



The Extraordinary Gertrude Bell

Classroom activities

KS3-KS4



It's a shocking affair how the East has wound itself round my heart till I don't know which is me and which is it. I never lose the sense of it. I'm acutely conscious always of its charm and grace which do not seem to wear thin with familiarity. I'm more a citizen of Baghdad than many a Baghdadi born, and I'll wager that no Baghdadi cares more, or half so much, for the beauty of the river or the palm gardens, or clings more closely to the rights of citizenship which I have acquired

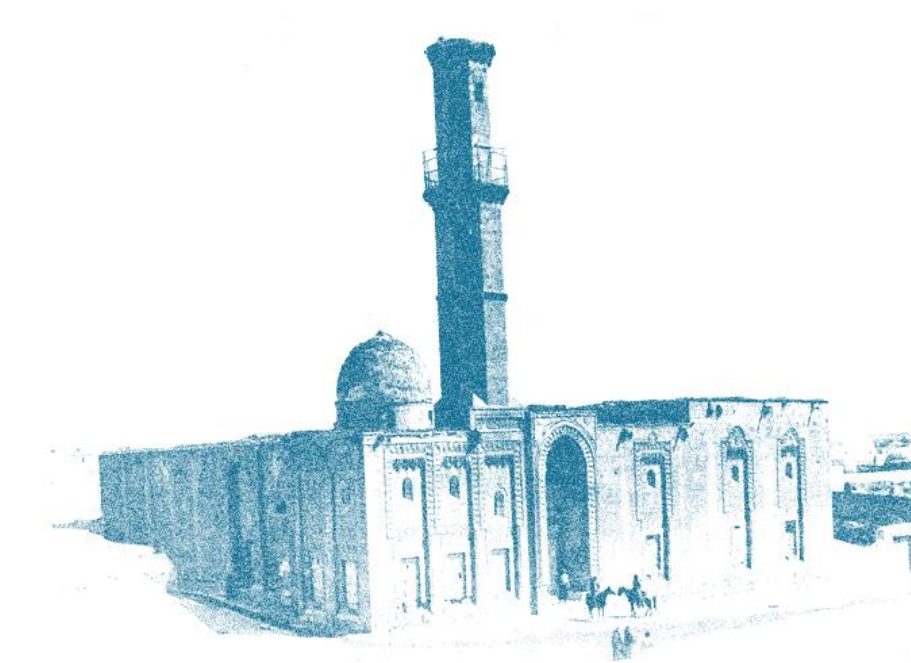
(Gertrude Bell, Letters)

WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN THIS TEACHING PACK

Classroom Activity	Key Stage	Literacy	History	Geography	Art and design	Citizenship	Page
1	3-4	✓	✓		✓		3
2	3-4		✓		✓		5
3	3-4	✓	✓		✓	✓	7
4	3-4		✓				9
5	3-4		✓	✓			11
6	3-4	✓	✓	✓	✓		13

1

GERTRUDE BELL AND THE ISLAMIC WORLD



The study of the Middle East in the United Kingdom has a long history, dating back to the first chairs in Arabic, established at Cambridge and Oxford in the Seventeen century. Gertrude Bell developed a truly fascination for the Middle East: she learned Arabic and produced a critically acclaimed translation of the 14th century Persian poet Hafez (Poems from the Divan of Hafiz). Hafez's passionate and sensual lyrics were much admired by poets such as Byron and Tennyson and are very popular in today's Iran.

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 Binbirkillise in Turkey (The Thousand and one Churches) and on the Islamic palace at Ukhaidir (Palace and Mosque at Ukhaidir). She founded the National Museum of Iraq that directed until her premature death in 1926.

RESEARCH TOOLS:

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

Gertrude Bell and Persian poetry

- Read Gertrude Bell's translations of the Persian poet Hafez: [click here](#).
- Discover more on the Persian poet Hafez: [click here](#).

