



# The Extraordinary Gertrude Bell

Classroom activities

KS1-KS2



## WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN THIS TEACHING PACK

Classroom Activity	Key Stage	Cross-curricular activity	Literacy	History	Geography	Page
1	1		✓		✓	2
2	1		✓	✓	✓	4
3	1	✓	✓	✓	✓	7
4	2		✓	✓	✓	9
5	2		✓			11
6	2	✓		✓	✓	12
7	2	✓	✓	✓	✓	14

# 1

## THE STORY OF YOUR ADVENTURE



Gertrude Bell (1868 – 1926) was a truly extraordinary woman. She was born into a wealthy and privileged family in the North East of England but chose to spend much of her life far from home as a traveller, explorer and archaeologist. During and after WWI her extensive knowledge of the Middle East as well as Arabic language and culture led to her working for the British Government. She was a key figure in the discussions that led to the creation of the state of Iraq following the defeat of the Ottoman Empire. Frequently she was the only woman contributing to decisions that shaped the political map of the Middle East. Towards the end of her life she devoted herself to the heritage of Iraq, setting up the National Museum in Baghdad and writing the country's first antiquities laws. Her legacy as a diplomat, archaeologist and writer is still of great significance today, not least in the political situation in the Middle East.

Gertrude Bell has left extraordinary accounts of her numerous adventures in her books, but you can also look at her photos, letters and diaries to know more about this extraordinary woman!

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### RESEARCH TOOLS: DISCOVER MORE ABOUT GERTRUDE'S LIFE

- Discover Gertrude Bell Research website: [click here](#).
- Read Gertrude Bell Comics: [click here](#).
- Watch the introductory video: [click here](#).

- Discover more on Gertrude Bell's adventure at Khakh in 1909:
  - Gertrude Bell Comics, page 2: [click here](#).
  - Gertrude's letter to her step mother: [click here](#).
  - Search Gertrude's photos, Album M, photos: M215-256.: [click here](#).

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#### CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: TELL THE STORY OF YOUR ADVENTURE

Now it is your time to tell the story of your adventures! Write a diary page or a letter in which you describe an adventure you had. Don't forget to mention: when did it happen? Where was it? How did it make you feel?

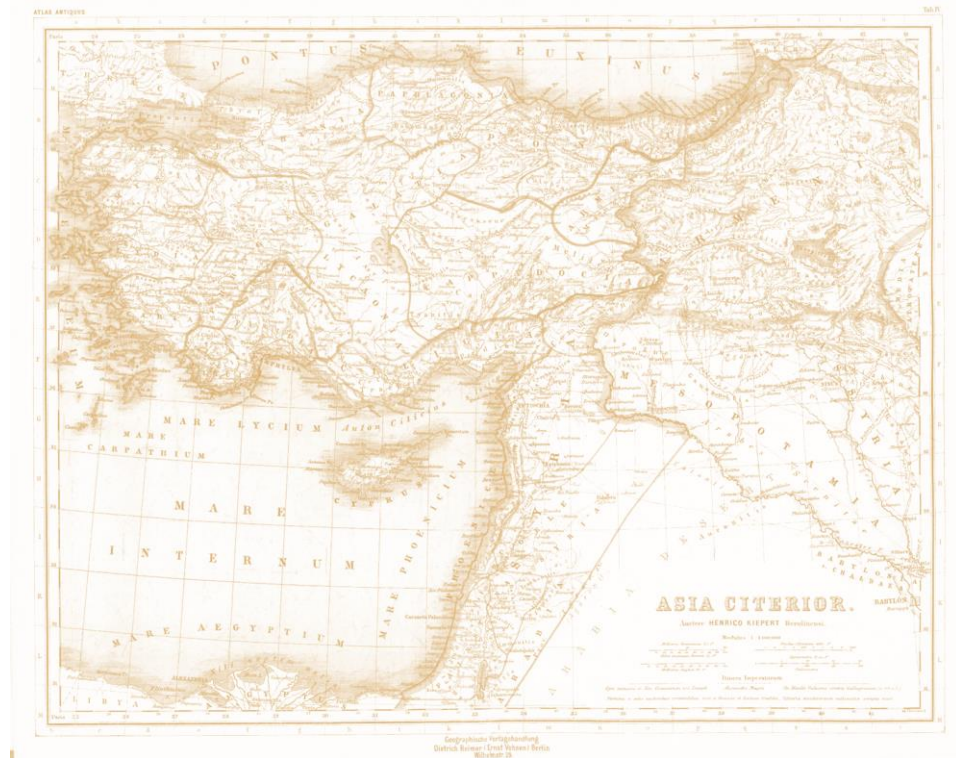
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#### LINKS TO THE CURRICULUM:

Descriptive writing, letter writing, geography.

