

WT H E WALLACE COLLECTION

Out of the Frame Loan Boxes



Work and Play



Work and Play



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How to use the Box

The theme of this Box is **Work and Play** and in the Box you will find:

- A booklet which gives you information about paintings and objects from the Wallace Collection.
- Images of the paintings or objects.
- Handling items relating to the paintings or objects.
- An ipad, with preloaded resources such as images, and audio descriptions and much more.

It's all about the picture

- The picture or object is the important thing. Encourage your resident to tell *you* what they see. Guide them where necessary, by suggestion, by asking questions, by giving a finger to follow, but unless they have very poor sight, try and avoid telling them what's there. Discovery is exciting.

One thing at a time

- Keep the questions and the handling to one at a time. Too many questions, or surrounding your resident with all the handling objects at once can be confusing. Finding an interesting facial expression, stroking a feather or pondering a question will be enjoyed much more without distractions.

Break it up!

- Look at the image or object in short bursts. Introduce conversation, tactile resources, activities to give a break – then go back to it. 'Real looking' is absorbing but also tiring physically and mentally.

Share your thoughts

- There are lots of ways to read a painting, some of them based purely on personal preference. Share your opinions and feelings about the picture with your resident, especially if your tastes are very different.

Know when to stop!

- You may want to look at 'just one more thing', but if the resident has clearly had enough, take the box away and look at it on your own! Always leave them wanting more.

10 Basic Questions

These can be used to help find details in the works of art and stimulate discussion with your residents.



- ? What can you see?
- ? Can you find the...? Shall we see if we can find the...?
- ? What colour is the...? Is there anything else the same colour in the picture?
- ? How many ... are there? Shall we count them?
- ? What do you think is the most important thing in the picture?
- ? Are we looking up or down or straight into the picture? Does that make a difference?
- ? Where do you think the light is coming from in the picture?
- ? What is lit up and what is in the shadow? Why do you think that is?
- ? What is the mood of the picture? How does it make you feel?
- ? Does the picture puzzle you, make you smile, not appeal to you? Why?

Some Thoughts about the Pictures in the Box



Writing Implements

When the 4th Marquess bought the inkwell, it was thought that because of the initials MA, it had belonged to Marie Antoinette, but investigation of the marks under the base proved that it had been made before she came to France to become Queen. But the inkwell was still in use during the Revolution, when Marie Adelaide went into exile in Italy, so who knows what secret letters and reports were penned with its use?

A sand-shaker was necessary to an 18th century letter-writer. Sand was shaken on to the wet ink to absorb it and when dry, the sand was poured back into the shaker to be re-used.

A quill pen was cut from a goose feather and a nib sharpened with a small knife – quite a tricky thing to do and there are many suggestions as to how it was done. It is said that Thomas Jefferson, the one-time President of the United States, raised his own geese for their excellent quill-making feathers.

The Second Ice Age

Winters in Northern Europe in the 17th century were exceptionally hard. Canals and rivers in Great Britain and the Netherlands were frequently frozen deeply enough to support ice skating and winter festivals. The first River Thames frost fair was held in 1622 about fifty years before van der Neer's picture of ice-skating.

The game being played on the ice in the picture started as a game called maliespel and later, kolf. The English set up a maliespel course on the wide avenue that's now known as Pall Mall. The Dutch game involved hitting a target or a local landmark in as few strokes as possible and it could go across country or in a more confined space. One group of players was once banned from playing in their local church. Gradually, the game became relegated to outside city limits and to the winter, when it could be played on ice with fewer broken windows as a consequence. No one knows whether it reached Scotland from Holland or elsewhere in Europe but it's there that the name became changed to the golf we know today.



Some Thoughts about the Pictures in the Box

A Little About Lace

Needlepoint lace is made with a single thread using embroidery stitches, but bobbin lace is made with multiple-thread weaving techniques. The Lace Maker in Caspar Netscher's picture is using bobbins. In the Netherlands in the 17th century, lace wasn't just a coveted luxury, it was an industry giving work to thousands of workers. Bobbin lace is made by two simple movements – the 'cross' and the 'twist', just as all complicated knitting patterns are made of the basic 'knit' and 'purl' stitches. An experienced lace maker can work with a hundred or more bobbins at the same time and at great speed.

Symbols in Dutch Painting

*Do as the mussel does and stay in your shell
Be happy indoors, and don't go beyond yourself;
For if you keep to your house long and well,
You remain inviolable, and always fresh and white.*

This little poem was written in 1623 as a warning to Dutch girls as to their behaviour both before and during their wedded life. Dutch paintings of the time are full of such warnings, both serious and comic, but we have to be careful in reading their meaning. Symbols were widely used, but by some artists more than others. There are several suggestions as to the meaning of The Lace Maker but it is fairly certain that she was intended to be a role model to young women of her time, perhaps with the poem in mind. What might be the indications that she might be in danger of yielding to temptation? The shoes thrown down untidily can stand for a woman of flighty morals. They might even belong to a man and not to the young woman at all. A folk lore tradition suggests that overturned shoes keep the devil at bay. The devil can't step into the shoes and enter the room if they are lying higgledy-piggledy. Are the shoes simply a sign that even this industrious young woman has her thoughtless moments? Are they to keep her safe from losing her virtue? In 17th century Holland a woman usually married in her mid to late twenties, but she had reached puberty long before, so there was a large gap in which a girl had to learn her household tasks and keep her virtue when she might find resisting temptation difficult, so the picture cleverly presents the viewer with all these possibilities in one gracious and sympathetic image.

Some Thoughts about the Pictures in the Box

The Joust

Jousting appeared in the 12th century as a means of training knights to fight on horseback with the lance. Two armoured riders charged each other at the gallop, the object being to strike the opponent as hard and as accurately as possible. The helmet and the shield were the main targets.

This mock-combat quickly became popular, not just for military practice but also as a public spectacle. Here a knight could proudly show off his fighting skill to thousands of spectators.