Gertrude Bell and Islamic art and architecture

- Explore Islamic calligraphy: [click here](#).
- Find out more on Islamic art: [click here](#)
- Learn about geometric patterns in Islamic art and architecture: [click here](#).
- Look at Gertrude Bell's pictures of the now destroyed Talismanic Gate in Baghdad ([click here](#)) and discover more on the role of figural representation in Islamic art: [click here](#).

FURTHER READING:

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

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:

- With the help of a ruler and a compass, try to recreate some of the geometric shapes and patterns of Islamic art. Watch this video for inspiration: [click here](#).
- Get inspired! Explore some of the most elaborate works of Persian calligraphers and get inspiration for your own work of art.
- Write a poem (you can get inspiration from the works of Hafez) and then shape it creating your own Persian calligraphy poem.

LINKS TO THE CURRICULUM:

Writing poetry, Art and design, Modern day History (the Middle East)

KEYWORDS:

Islamic Art, Islamic Architecture, Calligraphy, Poetry

2

THE ARTS AND CRAFTS AT RED BARNs



The Arts and Crafts Movement was one of the most influential design movements of the Nineteen century. It began in Britain around 1880 and quickly spread across America and Europe. Some of the leading figures of the movement were the textile designer William Morris and the architect Philip Webb. Gertrude's father Hugh employed them to design and decorate the Bell family home at Red Barns, Redcar (1868).

Gertrude Bell grew up in this house and came back here from her numerous travels and adventures. Many of her letters were addressed 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 Gertrude Bell Research website: [click here](#).
- Read Gertrude Bell Comics: [click here](#).
- Watch the introductory video: [click here](#).
- Discover Gertrude Bell's house in Red Barns and some of its interior decoration:
 - Search "Red Barns" in the Gertrude Bell Archive: [click here](#).

- Look carefully at the picture of Red Barns, designed by Philip Webb: [click here](#), [here](#).
- Look carefully at William Morris' decorations inside Red Barns: [click here](#).
- Discover more on the Arts and Crafts Movement at the Victoria and Albert Museum: [click here](#).
- Discover more on the Arts and Crafts Movement at the Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum that holds a nationally-important collection on the Arts & Crafts Movement in Britain [click here](#).

FURTHER READING:

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

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY:

- Discuss with your pupils about the role of the Arts and Crafts Movement in Nineteen century Britain, and on the effects of industrialization and of mass-production on British design and manufacture.
- Ask your pupil to produce their own artworks inspired by the textiles and print designs of William Morris. As an alternative project, you can also explore the intricate designs from the Umayyad palace of Qasr el Mushatta, in Jordan. The monument is one of the most important works of early Islamic architecture. In 1903, a few years after Gertrude Bell had visited the place and had taken some photos, a large part of the facade was sent to Berlin, as a gift from the Ottoman sultan Abdülhamid II to the German emperor Wilhelm II. The intricate decorations of the palace show a remarkable similarity with some of the most popular designs created by William Morris. [Click here](#) for some of Gertrude Bell's photos of the palace.

LINKS TO THE CURRICULUM:

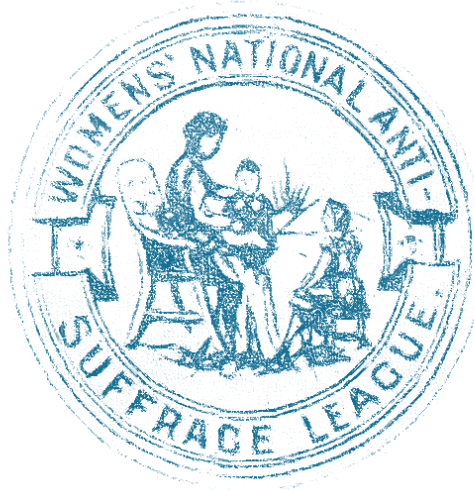
Art and design, History (local history study).

KEYWORDS:

Arts and Crafts, Red Barns, British design

3

GERTRUDE BELL AND WOMEN SUFFRAGE



Gertrude Bell was the youngest woman to graduate with a first-class honours degree in modern history from Oxford University. Life for women was not easy at Oxford: they had to remain silent in lectures and could not interact freely with professors or male classmates. In some classes, Gertrude and the other women even had to sit with their backs to the lecturer! Despite these constraints, Bell's academic career was remarkable. She became a respected fellow and gold-medal winning member of the National Geographical Society. She managed to become a very influential woman, who had a deep and lasting effect on British politics in the Middle East.

