Dig-ital Resource pack

Medieval Church Art (KS3 - KS4 / Secondary) (History / Art / Design Technology)

LESSON INFO:

A Key Stage 3-4 lesson investigating the art work associated with medieval and early modern churches in England. This resource focuses on paintings and sculptures that were once found within St Mary's Church near to the village of Stoke Mandeville in Buckinghamshire. It follows a format of art-history investigation, highlighting the importance of recognition and identification of symbolism within images.

The ruins of the church are currently undergoing archaeological investigation, undertaken as part of the HS2 project. The lesson encourages students to think about the differences between modern and historic ideas of design and symbolism. It investigates how archaeologists and historians can use the remains of art that once adorned a building to uncover more about the lives of people in the past.

Objectives:

- To discover the historic meanings and symbolism behind church art
- To learn about the importance of churches to people in Medieval Britain
- To understand the historic and continued role of heraldry and coats of arms

Teacher Objectives:

To encourage students to think about the historic images used in their everyday environment. Guide students in the delivery of two exercises and assist them in their further inquiries, encouraging questions and creativity of thought.

> **Students will:**
>
> Consider the history of their local area, explore how recognition of symbolisms within art forms the basis of art history investigation and how further meaning can be extracted from often simple images.

Provided resources:

Examples of heraldry relating to St Mary's in Stoke Mandeville
Heraldry recording sheet
Design your own coat of arms template

You will need:

Internet access, printer & paper, pencils, colouring pens/pencils/crayons,

Estimated time: 40 min

Introduction

Archaeologists are currently working on behalf of HS2 to excavate the ruins of St Mary's Church in Stoke Mandeville. They are uncovering a wealth of archaeology that will tell us more about the history and past communities of Stoke Mandeville. The church and churchyard of St. Mary's is one of the most important historical sites being investigated along the route, and we hope that the archaeological work will answer many questions about the building and its surrounding landscape.

The church of St Mary the Virgin was built in the late 11th century, shortly after the Norman Conquest in 1066. Unlike the modern church, also called St Mary's, the old church was not located in the centre of the village. Instead it stood in the middle of an agricultural landscape, on land owned by the bishop of Lincoln. Near to the church there were a number of other buildings, like barns and a mill. The mill is mentioned in the Domesday Book, which lists information about who owned land in England after the Norman Conquest.

The church was built in the bottom of a shallow valley, which was naturally very wet. People working the land in the medieval period took advantage of this, creating a number of artificial streams and ponds. These provided water to the nearby mill and were later used for growing watercress.

When the new church in the centre of Stoke Mandeville was opened in the late 1800s, St. Mary's fell into disrepair, although the churchyard continued to be used for burials until 1908. The ruins became dangerous and unstable, and the church was eventually demolished in 1966. In total the church and churchyard were used for over 800 years. The landscape around the church has evidence for even longer habitation. Excavations have also been taking place at the site of a Roman settlement to the east of the church, where buildings were arranged on either side of a central trackway. This settlement appears to have earlier Iron Age origins. High status Roman finds, such as a coin and decorated pottery, suggest that a Roman villa may have stood nearby.

As well as these packs for schools, we have a Field Museum on site, over a number of weekends over the summer. Inside the museum is a viewing platform giving a view of the ongoing excavations, as well as displays, films and interactives enabling you to explore the history of St. Mary's church and find out about archaeological discoveries in the area. Come and see the excavations, meet the archaeologists and find out more!

**Learning Content: Coat of Arms in Medieval England**

The use of coats of arms in England (also called heraldry) can be traced back to the early 1100's, not long after the Norman Conquest in 1066 AD. The tradition was brought across by the French court of William the Conqueror where it was used to show the rank and pedigree of the ruling class.