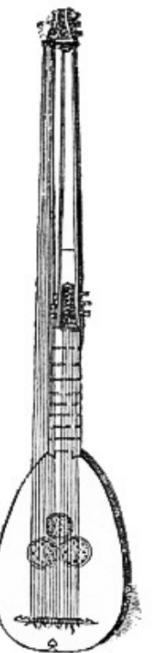
Jousting was however very dangerous, and soon after it became a peaceful sporting activity, efforts were being made to increase safety. Special jousting armour was invented to better protect the riders, and quickly became very different from the armour worn in battle.

Another safety feature invented in the early 15th century was the tilt, the wooden barrier that separated the two jousters, designed to protect the horses and to prevent collisions.

By the 16th century, jousts were great social occasions, used to celebrate important diplomatic events such as alliances and marriages. King Henry VIII was himself a very great jousting, who was famous for his horsemanship and his ability to smash many lances on his opponents.

The Theorbo

The theorbo is an extremely large type of lute developed in Italy over four hundred years ago. Its size made it difficult to play but it was very popular in Europe from the mid-16th century to the early 18th century, and even in America. There are some theorbos surviving that measure about two metres in length – that's just over six feet long. The body is curved, and bellies out like a mandolin. Along the neck are 14 pairs of strings that are plucked and stopped on a fretted fingerboard like a guitar. The fret comes about half way down the neck. 8 additional single strings are tuned and simply plucked. There are two sets of keys for tuning – one in the centre of the neck close to the fret, and the other at the very end of the neck, which was difficult to reach. The theorbo gave an especially powerful sound that carried well and was an excellent accompaniment for singers, so it's likely that the musician in the picture would accompany himself and the other members of the music party in a song or two once he had managed to tune his enormous instrument.



The Founders of the Wallace Collection

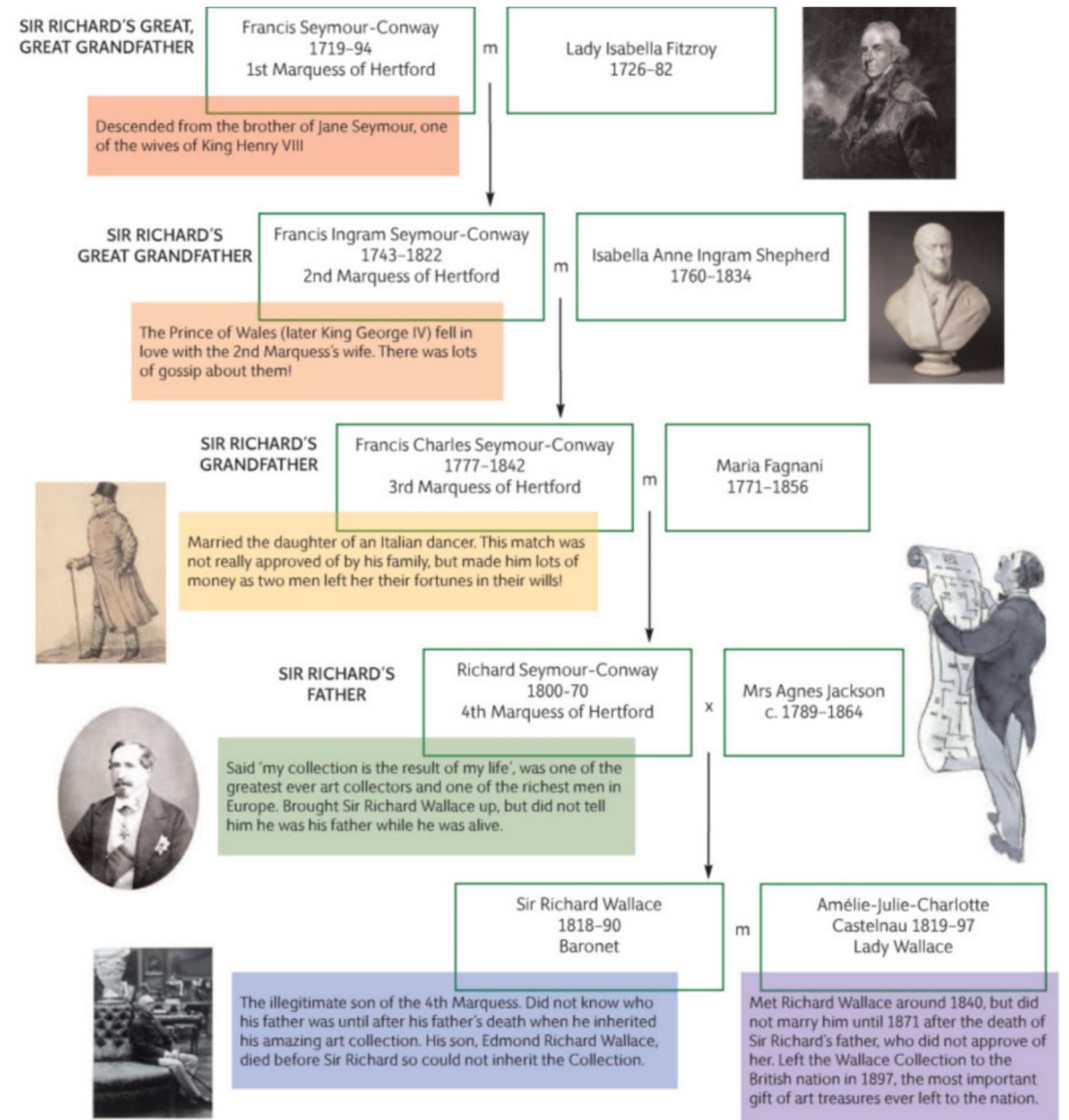


Hertford House (1776-88) and the Front State Room

Everything in this Box comes from the Wallace Collection at Hertford House, in the centre of London. Hertford House was the home of the Marquesses of Hertford and later of Sir Richard Wallace, the illegitimate son of the 4th Marquess.