## 2

## FOLLOW GERTRUDE ON AN ADVENTURE



When Gertrude Bell travelled to Damascus, she was equipped with items that she felt were necessary for her journey: fur coats for the chilly winter weather and tweed jackets, but also clothes for more mundane events, such as fashionable French gowns and skirts, plumed hats, parasols, fringed shawls, frilly blouses and riding clothes. It is incredible how much stuff travellers brought with them on a journey! At a time when plastic had not been invented yet, Gertrude travelled with silver brushes and cut-glass containers to hold creams and lotions. She also brought with her crates filled with china, crystal stemware, silver flatware, table linens and even rugs! Smartphones and iPads had not been invented yet, but Gertrude carried along her journeys several volumes of Shakespeare, and books of history and archaeology. Travelling also exposed people to risky diseases, so she had to take with her medicines, such as quinine (against malaria), but also camphor, boric ointment (a remedy for diarrhoea), bandages, soaps, and flea powder. And of course, she did not forget all the special equipment for an exploration: maps, cameras, film, binoculars, and even bullets and guns!

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#### RESEARCH TOOLS: DISCOVER MORE ABOUT HOW GERTRUDE TRAVELLED

- Discover Gertrude Bell Research website: [click here](#).
- Read Gertrude Bell Comics: [click here](#).
- Watch the introductory video: [click here](#).
- Check some of Gertrude Bell's diary entries, letters and pictures from her travels:
  - Discover which clothes Gertrude had to bring with her when she travelled in hot countries (Letters 7/5/1900): [click here](#).
  - See where Gertrude slept during her travels in the desert, by searching 'Gertrude Bell's camp' in the Photographic archive search engine: [click here](#).
  - Discover what Gertrude wore at the Cairo conference, in Egypt: [click here](#).
  - Discover what Gertrude wore at the crowning of King Faisal, in Baghdad: [click here](#).
  - Discover what Gertrude wore during her travels: [click here](#).
  - Read a letter written by Gertrude to her dad in which she describes how she climbed mount Meije, in the French Alps, in her underclothes: at that time there were no suitable clothing for women mountaineers! (Letters, 28/8/1899): [click here](#).
  - Discover which map Gertrude used during her travels: [click here](#) and [here](#).

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#### CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: GO ON AN ADVENTURE

Discover how things have changed and how different is to go for an adventure around the world today. Now, it is your time to pack up for an adventure! Plan your own trip to a place in your area you would like to visit. Draw a poster about it:

- Find a map. How is your map? Did Gertrude have the same maps as today's maps? If no, what do you think has changed?
- Plan your adventure! How do you think Gertrude prepared her travels? How would you prepare your trip today? What has changed?
- What are you going to take with you? What did Gertrude bring with her? What would you need today for your adventure? Did you know that at the beginning of the Nineteen century people could travel around Europe without a passport? It was only during WWI that European governments introduced border passport requirements for security reasons. The controls remained in place after the war.

- Record your adventure. Are you going to blog your adventure? How would Gertrude have recorded it instead? What has changed?

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#### LINKS TO THE CURRICULUM:

Descriptive writing, understand, describe, select or retrieve information, events or ideas from texts and use quotation and reference to text, geography, history.

# 3

## DISCOVER GERTRUDE THE EXPLORER



Gertrude Bell was an enthusiastic traveller throughout her life. She went on two around the world tours. Between 1899 and 1902 she climbed in the Alps and became one of the most respected female climbers of the time. Her desert travels are also noteworthy for their extent and the dangers she had to face. Bell's extensive travels in Turkey, Mesopotamia and Arabia, were crucial to her later role as a member the Arab Bureau in Cairo and then of the administration of British controlled Mesopotamia. She knew most of the tribal groups and had personal ties with a great many of the tribal leaders. This knowledge informed many policy decisions by British administrators in the Middle East. As an acknowledgement of her achievements as a traveller and an explorer, Gertrude was one of the first women to be elected a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society in June 1913, and won the prestigious RGS Founders Medal in 1918 "For her important explorations and travels in Asia Minor, Syria, Arabia and on the Euphrates". Her bronze portrait was presented to the Royal Geographical Society "by a number of ladies as a tribute to a very distinguished woman".

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### RESEARCH TOOLS: DISCOVER MORE ABOUT GERTRUDE BELL'S TRAVELS

- Discover Gertrude Bell Research website: [click here](#).
- Read Gertrude Bell Comics: [click here](#).
- Watch the introductory video: [click here](#).