Originally, they were used by knights to tell each other apart during battles and tournaments. Knights would have their own coats of arms painted onto their shields or parts of their armour. They would have been quite simple designs and easy to recognise. Heraldry was also used to celebrate achievements or good qualities of character and were important symbols during ceremonies; they were often displayed as shows of courage, bravery and wealth.
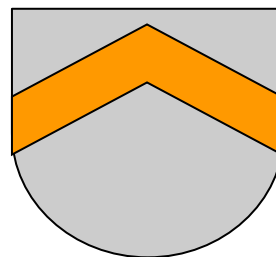
The shape and design of shields were also important - the simple patterns on shields were called '*heraldic ordinaries*'. These divide the shield into sections of colour. As well as the 4 common 'ordinaries' below, the shield could also be divided in half vertically, horizontally or diagonally too.
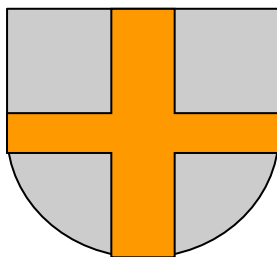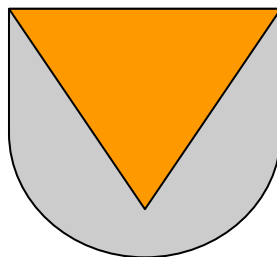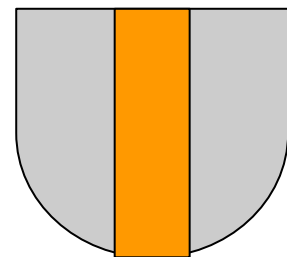

Cross	Pile	Chevron	Pale

Soon it wasn't just knights or members of the royal court who had their own coats of arms. By 1250 AD women, merchants and other ordinary people had their own too. They didn't just appear on shields or armour, people would have them on their clothes, houses, jewellery and even use them as adverts for their businesses. Because most people in the middle ages couldn't read or write, using pictures and symbols to represent yourself, your family or your business would have been the best way to get recognised.

When people created a coat of arms, they included pictures (symbols) which represented who they were and what they were like (or at least what they wanted to be like). Colours were also important but they didn't have the same names as colours do today - they were all in french. This is because between 1066-1413 the kings, and other important people in England, spoke French!

Even though many of the medieval examples on display in museums or art galleries today may not look very vivid, the colours originally used in heraldry would have been bright and vibrant. This originates in their use in battle, so it was clear what side you were fighting for. With age the colours of paint or cloth darken or become faded over time. Despite their age it is still possible to see the colours that once decorated important examples of heraldry and their continued use into the modern day means many are very well recorded. The colours chosen also had great meaning, they represented the values of the family, business or person they were designed for. See the table below for some examples:

Colour	Norman / French	Meaning
Red	*Gules*	Courage
Blue	*Azure*	Loyal
Green	*Vert*	Hopeful
Black	*Sable*	Reliable
Yellow or Gold	*Or*	Generous
Orange	*Tenne*	Determined or Enthusiastic
White or Silver	*Argent*	Peaceful

The Norman conquerors of England brought the French language with them as well as a lot of symbols important to the medieval French courts including the *fleur de lis* (meaning flower of the lily). This floral symbol was very important to French Royals, including the Norman king of England William the Conqueror. It is a very common symbol used within heraldry across Europe and symbolises connection or service to royalty.

Most medieval coats of arms contained many different symbols, some of these took the form or more simple shapes. These were called '*Heraldic Charges*' and were added onto the shields or in the background of heraldry paintings.

Animals also regularly feature in heraldry. Coats of arms often featured animals that you would have been able to see in Britain in the medieval period. For example bears used to roam the forests in some parts of England and Wales until the 1600's! like colours, animals also had important meanings that symbolised particular character traits or even 'historical' events. Animals and plants were normally depicted in their natural colours, this is called '*Proper'.*

'Fantastical' animals like griffins, unicorns or dragons were also used alot by people when designing their coat of arms. Some people even believed they existed, maybe because they'd heard about them in stories made up by travellers to distant lands, like crusading knights or merchant adventurers. Pictures of them also appeared in 'bestiaries', a popular kind of illustrated medieval story-book.

