Fact File: The Ardabil Carpet

- The carpet is the **oldest** dated example in the world. It was made in 1539-40.
- It is also one of the **biggest**. It is over 10 metres long and 5 metres wide, which makes it twice as big as a gymnastics trampoline!
- The carpet was made by hand by tying knots of very fine coloured wool onto silk.
- There are only ten different colours of wool in the carpet.

Step 1. Explore how the carpet was made

The knots that make up this carpet are very difficult to see.

Guess how many knots went to make up a piece of carpet the size of this square?

3 or 4  
34  
304  
3,400

Step 2. Find out more about the patterns

**Look** at the pattern on the carpet. Can you see the central yellow sun? It is also called a **medallion** and has 16 small ovals around it. Now look in the corners. In each corner, one quarter of the medallion pattern is repeated.
There are four different patterns around the edge of the Ardabil carpet. See if you can copy a pattern, or a small part of one, in this rectangle.

Step 3. Get ideas for your own carpet design

Look at the Ardabil carpet and other carpets in the gallery to find ideas for your own carpet design. What shape will you put in the centre of your design? Draw it below.

When you are back at school your teacher can photocopy your drawing and then divide it into four quarters. You can put one quarter in each corner, just like the design on the Ardabil carpet.
Step 4. Find the lamps

The carpet is also decorated with two hanging lamps. Can you see them?

There are more lamps on display in the gallery. Some have chains and would have hung from the ceiling in a mosque. You can read more about mosque lamps below.

See if you can find other lamps in the gallery and choose one or two to copy for your carpet design.
Fact File: Mosque Lamps

- Mosque lamps are often made of glass, like the one you can see in the picture on the left. Can you find this lamp in the gallery?
- Glass lamps like this one would have been filled with oil and then lit.
- The lamps are often decorated with beautiful writing, called calligraphy. The writing is in Arabic and is usually verses from the Holy Book of Islam, the Qur’an. Sometimes it tells you the name of the person who paid for the lamp to be made.
- The ceramic lamp you can see in the picture at the bottom was made for a mosque in Istanbul in 1557. Can you find it in the gallery? It is quite large.
- This ceramic lamp was just used for decoration, because light does not show through clay.
- Can you see the red/orange colour on the lamp? When this lamp was made, people were only just finding out how to make red paint for ceramics. It was quite difficult, and that is why the red looks quite orange and is lighter in some places than others.
Fact File: Picnic Tile
- These tiles show a **rich young lady** having a picnic.
- They decorated a palace in Iran.
- The lady is resting on two cushions. In Iran at this time, most people sat on cushions rather than chairs.

Step 1. Find and sketch the flowers
There are **flowers** all over the picnic tiles. In the boxes below, sketch two different flowers that you can see on the tiles
Step 2. Design your own cushion

Imagine you are going to the picnic. Design a cushion to take with you. Either use the outline below or design your own shape. Use the flower designs you copied to decorate this cushion or make up your own design. You will find lots of things in the gallery to give you ideas.
**Step 1. Hunt for the tile**
Can you find this tile in a corner of the gallery? It is near a large chimneypiece.

Islamic artists got the ideas for these spotty and stripy designs by looking at the skins of two wild animals. Which two animals do you think have spots and stripes like these?

Read the label below to find out if you were right!

**Step 2. Draw spots and stripes**
Can you find the same spot and stripe designs on the chimneypiece nearby? Try drawing them below.
Step 3. Draw your own animal pattern
Try designing a new pattern based on an animal skin. How about drawing the scales of a snake, the stripes of a zebra or the patches of a cow?

Step 4. Design an animal pattern tile
Use your new animal pattern to make your own design for a tile. Draw it here.
Fact File: The Minbar

- The minbar was made for a mosque in Cairo in Egypt more than **500 hundred** years ago.
- Every Friday at the midday prayer, a learned man would have **climbed the stairs** of the minbar to speak to the rest of the people in the mosque.
- The writing on the minbar mentions **Sultan Qa‘itbay** who ruled Egypt for 28 years.
- During his long reign, Sultan Qa‘itbay **built** new mosques with many beautiful furnishings, such as this minbar.

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Step 1. Look at the patterns

The minbar is made of **wood** and decorated with geometric shapes. Some of the shapes are filled with small pieces of carved **ivory**. The ivory came from elephant tusks. Each ivory panel is decorated with symmetrical patterns made from curving lines and shapes that look like leaves.

Can you see the **geometric shapes** and plant patterns?

The minbar is very old and some of its carved ivory shapes are missing. Can you see the gaps?

**Look** for the place on the side of the minbar where a large ivory star is missing. How many points has this star got?

Can you find any other stars on the minbar? How many points have they got?
Step 2. Design your own star

Try designing a new star for the Minbar!

Draw curvy lines and leaf or flower shapes to make a symmetrical pattern in the star below.
Step 1. Look at the Chimneypiece

Find this large chimneypiece in the gallery. Look at it carefully. Can you see the plants and flowers on the tiles? The potters only used a few colours to decorate the tiles. What colours can you see?

Step 2. Find other Ottoman tiles

Look around for other tiles with similar patterns and colours. Like the chimneypiece they were made in the Ottoman Empire. This great Empire, which had its capital in what is now Turkey, covered enormous amounts of land in Europe, Asia and Africa and was particularly powerful 400 years ago.
Step 3. Copy tile patterns

Choose some patterns you like from the tiles.
Try drawing them here.
Make a symmetrical pattern for your own tile design. Draw your pattern in one section and then repeat it each side of the dotted lines, as if it were reflected in a mirror.