- Check this useful list of the countries visited by Gertrude with many pictures taken from her personal archive ([check here](#))
- Discover how Gertrude was one of the first women to be elected a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society in June 1913: [click here](#).
- Discover her bronze portrait presented to the Royal Geographical Society: [click here](#).
- See where Gertrude slept during her travels in the desert, by searching 'Gertrude Bell's camp' in the Photographic archive search engine: [click here](#).
- Discover what Gertrude wore during her travels: [click here](#).

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#### CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: CREATE GERTRUDE BELL'S EXPLORER PROFILE

Know more about Gertrude Bell and her extraordinary life: create Gertrude Bell's explorer profile, with all the details you can draw from the documents above: her date and place of birth, her interests, the places she explored, her clothes.

Now it is your turn to draw your own personal explorer profile: where would you like to go? What kind of equipment would you take with you? Why?

➔ This activity is inspired by, and can easily complement the **Making a Mark in the Tees Valley**, a classroom activity pack for KS1 pupils. Please check the **Explorer Profiles** activity ([download here](#)).

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#### LINKS TO THE CURRICULUM:

Descriptive writing, understand, describe, select or retrieve information, events or ideas from texts and use quotation and reference to text, geography, history.

# 4

## SAVE RED BARNS



Gertrude Bell was born in Washington Hall in 1868 from a very wealthy family. The same year her father commissioned a new home in Red Barns (Redcar). Two very popular men of the Arts and Crafts movement, Philip Webb and William Morris, designed the house and the interiors respectively. Gertrude Bell grew up in this house and came back here from her numerous travels and adventures. She addressed many of her letters to her family in Red Barns. After the First World War, luck ran out for the Bell family. The property was sold, and Red Barns became a boarding house for school pupils from the Sir William Turner School and was later converted into a pub and hotel. Now the hotel has closed, leaving the house vulnerable to vandalism.

### RESEARCH TOOLS: DISCOVER MORE ABOUT GERTRUDE BELL AND RED BARNS

- Discover Gertrude Bell Research website: [click here](#).
- Read Gertrude Bell Comics: [click here](#).
- Watch the introductory video: [click here](#).
- To look at the pictures of Red Barns taken by Gertrude Bell: go to the Gertrude Bell Archive website ([click here](#)), click on *Search* and digit *Red Barn*.
- Read the letters written by Gertrude Bell to her family members in Red Barns: go to the Gertrude Bell Archive website ([click here](#)), click on *Search* and digit *Red Barn*.

- See how Red Barns is today: [click here](#)
- Discover more on the Red Barns revival campaign: [click here](#).

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#### CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: DEVISE YOUR OWN CAMPAIGN TO GIVE RED BARNs A NEW LIFE

What is the future of Red Barns? Go on a trip and try to find out what happened to the building. Take pictures of Red Barn today and encourage the kids to compare them to those taken by Gertrude. What has changed? Why? Encourage your pupils to write campaign posters to gain Red Barns a new future.

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#### LINKS TO THE CURRICULUM:

Persuasive writing, geography, history.

## 5

## LETTERS HOME



Gertrude Bell was an enthusiastic traveller throughout her life. She went on two around the world tours. Between 1899 and 1902, she climbed in the Alps and became one of the most respected female climbers of the time. Bell also extensively travelled across the Middle East, from Turkey, to Mesopotamia and Arabia, to Egypt, Israel and Syria. Her desert travels are also noteworthy for their extent and the dangers she had to face. During her travels, she frequently wrote long letters back home, who give us an insight into the life of this extraordinary Victorian woman.

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DISCOVER MORE ABOUT GERTRUDE BELL

- Discover Gertrude Bell Research website: [click here](#).
- Read Gertrude Bell Comics: [click here](#).
- Watch the introductory video: [click here](#).
- Read Gertrude's letters: [click here](#).

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CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: WRITING HOME

Encourage your children to think about how it would be to travel away from home. Ask them write down a letter to their family: What would they miss? What would they like?

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LINKS TO THE CURRICULUM:

Letter writing.

## 6

## EXPLORE HOUSING AROUND THE WORLD



The fascination of Gertrude Bell for Middle Eastern art and architecture lasted for all her life and is documented in all her works. She spent many years in the Middle East, publishing important archaeological work on the Byzantine churches at Binbirkilise in Turkey ([The Thousand and one Churches](#)) and on the Islamic palace at Ukhaidir ([Palace and Mosque at Ukhaidir](#)). During her numerous travels, Gertrude Bell pictured payed special attention to people's housing, often taking numerous pictures of the buildings she visited.