Coats of Arms and Medieval Churches:

Royal coats of arms were usually hung in churches as a reminder of the relationship between the Church and the Monarch. This was especially true after the Pope granted Henry VIII the title 'Defender of the Faith' in 1521 AD. Following Henry VIII's decision to break from Rome and form the Church of England 9 years later in 1530 AD, he declared the Monarch as the head of the Church. Royal coat of arms therefore became common-place in all churches in England. Paintings of it were installed on the walls of the church to remind the congression of the link between the church and the state.

There are also examples of ecclesiastical heraldry relating to several people and orders within the Christian Church. It is notably different from other heraldry as it uses special insignia around the shield in designs that show the rank or type of church it belonged to. The Pope has his own coat of arms but the Bishops of England in the Medieval period also designed and developed their own. Bishops were incredibly important in medieval England and owned large amounts of land and were extremely wealthy before Henry VIII's break from Rome. Their coat of arms would have been well recognised.

Learning Exercise 1: Coat of Arms Symbol Recognition

Teacher Instructions:

Divide the class into small groups or pairs to look at the images of coats of arms that relate to St Mary's Church in Stoke Mandeville. These can either be printed out (preferably in colour) or saved and digitally sent to students. Each group can have access to the internet to be able to research aspects of the heraldry or make suggestions using their imagination and intuition.

As small groups, students should identify important symbols within the heraldry. This includes the animals, shapes and colours used. They should suggest what they mean and why they could be relevant to the person, family or place they represent. They can use the recording sheet to support them doing this or draw next to / on the images.

After students are done looking at and identifying features within images (give them about 15 minutes), go through each image with the class. Go around the groups and ask them to point out symbols within the image or colours used. Ask them to offer explanations and meanings for the use of colours and symbols. There is information stated within the teacher notes for each image to help.
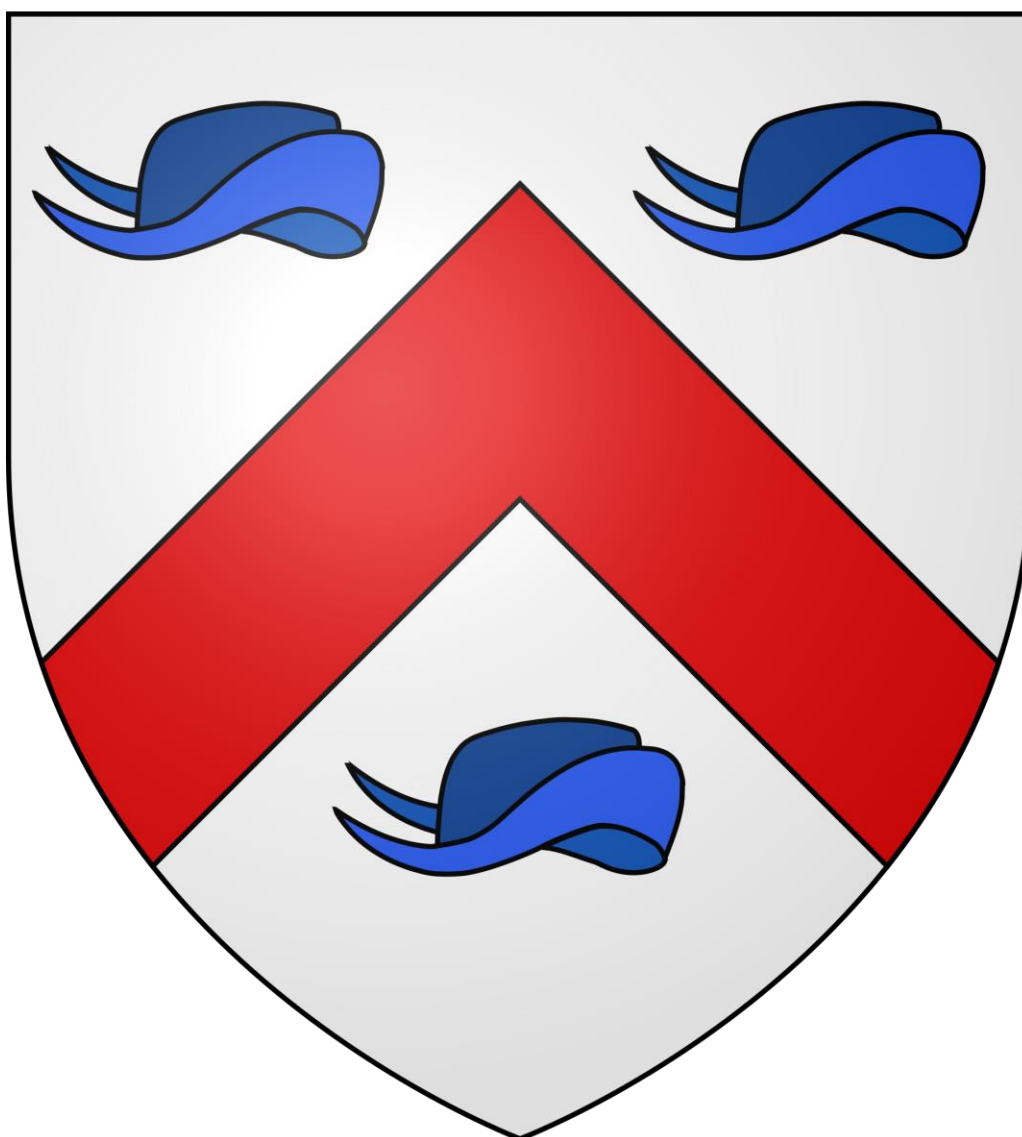
Useful questions to prompt students:

- Why do you think those colours were chosen?
- What animals can you see? What do they represent?
- How are the animals standing? Can you find the name for their positioning?
- Can you see any plants, flowers or trees? What do these symbolise?
- Can you spot any crowns, hats or helmets ? What do these symbolise?
- Are there any words in the coat of arms you are looking at? Can you make them out or translate them?

Heraldry Recording Sheet

Title of Heraldry Image	
Heraldic Ordinary **(Design of Shield)**	
Colours	
Heraldic Charges **(symbolic shapes)**	
Animals and Plants	
Other / Additional Research	

1. Shield of the Brudenell Family

VESTIGIA NULLA RETRORSUM

1) Shield of the Brudenell Family

This is a simplified shield from the coat of arms of the **Brudenell family**, who became the Earls of Cardigan. They were a very important family in the area around Stoke Mandeville and members of the family were buried at St Mary's Church. The Brudenell coat of arms can still partially be seen on the Brudenell monument, now in new St Mary's Church, Stoke Mandeville. The shield uses a chevron heraldic ordinary. The blue hats are actually a type of helmet from the 1500s known as a 'morion helmet', it would have been worn by foot-soldiers. The main colours are blue, red and silver (loyal, courage, peaceful).

> There are three main colours in this shield - can your students suggest what the colours used say about the Brudenell family?

For more information please go to : houseofnames.com/brudenell-family-crest

2) Buckinghamshire County coat of arms.

The shield is colored yellow, red and black (generous, courageous, reliable) with a picture of a swan wearing a crown around its neck. Above the swan is said to represent the Whiteleaf Cross; a cross-shaped chalk hill carving, with a triangular base, on Whiteleaf Hill near Princes Risborough in Buckinghamshire. The type of crown around the swan's neck in the centre of the shield is called a "ducal coronet" this is a sign of the Duke of Buckingham. It has a long gold chain attached to it. The image of the swan might also be a reference to an important local family called *de Bohun* who used it as their symbol in the middle ages. The stag deer (or BUCK) is a play on words (BUCKinghamshire). The tree represents the old woods in the Chilterns and that they used to be Royal hunting forests. The writing underneath is the county motto. It is in Latin and means "We never go backwards". There is also Christian cross on the top of the shield.

> The animals in this crest are shown in their natural colours - can your students remember what this is called?

