

Arts Award Shakespeare Challenge case study

Centre: University of Cambridge Museums

Adviser: Lucy Sercombe & Sarah Blake

Level: Bronze

Context

The Fitzwilliam Museum is a University of Cambridge Museum with an extensive collection of paintings, antiquities, applied arts, coins, medals and manuscripts. They have embedded Arts Award within their learning programme and use it as a means to engage and support their younger audiences. More recently they have used Arts Award to support schools in raising aspiration and attainment for selected groups of students.

The University of Cambridge Museums delivered Shakespeare Challenge in collaboration with a local secondary school. The aim of the project was to introduce 15 Year 8 students to the world of Shakespeare, using the museum's collections as a stimulus. Supported by Cambridge University Press, they also included digital and interactive resources which were accessible via the Press' website.

The project was scheduled over ten days, allowing the students to work directly from the museum's collections and to also participate in practical workshops in the museum's studio. Museum Educators also visited the school, taking handling objects and digital resources, such as digital theatre, to support the delivery of the sessions in school.

Approach

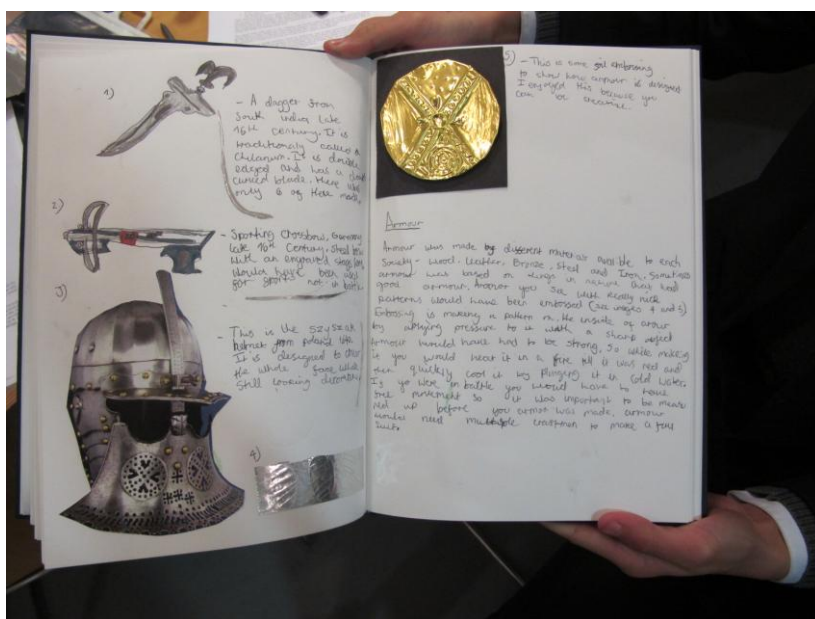
Many of the young people taking part had a keen interest in the arts but had not begun studying Shakespeare. Many also lacked confidence in their own abilities and were selected for the programme to help increase their confidence and improve their communication skills.

For Bronze, **Part A** (exploring the arts as a participant), the group learnt about the decorative arts of the 16th Century, from armour to fashion and miniature portraits. The group responded creatively to these art forms, creating their own versions and dressing up in 16th Century costume.



As the students were going to be studying *Macbeth* in school, for **Part B** (exploring the arts as an audience member) the group experienced the play through Digital Theatre. They discussed everything from the costumes, the language to the staging

and lighting. Having already engaged with objects from the period, they were able to make comparisons to a modern day interpretation within their reviews.



The group researched 16th Century artists for their arts inspiration (**Part C**). This was a popular unit, with some of the participants researching 16th Century musicians and others looking at popular Tudor portrait artists, such as Hans Eworth.

The group also participated in a drama workshop, reciting and performing scenes from *Macbeth*. They gained skills in communicating stage presence, use of language and movement. For **Part D**

(arts skills share), they then had to write and direct their own version of a 'Shakespeare style' play, passing on skills that they had learnt from the workshop. They gained feedback from their casts on their skills sharing.

The students evidenced their work in a portfolio, but also used film for interviews and feedback discussions.

Impact

All participants successfully passed their award and their grades in English and Art have also improved since the project. The wider impact shows that all the young people now feel a part of the museum's community and a sense of ownership of the museum. The Arts Award advisers also highly recommend Arts Award Shakespeare Challenge to support students new to Shakespeare, as it has helped to create a context for his work and increased the students' understanding of the world Shakespeare lived in.

Comments

'The students have particularly benefitted from working on an extended project, bringing together a number of different disciplines and becoming familiar with the Fitzwilliam Museum. The work that they produced was excellent and seeing their pride in completing the award to a high standard was fantastic. Because the project was deliberately centered around Macbeth, which the students are studying in school, we have also seen a positive impact on their English grades.'

Deputy Head of the school

'Definitely do this because you'll regret it if not.'

Bronze Arts Award achiever

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