- In 1797 the 2nd Marquess bought the house as a hunting lodge but subsequent owners have added to it. They also added to the Collection, but the greatest of the collectors were the 4th Marquess and Sir Richard.
- When he was 18, the 4th Marquess had a love affair with a married woman, Agnes Jackson. Six years later, she left their young son Richard with the Marquess in Paris where he lived. Richard was brought up as Richard Jackson. He was never told that the Marquess was his father and later adopted his mother's maiden name of Wallace. In his early twenties, his father told him that he must settle down. Richard made enlarging and looking after the Collection his life's work.
- Richard himself had a mistress, Amélie Castelnau, who worked in a Paris parfumerie but his father didn't approve of a marriage. When the 4th Marquess died in 1870, he left the Collection to Richard. Richard discovered that the Marquess was his father and was now free to marry Amélie.
- Sir Richard performed many charitable works for which Queen Victoria created him a Baronet. He died in 1890 and left the Collection to Lady Wallace who died in 1897. Following her husband's wishes, Lady Wallace left the Collection to the Nation.

Family Tree



Les Charmes de la Vie (The Charms of Life)



Antoine Watteau
France, c1718-1719
Oil on canvas, 26.5 x 36.4in / 67.3 x 92.5cm

Description of the picture

In the shade of a grand porch, an exquisitely dressed group, perhaps a family, sits to enjoy music, refreshment, sunshine and a little flirtation.

In the shade of a grand porch, an exquisitely dressed group sits to enjoy music, refreshment, sunshine and a little flirtation. A man in fancy costume tunes an enormous theorbo, an instrument like a lute. The man's face is a little anxious under his feathered hat. A pretty young woman plays the guitar. Another's attention is taken by the young man kneeling beside her. An older man in a soft red beret leans on the back of a chair, his eyes on the instrument and the possible difficulties tuning it. A little girl stands with her back to us to show off her sumptuous pink gown and the lace flower in her hair. Beside her, a bass viol, or cello, with its bow leans against a stool, a symbol that the child is too young for love. On her other side a child plays with a puppy. A larger dog lies on the marble floor of the porch, biting at its own flank, perhaps searching for fleas. On the right, a black boy kneels to take a bottle from a large copper wine-cooler. Behind this charming group a view of the countryside stretches away into a misty distance. Other elegant figures on the grass stroll, recline, romance, wiling away their endless leisure time.

Some thoughts about the picture

- The artist, Watteau, excelled at these 'fêtes gallantes', fantasies of an enchanted aristocratic life interwoven with portraits of people he knew from his own sphere of art, music and theatre. The man in the beret is thought to be his painter friend Nicolas Vieughels, and he often painted actors from the Commedia dell-Arte.

Discussion point: Fantasy and reality

- Watteau creates a fantasy world that his wealthy patrons would enjoy – a dream world that was far from reality.
- ? Do you think that people today enjoy looking at or reading about fantasy worlds?
- ? Which films or books do you like? Do you prefer types that 'take you out of yourself' or would you prefer gritty reality?
- ? If you could paint a picture of your dream world, what would it look like? What people would be in it and what would they be doing?

Discussion point: People

- The countryside in the painting is idyllic, with everyone at leisure. Each character interacts with another, their gaze and body-language telling us where their interest lies.
- ? Who is interested in who, do you think – and why?
- ? Which of the people in the picture would have the most interesting story to tell? Will the flirting couple have a happy ending? Will the musician tune his instrument and play well, or is disaster imminent?
- ? And the children... The little girl must be proud of her dress. She watches the others closely. What is she thinking? The little boy is wearing a dress too. Did you know that little boys wore skirts until they were six or seven years old until not so very long ago? Do you remember any little boys that wore skirts when they were small?
- ? The young black boy is a servant at everyone's bidding. What might his life have been like? The family might be kind to him or they might not, but in any event, he has to work hard. No school, no proper friends. And where are his parents?



A Skating Scene



Aert van der Neer
Netherlands, c1655 - 1660
Oil on canvas, 21 x 26.8in / 53.4 x 68cm

Description of the picture

The golden light of a setting winter sun casts a glow over a frozen canal that leads away towards the distant sea. On either bank is a small village among trees. The silhouettes of a church and a windmill pierce the sky. Taller trees reach up from a spit of land, leafless but aquiver as if the unaccustomed sun is bringing them to life, unlike the two abandoned boats stuck in the ice.

- But the ice is alive with busy people: a prosperous couple sit comfortably in a sledge drawn by a plodding horse, their manservant behind them standing on the sledge-runners to guide it. A lively dog springs towards them over the ice, barking, its owners busy chatting, oblivious of the cold. A group of men practice *kolf*, a forerunner of golf, as a little boy skates awkwardly, knees up, towards a watching couple, his club tucked under his arm. Other people stand, warmly wrapped in heavy cloaks, or perch on the canal bank to watch the many skaters zigzagging across the ice, perhaps going about their business, perhaps simply enjoying themselves in the last rays of the hazy sun.

Some thoughts about the picture

- The figures in the painting are small, but detailed. The huge expanse of sky and the distance make a realistic background to the lifestyle of the people. Landscape paintings, showing Dutch people at work and at play, were extremely popular in the Netherlands in the 17th century. They were a reminder to people of their country's new independence, their industry, patriotism and success. Perhaps 'winter pictures' in particular told of their endurance and fortitude in adversity, though in van der Neer's picture, they appear to be having fun too.

Discussion point: Skating

- The people in the painting seem relaxed with the idea of skating as a means of getting about, as if it was something that they often had to do. No one is falling over or having to hang on to something, with the exception perhaps of the little boy whose legs seem to have a life of their own.
- ? Did you learn to skate when you were young. Did you enjoy it? And did you fall over a lot while you were learning?
- ? Did you prefer roller skates perhaps? Do you think you would have had a go at skate-boarding?
- ? The World Ice-Skating Championships or the Winter Olympics are usually covered on television. Do you enjoy watching those really skilled skaters? What about programmes about celebrities learning to skate or some of the old films that featured ice-skaters, do you enjoy those?

