

Take One...
Powhatan's Mantle
Teacher guidance notes

ASHMOLEAN

These guidance notes are designed to help you use one object from our collection as a focus for cross-curricular teaching and learning. A visit to the Ashmolean Museum to see your chosen object offers your class the perfect 'learning outside the classroom' opportunity.



Starting Questions

The following questions may be useful as a starting point for developing speaking and listening skills with your class.

- What do you think this object is made from?
- How is it decorated?
- How many circles can you see?
- What do you think the images could represent?
- Is the object complete?
- Where might the object come from?
- What kind of person do you think would have owned this?
- Who could have made it?
- How could you use it?

Powhatan's Mantle is on display in Gallery 8, Ark to Ashmolean
The mantle measures 235 x 160 cm
A zoomable image of the mantle is available on our website.
Visit www.ashmolean.org/education



Inspired by the National Gallery's
Take One Picture programme

Background Information

The Object

Powhatan's Mantle is possibly the most famous exhibit from the Tradescant Collection, which formed the major part of the Ashmolean's displays at its opening in 1683. Quite how the mantle became part of John Tradescant's Cabinet of Curiosities at his home in Lambeth is not clear. But reports from visitors show that it was on display. In 1638 a visitor recorded seeing there 'the robe of the King of Virginia' and it was later catalogued as 'Pohatan, King of Virginia's habit all embroidered with shells or Roanoke'. The 'mantle' may have had some function, such as a temple hanging, rather than being a garment. It is made from the tanned hides of four white tailed deer sewn together with sinew. It is decorated with thirtyfour cowrie shell discs representing Powhatan villages. Two of these discs are now completely missing possibly having been vandalised in the past.

Chief Powhatan

Chief Powhatan was a very powerful man. His real name was Wahunsonacock. "Chief Powhatan" was his title as the leader of the Powhatan Confederacy. In most Algonquian tribes, village chiefs made important decisions together. But Chief Powhatan was an absolute ruler and village chiefs had to obey his commands and pay tribute to him. Chief Powhatan's daughter Matoaka, better known by the nickname "Pocahontas" is one of the most famous Native Americans ever to live. In 1614 she married an English colonist called Thomas Rolfe and in 1616 the couple travelled to England on a ship called the Treasurer. A year later, shortly after setting sail for the return journey, Pocahontas, aged 19 or 20, fell ill and died suddenly. She was buried at Gravesend in Kent. Pocahontas' death was a severe blow to Chief Powhatan and he never really recovered. He died in the spring of 1618.

The Historical Context

The arrival of English colonists in Powhatan territories created tension. Interactions were sometimes violent and exploitive on both sides. However, both sides realized the importance of peaceful relations. One story tells of the English dressing Powhatan in a scarlet cloak and crowning him. Powhatan in return gave his old shoes and his mantle to Captain Newport. Perhaps this was the mantle now housed in the Ashmolean.

Pocahontas may have had a role as a peacekeeper but she was only eleven years old when she met the English colonist John Smith and, according to some reports, saved his life.

Her marriage to another settler John Rolfe in 1614 ensured a few years of peace. However, with the death of Pocahontas in 1617 and the death of Powhatan a year later, the peace came to an end.



Ashmolean graphic panel from Gallery 8 artist Tim Archbold

Ideas for creative planning across the KS1 and KS2 curriculum

You can use this object as the starting point for developing pupils' critical and creative thinking as well as their learning across the curriculum. You may want to consider possible 'lines of enquiry' as a first step in your cross-curricular planning. Choosing a line of enquiry area may help you to build strong links between curriculum areas. After using strategies to help children engage with the object and using questions to facilitate dialogue about the object you can work with the children to develop lines of enquiry that will interest them.

Here are a few suggestions of possible 'lines of enquiry' using this painting:

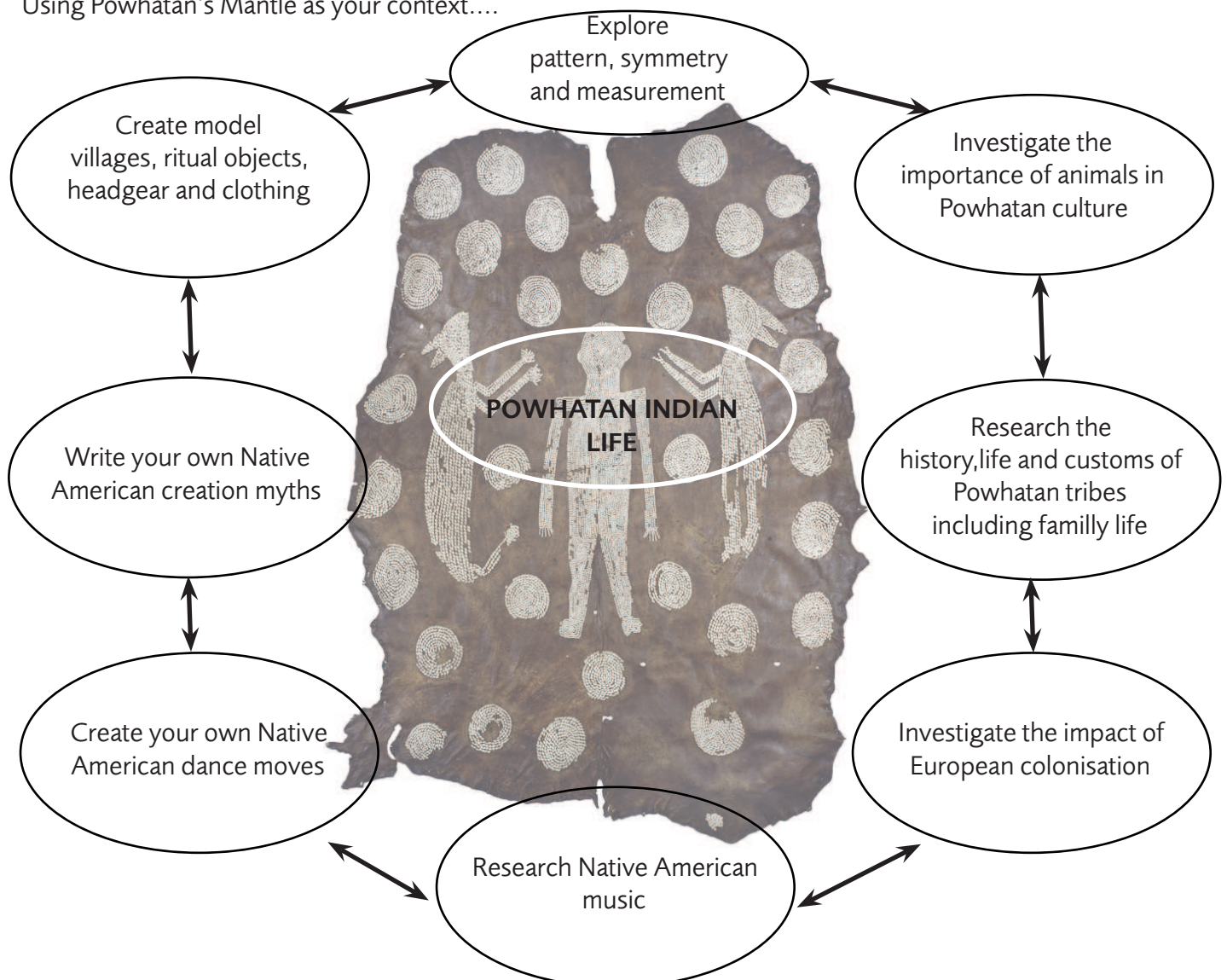
- Native American life
- Voyages of Discovery
- Animals and us
- Making Museums - collectors and collections

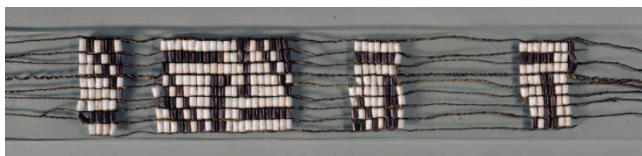
Using one or more line of enquiry as your starting point consider how you can work in a number of curriculum areas to build strong and effective crosscurricular links.

Using POWHATAN INDIAN LIFE as a line of enquiry

Here are a few ideas of how you can develop a range of learning opportunities to engage pupils with this line of enquiry. Each activity can link with the others to build on pupils' learning across the chosen theme.

Using Powhatan's Mantle as your context....





Wampum belt (beaded) from NE North American, before 1656, on display in Gallery 8

Tips for introducing objects to a class

- Display an image of the object in the classroom for a number of days with a tape recorder or 'graffiti wall' for children to add comments or questions about the object. Once the pupils' comments and questions have been gathered a class discussion can follow on.
- Cover the object and allow the children to feel it. Can they work out what it is without seeing it?
- Show the object to the class for a minute or two. Remove the object and see what they can remember.
- Introduce the object to the whole class in a question and answer session designed to develop the pupils' speaking and listening skills as outlined on page one.
- Work in pairs sitting back to back. One child describes the object and the other draws.
- Collect as many pictures or examples of similar objects from different time periods and explore the similarities and differences. Then try to sort the objects according to age.

"Thank you for a wonderful and stimulating day at the Ashmolean. I came away buzzing full of ideas."

Feedback after a recent Take One...INSET

Take One...Inspires

Take One... encourages teachers to use an object, painting or other resource imaginatively in the classroom, both as a stimulus for artwork, and for work in more unexpected curriculum areas. Work in many curriculum areas can be inspired by using a single object as a starting point.

The challenge is for teachers to use objects to develop culturally enriching, relevant and practical learning opportunities across the curriculum.



After a visit to the Ashmolean, yr1 pupils from West Oxford Community Primary School created this fabulous textile artwork inspired by Powhatan's Mantle.

Please contact us or visit our website for more information about our programmes including training opportunities

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