from Arabia to Royal Ascot
24 May – 30 September 2012

Teachers’ resources
for Key Stages 3 to 5
Art and Design

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Contents

Using the exhibition ......................................................... 3
Exhibition summary ......................................................... 4
Pre-visit activities .......................................................... 5
Exhibition activities ........................................................ 6
Classroom activities to support the exhibition ............... 7
Further resources .......................................................... 8
Using the exhibition

Entrance to the exhibition is free.
All visiting groups must pre-book through the Museum’s Ticket Desk.

In advance
• Use some of the ideas for pre-visit activities in the classroom, (see page 5) including looking at the PowerPoint of objects from the exhibition.
• Ensure students know how the material they collect will be used in project or classroom work back at school.
• Decide on an additional ‘big question’ (see page 5) for the students to think about as they go round the exhibition.
• Circulate the exhibition summary (page 4) to students and accompanying adults.

On the day
• The Museum suggests that students move through the exhibition in small groups looking at and discussing objects, graphics and relevant text.
• Give each adult a free exhibition guide available at the exhibition entrance.
• Your visit may take place alongside the general public. Please remind students to behave calmly and politely.
• Photography is not allowed within the exhibition space. Students should collect visual information about the horse by making relevant sketches of objects and details, annotating their drawings, which can then be used to support follow-up art and design work in the classroom. Students are permitted to take photographs of objects in the Museum’s permanent collection outside the Horse exhibition.

Afterwards
• Discuss the students’ thoughts and responses to the exhibition.
• Apply information gathered in the exhibition to the relevant follow-up activity.
• Revisit any preparation resources, such as the PowerPoint, which support follow-up activities.
• Students can use the online resources on the Museum’s website to investigate the objects further.
**Exhibition summary**

**Section 1: Introduction: the horse in the Middle East and beyond**
Horses were domesticated around 5,000 years ago. Horses played an important role in the development of civilisation particularly in the Middle East where breeds such as the Arabian horse emerged. From the 1600s Arabian horses were imported into Europe, and today nearly all Thoroughbred horses trace their ancestry back to just three stallions from the Middle East.

**Section 2: Before the horse**
Before horses were domesticated, people in the ancient Middle East used asses and donkeys to pull wheeled vehicles. These animals were fast but difficult to control and early chariots were probably not very effective. Nevertheless, these chariots were impressive, high technology, high status items fit for the gods, for rulers and as weapons of war.

**Section 3: Horses in the early Middle East**
Horses were first domesticated on the Eurasian grasslands, probably in the area known today as Kazakhstan. They were introduced into the Middle East before 2000 BC. Horses were stronger and faster than donkeys and easier to control. Early on horses were used mainly for pulling chariots. Horses and chariots were given as diplomatic gifts and tribute. At first riding was less important but by 1000 BC it was becoming more widespread.

**Section 4: Age of empires**
From 1000 BC until the arrival of the Islamic armies in the AD 600s, a series of great empires emerged in the Middle East. A ruler who could combine the best technology with the swiftest and hardiest horses, and the greatest skill in handling them, had the advantage in battle. Horses were also used for communication across the vast empires.

**Section 5: Horses in the Islamic world**
Horses are prized in the Islamic world. In the Qur’an they are described as gifts of God, and splendid horses are listed among the comforts of life on earth and are mentioned in early Arabic poetry and stories. In medieval Islam, horses were used in battle, for hunting and for sports such as polo. The Arabian horse, with its large eyes, concave nose, arched neck and high-set tail, developed as a distinct breed in the Islamic period in the Middle East. Horses were included in many artworks.

**Section 6: The horse in Arabia**
The Arabian is one of the most famous horse breeds in the world. Over time it has become a part of Arabian culture and identity alongside the saluki (a hunting dog) and the falcon. Arabian horses are highly valued by their owners. Arabian horses are fast, hardy, have good stamina and a good temperament. As they gallop their nostrils flare, giving rise to the epithet ‘drinkers of the wind’.

**Section 7: From the Middle East to Britain**
From the medieval period, horses played an important role in British history. The first Arab horses may have come to Britain as diplomatic gifts or may have been won in battle. Horses from the Middle East were admired for being swift, sleek and strong. Arabian horses were crossed with British mares to create new types of horse used by the elite for hunting, racing and warfare. Horses of all kinds continued to be very widely used in Britain for transport, agriculture, industry and warfare until at least the early 1930s. Today most of their roles have been taken over by machines.
Pre-visit activities

Look at the exhibition PowerPoint and discuss the questions below. Choose one of these as your ‘big question’ to be thinking about as you go round, as well as the specific education activities listed in the next section. The big question can then be discussed back in the classroom after the visit – have their ideas changed since looking at the objects?

Ideas for big questions:

• How are horses depicted differently by different cultures, over different times? Why do you think this might be?
• Sketch and compare examples of the horse in motion and where the horse is still. Which do you prefer? Why?
• What is the relationship between man and horse shown in this exhibition? Why do you think horses have been depicted in this way?
• What do the objects tell us about the interactions between man and nature?
• Consider and contrast different examples of the physical appearance of the horse. Suggest reasons for this.
• Think of ideas as to why so many different materials have been used in the portrayal of the horse.