Discussion point: People

- The people in the picture are very tiny, yet the artist is so skilled, you can tell what kind of people they are, their age, their status, their feelings. Have a close look at them through the magnifying glass in the Box and make your own stories about them.
- ? Can you find someone who is in a great hurry? What do you think his story is? Where is he going? Why is he racing along so fast? Is he the bearer of news? Is he escaping from someone or something, or just enjoying the speed?
- ? What do you think the servant guiding the sledge is thinking about? Is he listening to his master and mistress? What are they talking about? And what about the other groups of sturdy looking villagers, wrapped in their warm clothes? What are they discussing? The weather? Business? Or just gossip?
- ? And what about the little boy with his kolf-club, his face lifted towards the grown-ups? Is he asking a question? Are the older boys not letting him have his turn, maybe? Is it time for tea?



Inkstand (Ecritoire à globes)



Jean-Claude Chambellan Duplessis the Elder
Designer, possibly Charles-Nicolas Dodin (Painter, cherubs)
Sèvres, France, 1758 - 1759
Soft-paste porcelain painted and gilded and silver-gilt mounts
6.7 x 14.9 x 10.6in / 17 x 38 x 27.1cm

Description of the inkstand

The brilliant green, white and gold of this precious little inkstand sparkles, fresh and bright. The shallow oval dish is decorated with wreaths of flowers and with cupids frisking among the clouds. In the centre, where the dish rises up to a miniature pedestal, is a royal crown with the fleur de lys of France. The crown is intricately decorated with white porcelain mesh and leaves tipped with gold. It sits on a green porcelain cushion. On either side of the crown is a globe on a green and gold stand. On the right, is the terrestrial globe, showing the countries of the world. On the left is the celestial globe, showing the constellations of stars and signs of the zodiac.

Some thoughts about the inkstand

- The inkstand is especially rare and treasured because it was a birthday present from King Louis XV of France to his favourite daughter, Marie-Adélaïde. Two medallions reveal this: one in the centre shows Louis' head, and at one end is the gilded monogram MA for Marie-Adélaïde. The princess's pens were laid in the dish, a sponge to wipe them was concealed under the cushion, and under the crown was a bell to summon her maid to collect the letter she had written. Inside the terrestrial globe was an inkwell. Inside the celestial globe was a silver-gilt sand-shaker and when candles were lit, the tiny gilt stars on its surface twinkled through the porcelain like real stars.

Discussion point: Marie-Adélaïde

- Marie-Adélaïde was the fourth of Louis XV's daughters, and sixth of his ten surviving children. She was said to be very intelligent and portraits show her as pretty, but she never married and outlived all her siblings, dying in Italy during the French Revolution.
- ? Do you have brothers and sisters? Where did you come in your family? Do you think it made a difference in your childhood? Were older siblings good-natured or a bit bossy, maybe? Did you spoil the younger ones and play with them, or expect them to run round after you?
- ? People wrote many more letters before phones, mobiles and emails were invented. Do you like sending and receiving letters and postcards? Do you feel it's rather sad we don't do it as much any more?

Discussion point: Presents

- The inkstand is made of porcelain, and decorated with gold and silver. Marie-Adélaïde must have treasured her beautiful present and we know she wrote many letters to her family and friends.
- ? Do you remember any special presents you were given? Did you keep them for a long time? Did you give any presents that you especially remember?
- ? Do you remember having to write letters, maybe thank you letters at Christmas and birthdays? Did you mind, or was it a really tedious chore? Did you have to use messy ink, or did you have an inkstand or a pencil case to keep things tidy?

Discussion point: Stamps and postage

- There were no stamps in the 18th century. Letters were delivered by mail coach or special messengers on horseback if they were urgent.
- ? Did you ever wait anxiously for the postman for some reason?
- ? Did you collect stamps? If so, which was your favourite? What picture was on it?
- ? Lots of people get temporary jobs delivering mail at Christmas. Did you ever do that, or do you know someone else who did? Was it a hard job?



The Lace Maker



Caspar Netscher
Netherlands, 1662

Oil on canvas, 13 x 10.63in / 33 x 27cm

Description of the picture

On the bare boards of a quiet, humble room, a young woman sits on a low chair, absorbed in the intricate task of lacemaking. Seen in profile, her turned up nose and firm little chin are outlined against a faint halo of light cast from an unseen window on to the peeling grey paint of the wall behind her. On the wall is pinned a black and white print of a landscape, its borders curling up.

- The Lace Maker's modest clothes are of heavy wool, a voluminous black skirt and a brilliant scarlet jacket, edged with braid. A white shift peeps out from the wide neckline and the full sleeves of the jacket. The sleeves are pushed back to reveal her strong arms and hands. Her light brown hair is scraped back from her face and hidden under a close-fitting white cap, the point jutting down on to her rosy cheek. The cap is decorated with black-work embroidery which she has probably sewn herself. On her lap is her lace pillow with its many bobbins, showing the intricacy of her work. Behind her, leaning against the wall is a besom, a broom with the twigs bound with metal. On the floor are two closed mussels. Beside her, lying untidily is a pair of black, square-toed shoes.

Some thoughts about the picture

In the Netherlands in the 17th century, every young woman embroidered and made lace, but the professional lace-makers were from poorer families. Their hours were long, their conditions harsh, and working by candle-light sometimes affected their eyesight.

Discussion point: Lace-making

- Lace is very beautiful and looks and feels luxurious, but long ago, it sometimes came at a human cost as well as in money.
- ? Did you ever have a job that was arduous and tiring and that might even have affected your health? Did you know someone else who did? Have conditions changed for that kind of work nowadays?
- ? Lace-making by hand is probably more of a hobby than an industry nowadays. Would you like to try it? Or would you prefer something a bit less tricky and time-consuming?

