



ENGLISH HERITAGE
EDUCATION

KS2 & KS3

TEACHERS' ACTIVITY IDEAS

Eltham Palace

This resource has been designed to help teachers plan a visit to Eltham Palace, which provides essential insights into the royal medieval and Tudor courts and 1930s Art Deco interior design. Use these activities at the palace or in the classroom to help students get the most out of their learning.



Get in touch with our Education Booking Team

- ☎ 0370 333 0606
- ✉ bookeducation@english-heritage.org.uk
- 📄 <https://bookings.english-heritage.org.uk/education/>

Don't forget to download our **Hazard Information Sheets** and **Discovery Visit Risk Assessments** to help with planning.

Share your visit with us @EHEducation

Step into England's story

TOP 5 ACTIVITIES

BISHOP BEK'S MYSTERY ARTEFACT

IN THE
CLASSROOM

ACTIVITY 1

Recommended For

KS2 and KS3
(History, English)

Learning Objectives

- To understand the importance of Eltham manor as the home of a key figure in English politics.
- Using historical enquiry skills to discover about the past through artefacts.

Time to Complete

20–30 mins



An anthropomorphic jug spout dating from c.1300, discovered during excavations at Eltham Palace in 1976.

Summary

This activity is based on a jug spout artefact discovered during archeological excavations at Eltham Palace in 1976. The spout is part of a early 14th-century water jug used at the palace during the ownership of the fabulously wealthy and powerful Antony Bek, Bishop of Durham. Show the image flashcard (on the next page) to students in groups, without revealing what it is.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES:

First, ask each group to identify what period in history this object might be from. They should think about what material they it is made from and how it has been made. What tools do they think were used?

Next, ask the students to identify what the object is. They should think about its shape and form – what does it tell us? To help students, you could make clear that this is a small part of larger object.

Lastly, ask the groups who they think may have owned an object like this. Suggest to students that an object with decoration was much more difficult to make than something plain. It would need to be made by a skilled craftsman. Who would be able to afford to pay someone to make it? Why would they want something highly decorated? What would it say about them?

MORE LEARNING IDEAS

Students can imagine that they are the jug and write a piece on what they see happening at the great hall from the jug's perspective. This activity encourages students to think about a typical scene in a medieval great hall, with servants coming in with food, musicians playing and the bishop calling for a drink.



© Historic England Archive

ACTIVITY 2

Recommended For

KS2 and KS3
(History, English)

Learning Objectives

- To understand why Henry VIII was a significant individual in English history.
- To use interesting adjectives, rhythm and rhyme in poetry (English)

Time to Complete

30-45 mins

Equipment Needed

Poetry for a King activity sheets (printed copies for each student)



Henry VIII

Summary

In 1499, the Dutch philosopher Desiderius Erasmus met the young Prince Henry, who would later become Henry VIII, at Eltham Palace. During dinner, Prince Henry sent a note to challenging Erasmus to write something for him. Erasmus wrote a poem in Latin in praise of the prince, his father King Henry VII and England.

Students can analyse the extract on the next page to understand how Erasmus uses poetic language devices (similes, adjectives, repetition and opposites) to praise Prince Henry's father. The extract refers to historical and mythological figures. Students should think about the qualities associated with those figures and why Erasmus uses them to describe Henry VII.

They should also think about why Erasmus would want to please Prince Henry. Erasmus was a guest in England, trying to make a career from his writing. Even at nine years old, Henry was surrounded by influential and important people in the royal court at Eltham Palace who could give Erasmus writing commissions that would raise his profile.

MORE LEARNING IDEAS

Students could use the extract as inspiration for their own poem in tribute to someone. This could be a significant person in modern times, such as Queen Elizabeth II or the Prime Minister, or someone they admire, such as their favourite teacher, author or TV star.

Students can think about the qualities in the person they admire (or want to impress!) and try to associate mythological or real historical figures with these qualities. They will need to come up with interesting adjectives, similes and imagery to impress the person they are writing about.

Share your poems with us @EHeducation

POETRY FOR A KING

'Skilled in war,
Lover of peace,
Indulgent to others,
Strict to himself,
More sublime than Caesar,
More generous than Maecenas...
The father of the Age of Gold.'

A short extract from the poem 'Prosopopoeia Britanniae', by the philosopher Desiderius Erasmus, printed in 1500. The poem was written for the young Prince Henry (who later became Henry VIII). This extract praises his father, Henry VII.

'Erasmus: The Poems of Desiderius Erasmus', ed. Cornelis Reedijk (Leiden: Brill, 1956).



A portrait of Desiderius Erasmus painted by Hans Holbein the Younger in 1523.

Now write your own poem in tribute to someone:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

ACTIVITY 3

Recommended For

KS2 and KS3
(History, Drama)

Learning Objectives

- To understand the scale of a medieval feast and how it demonstrated the wealth and the power of the medieval/Tudor royalty living at Eltham Palace.
- To engage with the different roles within the royal court from the highest position of king down to the servants.