Her success as a woman and her life seems to contradict common stereotypes about the role of women in the Twentieth century. Yet, despite her achievements as a woman in a male dominated society, Bell openly campaigned against votes for women, becoming the Honorary Secretary of the Anti-Suffrage League (1909). The reasons for such a surprising position, at least to modern eyes, lay in Gertrude Bell's social and political background. Her life embodies the challenges that Twentieth century women faced in defining their role within the context of a changing society.

RESEARCH TOOLS:

- Discover Gertrude Bell Research website: [click here](#).
- Read Gertrude Bell Comics: [click here](#).
- Watch the introductory video: [click here](#).
- Discover more on Gertrude Bell in this paper by Professor Helen Berry: *A North-East woman of Contradictions* (pdf file): [click here](#).

- Read Gertrude Bell's articles against the suffrage movement:
 - "The National Anti-Suffrage League," Times [London], 20 August 1908, p. 6.
 - "Woman Suffragists and the House of Commons," Times, 13 October 1908, p. 8.
- Read Bell's diary entry where she recounts how she successfully managed to recruit her traveling companion on a train to the Anti Suffrage movement: [click here](#).
- Check UK Parliament website to discover more about women and the vote: [click here](#).
- Check the British Library website to find source material on the Suffrage Movement: [click here](#).

FURTHER READING:

- Bush, J., 2007. *Women against the Vote*, Oxford University Press: pp.119-125.
- Duplisea, G., 2016. Writing in the Masculine: Gertrude Lowthian Bell, Gender, and Empire. *Terrae Incognitae*, 48(1), pp.55–75.
- Riedi, E., 2002. Women, Gender, and the Promotion of Empire: The Victoria League, 1901-1914. *The Historical Journal*, 45(3), pp.569–599.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY:

- Encourage your pupils to research on the Women's Suffrage Movement and on Gertrude Bell's role as an Anti-Suffragist.
- Ask your pupils to get inspiration from contemporary posters for and against women suffrage and devise their own Suffrage and Anti-Suffrage posters.
- Then, ask them to give short speeches (or set up a debate in your classroom) for and against Women's vote.

LINKS TO THE CURRICULUM:

Citizenship, History of the British Empire, Women suffrage, writing non-narrative texts, giving short speeches, expressing ideas, and participating in formal debates. Arts and design.

KEYWORDS:

Women suffrage, British Empire

4

GERTRUDE BELL AND THE BRITISH EMPIRE IN THE MIDDLE EAST



World War I broke out in August 1914 just a few months after Gertrude had arrived back from her journey to Arabia. She began World War I by working for the Red Cross, but in November 1915 she was asked to go to Cairo along with archaeologists and others, to make maps for the army. The group became the Arab Bureau, responsible for military intelligence in the Middle East. As one of the few people who knew the desert and its people, Gertrude was very useful.

Following the British occupation of Baghdad, Gertrude moved to the city in 1917 and had a key role in the new British administration. After WWI, the British Government was determined to establish the borders of the new Iraq. Gertrude Bell was deeply involved in this process. She was the first woman to write a 'white paper' for parliament: it was published in December 1920, and summarized the situation in Mesopotamia from 1914 until 1920. She attended the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 and in March 1921 she attended the Cairo Conference with Winston Churchill, who wanted to find a solution for Iraq. Bell was instrumental in the choice of Prince Faisal as the new king of Mesopotamia and in drawing the new borders of Iraq.