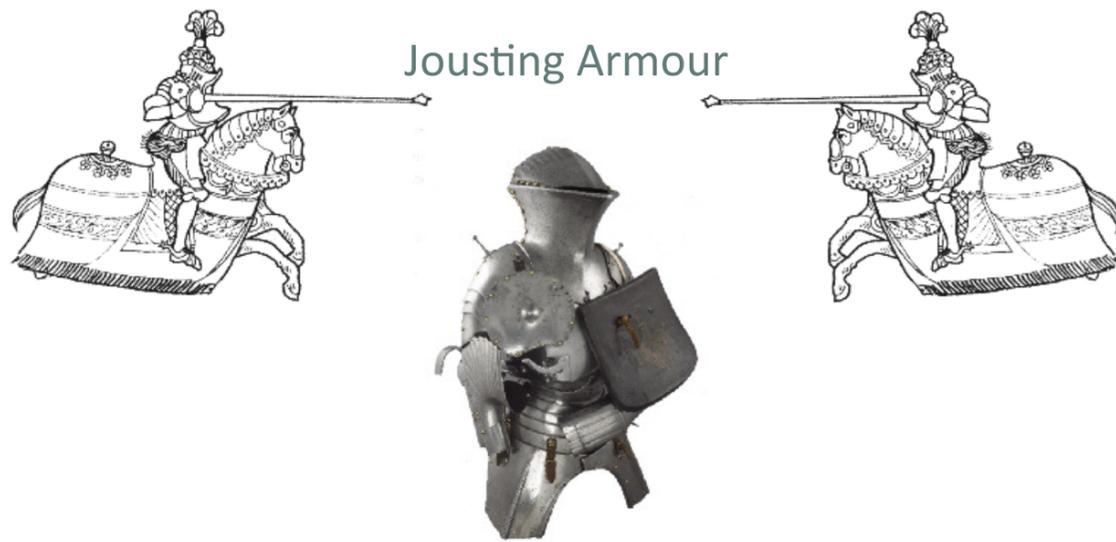
Discussion point: The young woman

- The artist appears to be showing us the Lace Maker as a role model for young women.
- ? What role models can you think of nowadays for young women, or young men too?
- ? Do you think that many of them are holding up a bad example? Can you think of any good ones, too?

Discussion point: Symbols

- Closed mussels beside a young woman in a Dutch 17th century painting are often a symbol that she is a virgin. The shoes thrown down untidily are more of a mystery. Another folklore tradition suggests that they were to keep the devil at bay. He can't step into the shoes and enter the room if they are lying higgledy-piggledy.
- ? Are the shoes simply a sign that even this industrious young woman has her thoughtless moments? Are they to keep her safe from losing her virtue? The mussels suggest that she has resisted temptation but whose shoes are they? Might they belong to a man? If so, how long will she resist?





Jousting Armour

Unknown artist or maker
 Augsburg or Nuremberg, Germany c1500-1520
 Low-to-medium carbon steel, leather, copper alloy; gesso, oil paint
 and wood, engraved, embossed, incised, pierced and painted
 Weight: 90.19lb / 40.91kg

Description of the armour

Made in Germany 500 years ago, the armour is imposing and even intimidating, but it was made not for battle as you might suppose, but for jousting in a friendly setting, where two knights charged each other on horseback, aiming to strike their opponent as hard and as accurately as possible with their long lances. 'Jousts of Peace' were sporting displays of bravery and skill with the horse and with the weapon. They were held to celebrate great events such as important marriages or diplomatic meetings, when great pageantry and spectacle were essential but accidents and injuries considered unacceptable.

Some thoughts about the armour

The head was one of the main targets in the joust, so the helmet, or 'helm' had to be very strongly built. This one is made of steel 6mm thick and is securely bolted to the breastplate, holding the wearer's head firmly in place and fully protecting him from head and neck injury. Safety was much more important than mobility. The heavy jousting lance was 10-12 feet long. When lowered it was supported by the lance-rest and rear arm or 'queue' on the right side. Rivets and leather straps held the armour together, allowing the arms to move freely while the body and head remained, for the most part fixed in place. The shield is made of wood covered with leather, and was painted with the heraldic coat of arms of the owner.

If you would like to know more about armour and the names of the different parts, look at the figure on page 18 of the booklet.

Discussion point: Jousting armour

- Jousting armour was often very different from battle armour. It was usually heavier, less flexible, and restricted vision and hearing quite dramatically.
- ? Look at the picture of the two helmets. Can you tell the difference? Which do you think is for jousting and which for battle?
- ? Why do you think the armour ends at hip level? Do you think it's because the wearer needed freedom of movement to control his horse and keep his balance, or because the legs were protected in some other way, or because the armour is today incomplete?

