



# The Extraordinary Gertrude Bell

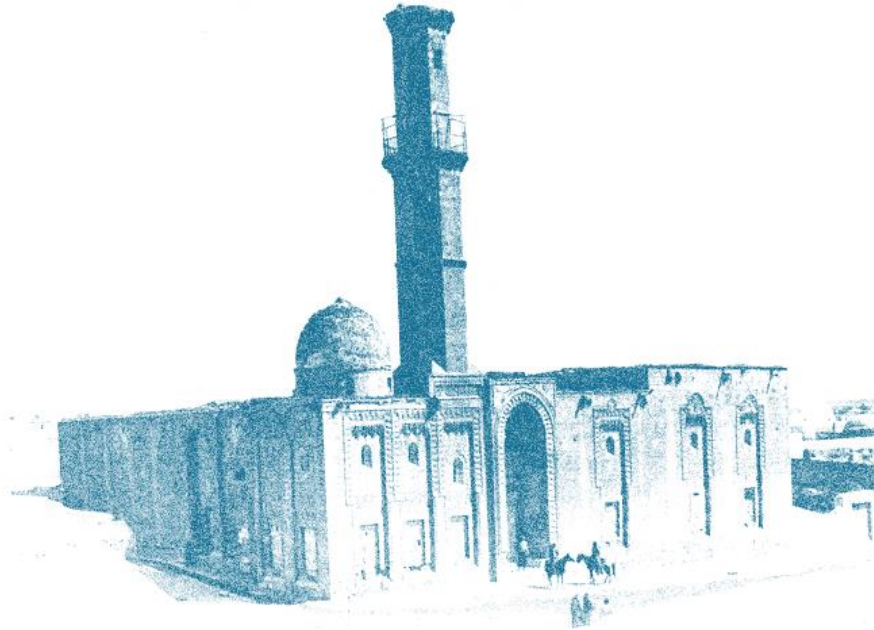
Classroom activity 1

KS3-KS4



# 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 14<sup>th</sup> 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.

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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](#).

### ***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](#).

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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](#).
- Read Gertrude Bell's book *Persian pictures*: [click here](#).

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#### 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.

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#### LINKS TO THE CURRICULUM:

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

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#### KEYWORDS:

Islamic Art, Islamic Architecture, Calligraphy, Poetry