BRITAIN 1500–1900
TEACHERS’ RESOURCE
Change through Time

Explore British art and design at the home of creativity
Key Stages 1 & 2: History, Art & Design
Introduction

The V&A’s Britain 1500–1900 galleries take you through an extraordinary four centuries of British art and design. Spanning two floors, these richly immersive, chronological displays showcase the finest examples of ceramics, glass, furniture, metalwork, textiles, costume, wallpapers, sculpture, prints and paintings. The galleries include Discovery Areas with hands-on activities relating to the collections.

Four thematic threads run through the galleries:
• Style
• Who Led Taste?
• Fashionable Living
• What Was New?

This resource is designed to support exploration of the changes in British art and design over time, through comparison and identification of similarities and differences. Themes include the reigns of Queen Elizabeth I and Queen Victoria, and studying the work of significant British designer William Morris.

A companion resource Britain and the World is available, with further learning activities for Key Stages 1 & 2 inspired by the Britain 1500–1900 galleries.

Pre-visit activities

• Gather postcards and pictures of household objects used in key British periods: Tudor, Victorian, 20th century and modern day. Hold up pairs of images and discuss which item was made earlier. Arrange the images in one long timeline from the earliest object to the most recent.
• Cut out silhouettes of figures wearing fashions from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. Ask the class whether they think they are male or female figures, and how the fashions compare to today. Pupils can draw and cut out their own silhouette.

The Museum visit

The galleries on Level 2 span the years 1500–1760, while those on Level 4 cover 1760–1900. Changes over time in British history can be explored by comparing objects across the two floors. The following themes may be starting points. We recommend downloading the accompanying activity sheets, dividing the class into small groups, and rotating round the activities.

Men’s Fashion

Clothes have long been used to signify social status. In 17th-century Britain men displayed their wealth with elaborate, embellished outfits made from decadent lengths of fabric. The use of lace, ribbons and accessories were as common in men’s fashion as in women’s (see displays in Room 56).

By the 19th century, the range of clothing available to wealthy men had expanded. Multiple changes of outfit during the day were commonplace. Designs were often more practical than those of the 17th century, reflecting the broader range of social activities undertaken by men (see display in Room 125b).

Monarchs

Two defining reigns by queens took place during this period of British history: Queen Elizabeth I (1558–1603) and Queen Victoria (1837–1901). Portrait artists helped to create the images of the queens that we know today, particularly for Elizabeth I, who lived before the invention of photography. Elizabeth I controlled her image carefully, and utilised the arts to gain influence (see displays in Room 57).

Queen Victoria was the longest reigning monarch until Queen Elizabeth II. For Victoria’s Golden Jubilee celebrations, her likeness was used to decorate all manner of collectables, from plates to postcards, such as those on display in Room 123.

Design in the Home

Until the 19th century, British interior design was primarily a concern of the exceptionally wealthy. The extravagant Norfolk House Music Room in Room 52 provides an immersive experience of an aristocratic London residence from 1756.

During the 19th century, developments in technological innovation, consumerism and social expectation meant that home-decorating became desirable and accessible to the middle classes. Room 125f contains a display of home furnishings created by prominent designer William Morris.

Follow-up activities/find out more

• Make a ruff. Fold paper into concertinas, cut in shapes to create a design, then open out and glue papers together to create your ruff. Fasten with ribbon.
• Paint a self-portrait miniature, wearing your new ruff.
• Take a walk and collect leaves and blossom to inspire a stencil or stamp design for creating repeating patterns.
• Visit: vam.ac.uk/page/b/british-galleries vam.ac.uk/page/w/william-morris
MEN’S FASHION

Key Stage 1

National curriculum links

History:
Identify similarities and differences between ways of life in different periods

Art & Design:
Understand the historical and cultural development of art and design
Describe similarities and differences between different practices

• In Room 56 find the portrait of Dudley, the 3rd Baron North. What is he wearing? What do these clothes tell us about him? In Room 57 you can find a ruff to try on, like the one that Dudley is wearing. How do you feel when you are wearing the ruff?

• Back in Room 56 look at the long display case containing fashionable men’s 17th-century clothes, and find the cream doublet and breeches. What makes this a special outfit? How many buttons can you count?

• Move up to Level 4. Find Room 125b containing the Expanding Wardrobe display of clothes from a 19th-century gentleman’s wardrobe. Wealthy men changed their clothes up to six times a day for different activities. How many times a day do you change your clothes? Find a partner and tell them what you wear in a day, from when you wake up in the morning, to bedtime.