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RESEARCH TOOLS:

- Discover Gertrude Bell Research website: [click here](#).
- Read Gertrude Bell Comics: [click here](#).
- Watch the introductory video: [click here](#).
- Learn about geometric patterns in Islamic architecture: [click here](#).
- Look at Gertrude Bell's pictures of the diverse houses and buildings she discovered during her travels

- The beehive houses near Aleppo, in Syria. Search the Gertrude Bell Archive here: <http://www.gerty.ncl.ac.uk/> → Click on Pictures → Search pictures → Enter: **Beehive houses**.
- The buildings at Hail, in Saudi Arabia. Search the Gertrude Bell Archive here: <http://www.gerty.ncl.ac.uk/> → Click on Click on Pictures → Search pictures → Enter: **Hail**.
- The tents in Saudi Arabia, Syria, Jordan and Turkey. Search the Gertrude Bell Archive here: <http://www.gerty.ncl.ac.uk/> → Click on Click on Pictures → Search pictures → Enter: **Tents**.

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#### FURTHER READING:

- Jackson M. P. and Parkin A. (eds.), 2015, *The Extraordinary Gertrude Bell*, Tyne Bridge Publishing (opens a pdf file): [click here](#).

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#### CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:

- Ask your children to look at some of the houses pictured by Gertrude Bell during her travels. Discuss with them why they believe houses in different parts of the world have different shapes and are made with different materials.
- Now ask them to get inspired from Gertrude Bell's pictures and to design their own house. How would it look like? Which materials would they use to build it and why?
- Cut out all the drawings and create the skyline of your classroom city.

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#### LINKS TO THE CURRICULUM:

Architecture and design, Geography, History

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#### KEYWORDS:

Designing, drawing, colouring, cutting, exploring new formats to draw on, exploring different buildings in the world, heritage.

# 7

## GERTRUDE BELL EXHIBITION FOLLOW UP



I have been spending the afternoon today trying to learn a little about arranging a museum. Oh dear! There's such a lot to be learnt that my heart sinks. However, I know what I shall do. I shall concentrate on exhibiting the best objects properly and get the others done little by little (Gertrude Bell, [Letters](#)).

As soon as the new state of Iraq was created at the end of World War I, Gertrude Bell was appointed Honorary Director of Antiquities by King Faisal. In her new role, she drafted the first antiquities legislation for Iraq, supervised all the foreign archaeological missions in the country and opened the Iraq Museum, filling it with the collections that were flowing at the time from the excavations of the Assyrian, Babylonian and Sumerian sites. She remained director of the museum until her death. The museum is the ultimate testament to the love of Gertrude Bell for archaeology and to her pivotal role in the protection of cultural heritage in the early years of the Iraqi nation.

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### RESEARCH TOOLS:

- Discover Gertrude Bell Research website: [click here](#).
- Read Gertrude Bell Comics: [click here](#).

- Watch the introductory video: [click here](#).

Discover more about Gertrude Bell's role as the director of the Iraq Museum:

- Read Gertrude's letters here: [click here](#).
  - Discussing the draft of the Antiquities Law, 20/07/1922
  - Explaining how negotiations were carried out in order to divide artefacts found during excavations between the Iraqi state and the foreign missions that worked in the country, 6/03/1924
  - Recalling how she got the building that she wanted to host the museum, 3/3/1926
- Watch Gertrude Bell with the archaeologist Leonard Wooley at Ur: [click here](#).
- Watch Gertrude Bell and other Europeans including Lionel Smith dividing archaeological finds after excavations: [click here](#).

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#### CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: GERTRUDE BELL EXHIBITION

Encourage your pupils to use creatively the Gertrude Bell archive and set up a Museum Junior Board in school. The MJB will be composed by pupils with the aim to set up a small exhibition in school on a topic of their choice, related to the life and adventures of Gertrude Bell.

Encourage your pupils to research on their topic and then to draw a story line. The storyline will be the backbone of your exhibition. Small groups of students could be in charge of different elements of the exhibition: the objects to display, texts, images, labels, music and videos. Ideas for topics for a school exhibition could be:

- Memories from the First World War
- The history of Red Barns
- Exploring the desert
- People of the world

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#### LINKS TO THE CURRICULUM:

This activity can be used as a cross-curricular resource, for literacy (recounts, information texts), history (local history study), geography (to locate Iraq on map of world, desert, rivers, cities, aspects of life in modern Iraq), art (to investigate Islamic art, to create own artwork based on Islamic examples).