Exploring Calligraphy
Through the Jameel Gallery of Islamic Art
at the Victoria and Albert Museum
What is calligraphy?

What are the similarities and differences between the examples you can see here?
Trying different styles of writing for yourself

Calligraphy
Calligraphy
Calligraphy
Calligraphy
Calligraphy
calligraphy

Do these typefaces look different?
Do they suggest a different mood or tone of voice?
Which style would you use to write the word Calligraphy? Or the word Hello?
Here are 8 examples of different styles of Arabic script, all writing out the same phrase. How do they differ?
Can you find the same letters, by comparing different lines? (remember to read from right to left!)
More than just calligraphy

Four of the design elements found in Islamic art.

**Geometry**
- Wooden panel, Egypt, 1296. Museum no. 891-1884

**Plant-based design**
- Detail from the Ardabil Carpet, Iran, completed 1539-40. Museum no. 272-1893

**Figures**
- Detail from manuscript with illustration of Khusraw killing a lion, Iran, 1631. Museum no. L 1613-1964

**Calligraphy**
- Mosque lamp, Egypt or Syria, about 1430. Museum no. 1056-1869
Different ways of reading

Do you read this text from left to right or right to left? What clues might tell you this?
What can you see here?

Describe what you are looking at.
Here's what you were looking at

Carved ivory casket, Spain, about 1962. Museum no. a. 580-1910

Silk with Arabic inscription, Spain, 1300-1400. Museum no. 830-1894

Tile with Arabic inscription, Iran, about 1215. Museum no. 1481-1876

Qur'an manuscript, ink, gold and colour on paper, Iran, about 1370. Museum no. 365-1885

Match the close up images on the previous page with the correct object here.
The Letter Shin

The letter shin looks different depending on where it is in the text.

It has a distinctive trio of dots over it.

Can you spot it in the example below?
Where is shin?
Your Design Challenge

Create a piece of 2D or 3D art around a word, letter, phrase or poem of the student's choice (and in the language of their choice), taking as inspiration the concept of writing as an art form and Islamic calligraphy in particular.

You may decide to form a shape made out of words. This is known as a calligram.

Standard or Alam
Perforated Gilt Copper, Deccan, 17th century
Museum No. IM 163-1913
Things to remember in the Museum

Is there anything in particular that you will be looking out for when you visit the museum?

What ideas do you have about using calligraphy for your own design project?

On which type of objects will you find Arabic calligraphy?

What sort of texts are used for the calligraphy on these objects?