RESEARCH TOOLS:

- Discover Gertrude Bell Research website: [click here](#).
- Read Gertrude Bell Comics: [click here](#).
- Watch the introductory video: [click here](#).
- Read what Gertrude said about her work in Boulogne: [click here](#) and [here](#).
- Follow the preliminaries of the Cairo Conference through Bell's letters home: search the Gertrude Bell Archive here: <http://www.gerty.ncl.ac.uk/> → Click on Letters → Select Year **1921** → Select letters from **March**.
- Discover what Gertrude Bell thought about the role of Britain in the Middle East in a letter written in 1920 to her father: [click here](#).
- Dan Snow explains how WWI started: [click here](#).
- Schools WWI on BBC: [click here](#).

FURTHER READING:

- Jackson M. P. and Parkin A. (eds.), 2015, *The Extraordinary Gertrude Bell*, Tyne Bridge Publishing (opens a pdf file): [click here](#).
See especially chapter 7, Mark Jackson and Emma Short: *Gertrude Bell and the First World War*.
- Paris, T.J. (1998) 'British Middle East policy-making after the First World War: the Lawrentian and Wilsonian schools', *The Historical Journal*, 41(3), pp. 773–793. [Click here](#).

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY:

Ask your pupils to draw a map of the Middle East before and one after WWI. What has changed? Then discuss with your pupils about the consequences of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the role of Britain in the Middle East after WWI.

LINKS TO THE CURRICULUM:

History.

KEYWORDS:

WWI, the British Empire, Middle East, Iraq, Cairo Conference, Winston Churchill.

5

TRAVELLING IN THE VICTORIAN ERA: THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE MIDDLE EAST



*It's a shocking affair how the East has wound itself round
my heart till I don't know which is me and which is it'.*

(Gertrude Bell, Letters)

In the Nineteenth century increasing numbers of British women travelled via the Arabian Peninsula and Gulf, either with their husbands, brothers and fathers, on the journey to India, or exploring the Middle East as journalists, archaeologists, missionaries, intelligence officers or simply aristocratic explorers. Gertrude Bell was among them. She travelled to the Middle East, between 1900 and 1914 but she journeyed mostly without family members; she hired men and had a faithful servant Fattuh.

During and after WWI Bell's extensive knowledge of the Middle East as well as of 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. As well as her books, she has left an extraordinary archive of pictures, letters and diaries that are an important source of information for understanding how she travelled, the people she met and the places she visited during her journeys.

RESEARCH TOOLS:

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

- Read Gertrude Bell Comics: [click here](#).
- Watch the introductory video: [click here](#).
- Discover more on Isabella Bird, a Yorkshire born woman who travelled across the Persian Gulf and Iran in the 19th century: [click here](#).
- 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](#).
- Check BBC Bitesize on deserts (KS3 students): [click here](#).
- Discover the many features of the deserts in the Middle East and the Arabian Peninsula, from the endless flatlands of Nefud, to the rocky canyons of the Tor al Tubaïq and of the Jebel 'Ajja, to the water pool of Khabra Fafas: go to the Gertrude Bell Archive website <http://www.gerty.ncl.ac.uk/> → Click on Pictures → Use the Search tool and search for terms such as desert, camp, jebel, or for name places such as those listed above.

FURTHER READING:

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

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY:

- Discover more about the following places and geographical features by looking at the pictures taken by Gertrude Bell during her travels:
 - Baghdad (Iraq)
 - Palmyra (Syria)
 - Hail (Saudi Arabia)
 - Euphrates (river)
 - Tigris (river)
 - Nefud (desert)
- Ask your children to recreate a map of the Arab Gulf, outlining the countries, main cities and geographical features (deserts, mountains, rivers) of the region.

LINKS TO THE CURRICULUM:

Geography (hot deserts), history (the British Empire).

6

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 Gertrude Bell's love for archaeology and to her pivotal role in the protection of cultural heritage in the early years of the Iraqi nation.

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
- See Gertrude Bell with the archaeologist Leonard Wooley at Ur: [click here](#).
- See Gertrude Bell and other Europeans including Lionel Smith dividing archaeological finds after excavations: [click here](#).

FURTHER READING:

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

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

LINKS TO THE CURRICULUM:

This activity can be used as a cross-curricular resource, for literacy (recounts, information texts), history (local history study), geography (hot deserts), art (to investigate Islamic art, to create own artwork based on Islamic art).