Discussion point: Jousts of Peace

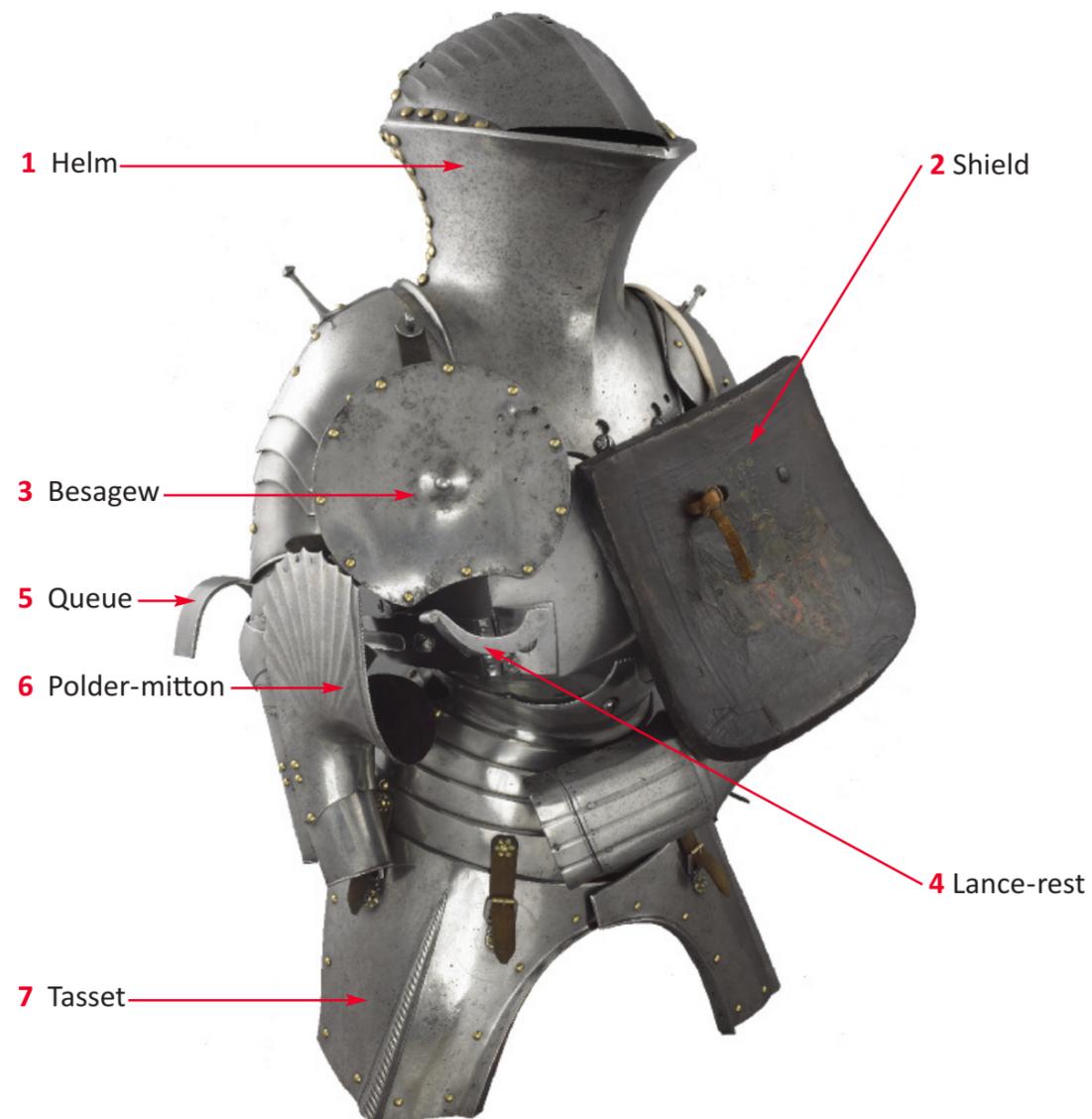
- Jousts of Peace were great celebratory occasions often with huge crowds gathered to watch the action. They would have been colourful, noisy and very exciting.
- ? Do you think you would have enjoyed watching a joust, or even fought in one yourself? Would you have minded the noise and the smell?
- ? Have you been to any sporting or other entertainments that were noisy, colourful and exciting? What about a football or a boxing match? Did you go to a music festival like Glastonbury or Reading? Did you enjoy them?

Discussion point: Knights of Old

- In the 19th century, the use of armour wasn't understood and it's probably from that time that the modern comical image of the knight lumbering round in his overly heavy armour comes. The Victorians also had a romantic idea of the knight as a swashbuckling hero.
- ? Do you enjoy books and films about knights and fair maidens and derring-do? Were Errol Flynn and Douglas Fairbanks Jnr and Robert Taylor among your heroes? Do you like modern favourites like Robin Hood where the armoured knight is often the villain?
- ? Do you remember films like Laurence Olivier's Henry V, where French knights were hoisted on their horses by crane? Do you think that was accurate? Why do you suppose it was decided to show the horses being mounted in this way?



Focus on the Jousting Armour



-
- 1 **Helm:** One of two main targets in the joust, a hit to the head scores maximum points.

 - 2 **Shield:** Also called a target, a word originally meaning shield. The other scoring area in the joust.

 - 3 **Besagew:** Thick plate protecting the vulnerable right armpit.

 - 4 **Lance-rest:** Stops the lance from being shoved backwards on impact.

 - 5 **Queue:** Heavy bracket to support the weight of the lance.

 - 6 **Polder-mitton:** Special armour for the right arm with large elbow guards to protect against lances skating across the body.

 - 7 **Tasset:** Thick plate protecting the hip and upper leg.

Focus on the Inkstand



The text below was written by the Wallace Collection's Young Curators, a group of children from a local state primary school, for their exhibition 'Shh...It's a Secret: Unlocking the secrets behind the treasures of the Wallace Collection' held at the Wallace Collection in 2010.

This inkstand has many secrets, with little compartments containing all the equipment for writing. It was a present from King Louis XV of France to his daughter Marie-Adelaïde, who lived over 250 years ago. Can you see the little picture of the King?

There are two letters M and A on the tray, many people thought MA stood for Marie-Antoinette, the most famous queen of France. It was not until much later they discovered that Marie-Adelaïde was the real owner.

How to use the inkstand

-
- 1 Lift off the lid of the terrestrial globe, which shows a map of the world, dip the pen in the ink and write.

 - 2 Clean the nib by using the sponge which is under the cushion.

 - 3 Take out the golden container from inside the celestial globe, which shows the stars and signs of the zodiac, and shake sand over the letter to dry the ink.

 - 4 All that is left to do now is to lift up the crown of France, which contains a bell, ring it and a servant will come and take the letter away.

 - ? Did you know that only three of these inkstands were made in the whole world?

Some Poems

to enhance your enjoyment of the pictures

These little poems are old traditional rhymes about work and play.
Some of them you may remember from your childhood.