Also look at these horses depicted on statues and monuments and in works of art such as:

• Pablo Picasso’s Guernica
• Paintings of George Stubbs
• Paintings of Eugène Delacroix, especially the battle and travel scenes
• Van Dyck’s Charles I in the National Gallery
• The Parthenon Frieze in the British Museum
• Lady Elizabeth Butler’s Scotland Forever (Charge of the Scots Greys at Waterloo)
Exhibition activities

Give the students one or more of these themed set of tasks:

1. Exploring movement: Explore an object and movement through drawing

Find an object that you can walk around, and do four drawings of the object from different positions. Consider how you can record movement by overlapping your drawings or through the way you draw, i.e. using fast or slow marks.

What movement is your drawing capturing, for example is it recording the object or your observation of it?

Explore the exhibition and record, using notes and drawings, five ways that artists and craftsmen have represented movement: for example, a flag blowing, how the horses’ legs are positioned or tension in muscles.

Out of all the examples of representing movement you have found, which do you think are the most successful?

2. Exploring objects and status: Use the exhibition to explore how objects relate to the status of their creator or owner.

Pick an object in the exhibition and record the purpose of the object, for example: why it was made? Who it was for? Or what message was it meant to convey?

What role or purpose does the horse have in the object you have chosen; for example, is the horse a symbol for something, a celebrity, or a tool, mode of transport? How important is the horse in or on the object?

Now find a second object made in a different medium or from a different time and compare it to what you have discovered.

3. Horse mind maps: Brainstorming during the exhibition visit

While doing the specific activities listed above, as you go through the exhibition, create a ‘horse mind map’ or spider diagram so that you record all the different lines of enquiry you think of as you go round.

Put the word ‘horse’ at the centre of the page. As an idea comes to you when examining an object, draw a line from it and think of different associations which link to this concept or theme. Let your ideas flow and put down everything you think of linked to that idea. Then follow another line of enquiry – they will begin to interconnect.

Be as creative as you can when making your notes – think about the materials, the form, the technique, the subject matter, the meaning and symbolism of the object, when and where it was made, and make links to your own experience. Make sure you capture these ideas as they will help you develop your ideas back in school.

4. Snapshots of motion: preparing for animation

Collect lots of examples of horses in different stages of motion – these can then be made into a flick book, animated as a zoetrope or digitally back at school.
Classroom activities to support the exhibition

Use the following ideas to follow up the exhibition visit with your students.

**Return to the big question**
Go back to the big question (see page 5) and see if your points of view have changed. Consider other questions relating the horse to your personal experience:
- The horse has had a close relationship with humans for over 5,000 years, but how has our view of them changed?
- What kinds of horses have you encountered in your life, in films or in books (e.g. toys, carousels, public statues, police horses)?
- How does the way the horse is depicted in the exhibition compare to the way we culturally view horses today? For example, are horses still symbols of status? Who owns horses today and what associations exist around the industry of racing and horse riding?

**The shadow of horses in urban life**
Although most of us see and interact with horses far less frequently than our ancestors would have done, their influence is all over our towns and cities: town plans, the width of roads, the names of streets and pubs, horse troughs, where stables might have been, the design of buildings which had to accommodate stables (e.g. taverns), words we use and vocabulary. Use this idea of the ghost of the horse to develop a piece of artwork.

**Links to contemporary art**
The theme of movement can be examined further with reference to contemporary artists. Examine the works of ‘Kinetic Art’ which record movement listed below.
- Eadweard Muybridge, *Animal Locomotion*, 1887
- Marcel Duchamp, *Nude Descending a Staircase, No.2.*, 1912
- Fischli and Weiss, *The Way Things Go (Der Lauf Der Dinge)*, 1987
- Rivane Neuenschwander & Cao Guimarães, *Quarta-Feira da Cinzas/Epilogue (Video Installation)*, 2006
- Steve McQueen, *drumroll*, 1998
- Umberto Boccioni, *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space*, 1913

**The representation of the horse**
Look at the works of Jacob Epstein and Mark Wallinger, along with Picasso’s *Guernica* of 1937 and Lucy Gunning’s *The Horse Impressionists*, 1994. Compare these depictions of the horse. Be specific about the techniques, materials and form the artist has used to express the physicality of the horse. Use Frith’s *Derby Day* as the starting point to explore 19th-century artists who studied and painted horses, for example, Frith and Landseer.

Robert Bevan (1865–1925) was a fine painter of the commonplace in the equestrian scene.

**Animation**
Use digital media to animate animals in motion.
Further resources

Explore
Explore is an online database with detailed information and images over 5,000 objects from the Museum’s collection. To investigate horse-related objects, click on Explore at britishmuseum.org

Collection online
This database has access to over two million objects in the British Museum’s collection, many of which have images and curatorial information. Search at britishmuseum.org/collection

Books
The horse: from Arabia to Royal Ascot (exhibition catalogue) by John Curtis and Nigel Tallis (British Museum Press, 2012)

Eadweard Muybridge by Philip Brookman (Tate Publishing, 2010)

Horses: History, Myths, Art by Catherine Johns (British Museum Press, 2006)