Britain 1500–1900 Teachers’ Resource: Change through Time
Victoria and Albert Museum
Men’s Fashion

Key Stage 2

National curriculum links

History:
Note connections, contrasts and trends over time

Art & Design:
Understand the historical and cultural development of art and design
Describe similarities and differences between different practices

• In Room 56 find the portrait of Dudley, the 3rd Baron North. What is he wearing? What do these clothes tell us about him? In Room 57 you can find a ruff to try on, like the one that Dudley is wearing. How do you feel when you are wearing the ruff?

• Back in Room 56 look at the long display case containing fashionable men’s 17th-century clothes, and find the cream doublet and breeches. What materials have been used to make this outfit?
  – For what occasions would this outfit be worn?
  – For what activities would this outfit not be worn?
  – Stockings would have been worn with breeches – find one in Room 54. Why do you think men in the 17th century wore stockings?

• In Room 54 find the case of Men’s Travelling Accessories. How did 17th-century gentlemen get ready for the day?

• Look at the display of 19th-century clothes in the Expanding Wardrobe in Room 125b. Which items of clothing do you recognise? Are there any that you have not seen before? What do you think they might be for?

• Would you prefer to have worn the clothes of the 17th century or 19th century?

• Men changed their clothes up to six times a day for different activities. How many times a day do you change your clothes? Find a partner and tell them what you wear in a day, from when you wake up in the morning, to bedtime.
National curriculum links

**History:**

Identify similarities and differences between ways of life in different periods

Learn about the lives of significant individuals in the past

**Art & Design:**

Understand the historical and cultural development of art

- In Room 57 can you find the miniature painting, wax seal and engraving of Queen Elizabeth I?
  - What does she look like?
  - How does she look different in each object?
  - Which do you think she preferred?

- Look at all the jewels she is wearing. Can you design a piece of jewellery fit for a queen?

- In Room 123 find the display of objects about Queen Victoria. Compare these with the ones you looked at showing Queen Elizabeth I. Can you find two similarities and two differences?

- Can you spot some objects showing the side of the queen's head? This is called a profile. Find a partner and try drawing the outline of their head in profile.
MONARCHS

Key Stage 2

National curriculum links

History:
Note connections, contrasts and trends over time
Understand methods of historical enquiry
Learn about the changing power of monarchs

Art & Design:
Understand the historical and cultural development of art and design.

• How do we know what the current royal family looks like? How do we know what kings and queens of the past looked like, if they lived before the invention of photography?

• In Room 57 find the miniature painting, wax seal and engraving of Queen Elizabeth I. Do you think these are realistic images? Who do you think decided what the queen would look like in these objects?

• Watch the film How was it made? Painted Portrait Miniatures.

• Look at all the jewels Queen Elizabeth I is wearing. Can you design a piece of jewellery fit for a queen?

• In Room 123 look at the display of Queen Victoria memorabilia celebrating her Golden Jubilee. What recent royal family celebrations have taken place?

• Do you think these are realistic depictions of the queen? How are these similar or different to the objects of Queen Elizabeth I?

• Can you spot objects showing the queen in profile? Find a partner and try making a line drawing of their profile.
Design in the Home

Key Stage 1

National curriculum links

History:
Identify similarities and differences between ways of life in different periods.

Art & Design:
Understand the historical and cultural development of art and design
Describe similarities and differences between practices
Learn about the work of a range of designers

• Go to the Norfolk House Music Room in Room 52.
  – How does the room make you feel?
  – What sort of person do you think lived here?
  – What was this room used for?

• Look carefully at the gold carvings around the room. How many musical instruments can you spot?

• Imagine you are a guest at a party in the 1750s. What might you be wearing? What sort of music would be playing? Role-play meeting a friend at the party.

• In Room 125f find the displays of William Morris wallpapers, textiles and furniture. How do these home designs make you feel? What is similar and different to the designs of the Norfolk House Music Room?

• William Morris was inspired by scenes in nature. Have a look at his wallpaper design called *The Strawberry Thief*. Make up a story about what is happening in this pattern.
DESIGN IN THE HOME

Key Stage 2

National curriculum links

History:
Note connections, contrasts and trends over time

Art & Design:
Understand the historical and cultural development of art and design
Describe similarities and differences between practices
Learn about great designers in history

• Go to the Norfolk House Music Room. How does the room make you feel? Find a partner and swap your top three words to describe the room.

• What sort of person do you think lived here?

• Look carefully at the gold carvings around the room. What objects can you spot in the designs?

• Imagine you are a guest at a party in the 1750s. What might you be wearing? What sort of music would be playing? Role-play meeting another guest at the party.

• In Room 125f find the displays of William Morris wallpapers, textiles and furniture. How do these home designs make you feel? How do they compare to the designs of the Norfolk House Music Room?

• Look at the wallpaper designs. What do you think was Morris’s inspiration? Try creating your own wallpaper design, with a repeating pattern inspired by nature.