Time to Complete

15–20 mins



A reconstruction illustration of the great hall in the 15th-century.

Summary

The great hall was used for ceremonial occasions, for the king to hold court and council, and also for lavish feasts at Christmas and Easter. In 1482, Edward IV hosted 2,000 people for Christmas celebrations, and up to 300 of them would have dined with him in the hall.

Students could carry out a role-play in the great hall, where medieval kings and Henry VIII's court celebrated and feasted.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES:

Begin with a discussion with the students about the high and low ends of the halls, and where they think the king would have sat for his meals. Although students are not permitted to touch the table in the high end, they can observe the raised platform or dais that demonstrated his importance.

The large windows looking down at the high end allow maximum light and the hearth would have been close by for warmth. Large tapestries would have been hung on the walls for decoration and to keep out draughts.

Re-enact a feast, with some students taking the role of members of the aristocracy being served and others playing the servants bringing food through the screens passage. There might also be musicians playing or people reading poetry to please the king. Henry VIII had his own jester or 'fool' called John Goose.

MORE LEARNING IDEAS

Back in the classroom, students could organise a plan for a medieval feast. What would be on the menu? They could work out a schedule for serving each course and write instructions for each servant.

ACTIVITY 4

Recommended For

KS2 (History, Art)

Upper Key Stage 2

Learning Objectives

- To understand that Art Deco design was inspired by other forms in nature, industry and historical architecture.
- To recognise typical Art Deco design features in the interiors and furniture in Eltham Palace.

Equipment Needed

- Art Deco Hunt tick-list (printed copies for each student)
- Clipboards and pencils



Summary

The 1930s Art Deco interior design at Eltham Palace demonstrates how the movement was inspired by a mixture of styles found in nature, industry and the art and architecture of other periods of history. Students can explore the modern house commissioned by Stephen and Virginia Courtauld and try to discover key characteristics of Art Deco design in each room.

Use the table on the next page as a tick-list for students to complete.

MORE LEARNING IDEAS

Before your visit, show students examples of other famous Art Deco architectural and interior design such as at the Strand Hotel and the Hoover Building. It would also be useful to look at images from the British cruise liner the Queen Mary to help students understand the context of cruise liner travel in the 1930s. Pick out the key features to help students become familiar with identifying typical Art Deco design.

Following your visit, students might like to design the classroom or their bedroom Back in the classroom. They can use their tick-list as a prompt for what design features they might use.

We'd love to see your Art Deco designs! Send them to @EHEducation

ART DECO HUNT

Art Deco design was inspired by many different things. Here are some examples:

Key forms/ features:

- Animals
- Sunbursts
- Ancient Greece or Rome
- Cruise liners
- Geometric shapes



The Greek key motif on the doors to the dining room.

Can you find Art Deco design in Eltham Palace? Search for the things below:

Room	Can you find:	✓	What was it inspired by?
Dining room	Greek key motif		
Dining room	Doors		
Boudoir	McMichael wireless set (radio)		
Pear bedroom	Curved-edge furniture		
West staircase	Portholes		
Virginia's bathroom	Dressing table		

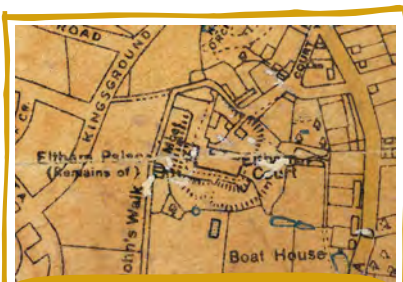
ACTIVITY 5

Recommended For

KS1 and KS2
(History, Local study)

Learning Objectives

- To recognise 1930s Art Deco design in the wider Eltham area.
- To compare features and materials used at Eltham Palace with the buildings on Eltham High Street.
- To understand how the area local to Eltham Palace has changed over time.



Detail of a wall painting in the map room: the Ordnance Survey map showing Eltham.

Summary

The local area around Eltham Palace changed drastically in the 1930s. In 1932, Eltham High Street was widened, and many of the older buildings were knocked down during the decade to make way for modern constructions. Virginia and Stephen moved into Eltham Palace and built the modern house in 1936, just when development in Eltham was booming.

Students will be able to identify structural and design similarities in the buildings listed below with the Art Deco design style that they see at Eltham Palace, such as Classical columns, sculptural reliefs and the contrasting aesthetic of brick and concrete in the same building. They might even spot the sunburst motifs in some of the residential houses.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES:

Art Deco style buildings to look out for in the Eltham area:

Eltham High Street:

- McDonald's
- Cook Taylor Woodhouse

Well Hall Road:

- Eltham Police Station
- Shopping parade (Acorn estate agents, Beauty Spot)
- Sherard Mansions

MORE LEARNING IDEAS

Before your visit, look at some historic images of Eltham both before 1930, during its development in the 1930s and images from today. Students can trace the development of the town and how particular aspects of life changed, i.e. transport, clothing and the types of shops.

Historic England Heritage Schools provides a learning pack to help you find out more about your local area. You can access Eltham pack [here](#).