Monday's child is fair of face
Tuesday's child is full of grace,
Wednesday's child is full of woe,
Thursday's child has far to go,
Friday's child is loving and giving,
Saturday's child works hard for his living,
And the child that is born on the Sabbath day
Is bonny and blithe and good and gay.

See saw Marjorie Daw,
Johnnie shall have a new master;
He shall have but a penny a day,
Because he can't work any faster.

Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor,
Rich man, poor man, beggar man – thief

God made man, and man makes money,
God made the bees, and the bees make honey,
God made a little man to plough and to sow,
God made a little boy to keep away the crow,
God made woman to brew and to bake,
And God made a little maid to eat plum cake.

In a Cornfield

Two short poems that evoke a bygone age: the first, *In a Cornfield* is by Christina Rossetti and the second, *The One Furrow* is by R S Thomas, in which he tells of learning to write and calculate long ago.

A silence of full noontide heat
Grew on them at their toil:
The farmer's dog woke up from sleep,
The green snake hid her coil
Where grass grew thickest; bird and beast
Sought shadows as they could.
The reaping men and women paused
And sat down where they stood;
They ate and drank and were refreshed,
For rest from toil is good.

The One Furrow

When I was young, I went to school
With pencil and foot rule
Sponge and slate,
And sat on a tall stool
At learning's gate.

When I was older, the gate swung wide;
Clever and keen eyed
In I pressed,
But found in the mind's pride
No peace, no rest.

Then who was it taught me back to go
To cattle and barrow,
Field and plough,
To keep to the one furrow,
As I do now?

The Glory of the Garden



Rudyard Kipling was one of the most patriotic of poets. In his poem *The Glory of the Garden* he extols the beauty of England and the work it takes to keep it so.

Our England is a garden that is full of stately views,
Of borders, beds and shrubberies and lawns and avenues,
With statues on the terraces and peacocks strutting by;
But the Glory of the Garden lies in more than meets the eye.

For where the old thick laurels grow, along the thin red wall,
You find the tool- and potting-sheds which are the heart of all;
The cold-frames and the hot-houses, the dungpits and the tanks,
The rollers, carts and drain-pipes, with the barrows and the planks.

And there you'll see the gardeners, the man and 'prentice boys
Told off to do as they are told and do it without noise;
For, except when seeds are planted and we shout to scare the birds,
The Glory of the Garden it abideth not in words.

And some can pot begonias and some can bud a rose,
And some are barely fit to trust with anything that grows;
But they can roll and trim the lawns and sift the sand and loam,
For the Glory of the Garden occupieth all that come.

Our England is a garden, and such gardens are not made
By singing – 'Oh how beautiful!' and sitting in the shade,
While better men than we go out and start their working lives
At grubbing weeds from gravel paths with broken dinner-knives.

There's not a pair of legs so thin, there's not a head so thick,
There's not a hand so weak and white, nor yet a heart so sick,
But it can find some needful job that's crying to be done,
For the Glory of the Garden glorifieth every one.

The Glory of the Garden (cont)



Then seek your job with thankfulness and work till further orders,
If it's only netting strawberries or killing slugs on borders;
And when your back stops aching and your hands begin to harden,
You will find yourself a partner in the Glory of the Garden.

Oh, Adam was a gardener, and God who made him sees
That half a proper gardener's work is done upon his knees,
So when your work is finished, you can wash your hands and pray
For the Glory of the Garden, that it may not pass away!
And the Glory of the Garden it shall never pass away!

The quintessential words about music come from the beginning of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, when Count Orsino sits alone musing on music and love.

If music be the food of love, play on;
Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,
The appetite may sicken, and so die.
That strain again! It had a dying fall:
O, it came o'er my ear like the sweet sound
That breathes upon a bank of violets,
Stealing and giving odour. Enough; no more:
'Tis not so sweet now as it was before.
O spirit of love! How quick and fresh art thou,
That notwithstanding thy capacity
Receiveth as the sea, nought enters there,
Of what validity and pitch so'er,
But falls into abatement and low price,
Even in a minute: so full of shapes is fancy
That it alone is high fantastical.

La Belle Dame Sans Merci

John Keats's poem *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* takes a Romantic's view of the valiant Knight in thrall to a wicked faery.

O what can ail thee, Knight-at-arms,
Alone and palely loitering?
The sedge is withered from the lake,
And no birds sing.

O what can ail thee, Knight-at-arms,
So haggard and so woe-begone?
The squirrel's granary is full,
And the harvest's done.

I see a lily on thy brow
With anguish moist and fever dew;
And on thy cheeks a fading rose
Fast withereth too.

I met a lady in the meads,
Full beautiful, a fairy's child; -
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild.

I made a garland for her head,
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;
She look'd at me as she did love,
And made sweet moan.

I set her on my pacing steed,
And nothing else saw all day long;
For sidelong would she lean, and sing
A faery's song.

She found me roots of relish sweet,
And honey wild, and manna dew;
And sure in language strange she said -
'I love thee true!'

She took me to her elfin grot,
And there she wept and sigh'd full sore,
And there I shut her wild, wild eyes
With kisses four.

And there she lullèd me to sleep
And then I dream'd - Ah! Woe betide!
The latest dream I ever dream'd,
On the cold hill-side.

I saw pale kings and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
They cried: 'La Belle Dame sans Merci
Hath thee in thrall!'
I saw their starv'd lips in the gloam,
With horrid warning gapèd wide,
And I awoke, and found me here
On the cold hill-side.

And this is why I sojourn here
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is withered from the lake,
And no birds sing.

Gawain and the Green Knight

The old traditional story of *Gawain and the Green Knight* is long but great fun. Here are some small extracts from it, in which the shock arrival of the Green Knight is told in a translation by poet Simon Armitage.

...a fearful form appeared, framed in the door:
a mountain of a man, immeasurably high,
a hulk of a human from head to hips,
so long and thick in his loins and his limbs
I should genuinely judge him to be a half-giant,
or a most massive man, the mightiest of mortals.
But handsome too, like any horseman worth his horse,
for despite the bulk and brawn of his body
his stomach and waist were slender and sleek.

In fact in all features he was finely formed
It seemed.

Amazement seized their minds,
No soul had ever seen
a knight of such a kind -
entirely emerald green.

And his gear and garments were green as well;
a tight-fitting tunic, tailored to his torso,
and a cloak to cover him, the cloth fully lined
with smoothly shorn fur clearly showing, and faced
with all-white ermine, as was the hood,
worn shawled on his shoulders, shucked from his head.
On his lower limbs his leggings were also green,
wrapped closely round his calves, and his sparkling spurs
were green-gold, strapped with stripy silk,
and were set on his stockings, for the stranger was shoeless.
In all vestments he revealed himself veritably verdant!

...The fellow in green was in fine fettle.
The hair on his head was as green as his horse,
fine flowing locks which fanned across his back,
plus a bushy green beard growing down to his breast,
and his face hair along with the hair of his head
was lopped in a line at elbow length
so half his arms were gowned in green growth,
crimped at the collar like a king's cape.
The mane of his mount was green to match,
combed and knotted into curlicues
then tinselled with gold, tied and twisted
green over gold, green over gold...

The Song of the Shirt

Thomas Hood wrote *The Song of the Shirt* in the early 19th century, at the height of the Industrial Revolution. He shows his sympathy with women working as shirt makers in the poor conditions that some of the lace makers may have encountered 150 years before. It is a long poem, so just a few of the verses are included here:

With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A Woman sat, in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread –
Stitch! Stitch! Stitch!
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch
She sang the ‘Song of the Shirt!’

Work – work – work –
Till the brain begins to swim,
Work – work – work –
Till the eyes are heavy and dim!
Seam, and gusset, and seam,
Band, and gusset, and seam,
Till over the buttons I fall asleep
And sew them on in a dream!

O, but to breathe the breath
Of the cowslip and primrose sweet! –
With the sky above my head,
And the grass beneath my feet
For only one short hour
To feel as I used to feel,
Before I knew the woes of want
And the walk that cost a meal!

O but for one short hour!
A respite however brief!
No blessed leisure for Love or Hope,
But only time for Grief!
A little weeping would ease my heart,
But in their briny bed
My tears must stop, for every drop
Hinders needle and thread.

Seam, and gusset, and band,
Band, and gusset, and seam,
Work, work, work,
Like the engine that works by Steam!
A mere machine of iron and wood
That toils for Mammon’s sake –
Without a brain to ponder and craze,
Or a heart to feel – and break!

With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A Woman sat, in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread –
Stitch! Stitch! Stitch!
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch
She sang the ‘Song of the Shirt!’

But this traditional rhyme gives us happier thoughts about shirts:

Can you wash your father’s shirt?
Can you wash it clean?
Can you wash your father’s shirt
And bleach it on the green?
Yes, I can wash my father’s shirt,
And I can wash it clean.
I can wash my father’s shirt
And send it to the Queen

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

The American poet Robert Frost wrote *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* whilst living in the English countryside during a snowy winter.

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound’s the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

My Papa’s Waltz

Another American poet, Theodore Roethke, reminds us of a hard working life that still held moments of laughter and play.

The whisky on your breath
Could make a small boy dizzy;
But I hung on like death:
Such waltzing was not easy.

We romped until the pans
Slid from the kitchen shelf;
My mother’s countenance
Could not unfrown itself.

The hand that held my wrist
Was battered on one knuckle;
At every step you missed
My right ear scraped a buckle.

You beat time on my head
With a palm caked hard by dirt,
Then waltzed me off to bed
Still clinging to your shirt.

A Welsh Childhood at Christmas

And lastly, an extract from Dylan Thomas's well-loved story of a Welsh childhood at Christmas:

And I remember that on the afternoon of Christmas Day, when the others sat around the fire and told each other that this was nothing, no, nothing, to the great snowbound and turkey-proud Yule-log-crackling holly-berry-bedizened and kissing-under-the-mistletoe Christmas when they were children, I would go out, school-capped and gloved and muffled, with my bright new boots squeaking, into the white world on to the seaward hill, to call on Jim and Dan and Jack and to walk with them through the silent snowscape of our town. We went padding through the streets, leaving huge deep footprints in the snow, on the hidden pavements.

'I bet people'll think there's been hippos.'

'What would you do if you saw a hippo coming down Terrace Road?'

'I'd go like this, bang! I'd throw him over the railings and roll him down the hill and then I'd tickle him under the ear and he'd wag his tail...'

'What would you do if you saw two hippos...?'

Iron-flanked and bellowing he-hippos clanked and blundered and battered through the scudding snow towards us as we passed by Mr Daniel's house.

'Let's post Mr Daniels a snowball through his letterbox.'

'Let's write things in the snow.'

'Let's write "Mr Daniel looks like a spaniel" all over his lawn.'

A Welsh Childhood at Christmas (cont)

'Look,' Jack said, 'I'm eating snow-pie.'

'What's it taste like?'

'Like snow-pie' Jack said.

Or we walked on the white shore.

'Can the fishes see it's snowing?'

'They think it's the sky falling down.'

The silent one-clouded heavens drifted on to the sea.

'All the old dogs have gone.'

Dogs of a hundred mingled makes yapped in the summer at the sea-rim and yelped at the trespassing mountains of the waves.

'I bet St Bernards would like it now.'

And we were snowblind travellers lost on the north hills, and the great dewlapped dogs, with brandy-flasks round their necks, ambled and shambled up to us, baying 'Excelsior.'

We returned home through the desolate poor sea-facing streets where only a few children fumbled with bare red fingers in the thick wheel-rutted snow and cat-called after us, their voices fading away, as we trudged uphill, into the cries of the dock-birds and the hooters of ships out in the white and whirling bay.