For more information please go to : buckscc.gov.uk/services/council-and-democracy/council-structure/chairman-of-the-council/coat-of-arms/

3) Heraldry of the Bishop of Lincoln

The shield is divided horizontally into two with an upper blue section and lower red colour (loyal, courage). Two lions are in a stance known as 'passant guardant'. The Royal coat of arms for England features three lions in a similar style. This was first adopted by the Plantagenet kings as their personal coat of arms who ruled England from 1154 until 1485. Above this sits the Virgin Mary, crowned and sitting on a throne, in her arm is the infant Jeasus and in her hand is a sceptre. She is all in gold. It relates to the dedication of Lincoln Cathedral to the Blessed Virgin Mary and All Saints.

Above the shield sits a Mitre, a type of hat traditionally worn during ceremonies by bishops and certain abbots in traditional Christianity. It has two ribbon-like 'tails' with tassel endings. In ecclesiactic heraldry tradition the Mitre would appear above the shield of all those who were entitled to wear it during the ceremony.

William the Conqueror reorganised the clergy of England and made one of his supporters, Remigius de Fecamp, the Bishop of Lincoln. In the Doomsday book of 1086 Stoke Mandeville is listed under the lands owned and controlled by the Bishop of Lincoln at the time - Remigius de Fecamp. However, this coat of arms first appears on the seals of William Smith (1496 - 1514) when he was the Bishop of Lincoln. The Diocese of Lincoln was once the largest in England during the Medieval period. Lands under its ownership extended from the Humber to the Thames and had both present day Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire within its control.

> can your students recognise or guess who is sat on the throne? Why might it be important for the church to have these two figures represented?

For more information please go to :
www.waymarking.com/waymarks/wm121X4_Diocese_of_Lincoln_All_Saints_Harmston_Lincolnshire

4) Royal Coat of Arms

Painting of the **Royal Coat of Arms** from 1700, found in St Mary's Church, Stoke Mandeville. It is a custom to show the Royal Coat of Arms in a church – this is now in New St Mary's Church, Stoke Mandeville. The Lion is wearing a crown and represents England (i.e. the English monarchy) and the Unicorn is the symbol of Scotland and wears a crown (i.e. the Scottish monarchy) and chain around its neck- just like the swan in the Buckinghamshire coat of arms. Both are standing in a 'rampant' position on their hind legs. This particular version dates to the reign of William II (1056 – 1100) the third son of William the Conqueror. The 4 quarters of the central shield represents England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales. The main colours are blue, red, gold and silver (loyal, courageous, generous, peaceful). Around the central shield is a belt or strap with the motto *Honi soit qui mal y pense* ("Evil to him who evil thinks"), the symbol of the Order of the Garter. The words in the banner at the bottom of the image are in old-french and read *DIEU IT MON DROIT* meaning 'God and my right': this is still the motto of the Queen of England today.

> There is a rose and an apple in the painting, can your students spot them and suggest what they symbolise?

> The letter W R are at the top of the painting, can your students make them out? Thinking of who the monarch was at the time, why were these letters used? (W = William II , R = Rex meaning king) - these initials are known as the 'royal cypher'.

For more information please go to : royal.uk/coats-arms

Learning Exercise 2: Design your own coat of arms

Instructions:

Imagine you are a person living in the middle ages. Perhaps you are a knight going into battle, a merchant who needs people to recognise their goods or advertise their service, or an important lord or lady who wants to decorate their house. Think also about how you want to be remembered, these designs have been used and recognised for hundreds of years - often passed down by generations in a family or business.

Draw and colour your own coat of arms & present to the class your design. Think about the symbols, animals and colours you want to use to represent you. Design your own shield in the centre and write your name or motto within a ribbon beneath. Including at least 2 animals surrounding the shield, these can either be real animals or fantastical beasts.

In your short (1-2 minute) presentation, explain the choices you made in your design and why they relate to your personality or interests. Think of the recording sheet from the last exercise and the key features to point out within your design.

Reflect on the examples in the previous exercise and how those shields and coats of arms are designed; how symbolic creatures and things are placed within the image. Use the information from the learning content and what you have learnt from looking at the previous examples to help you. You can also use online resources to research other examples of medieval heraldry and the meaning behind the colours, symbols or animals used in them that you might include within your design.

A useful website to visit:

hallofnames.org.uk/heraldry-symbols-and-what-they-mean/
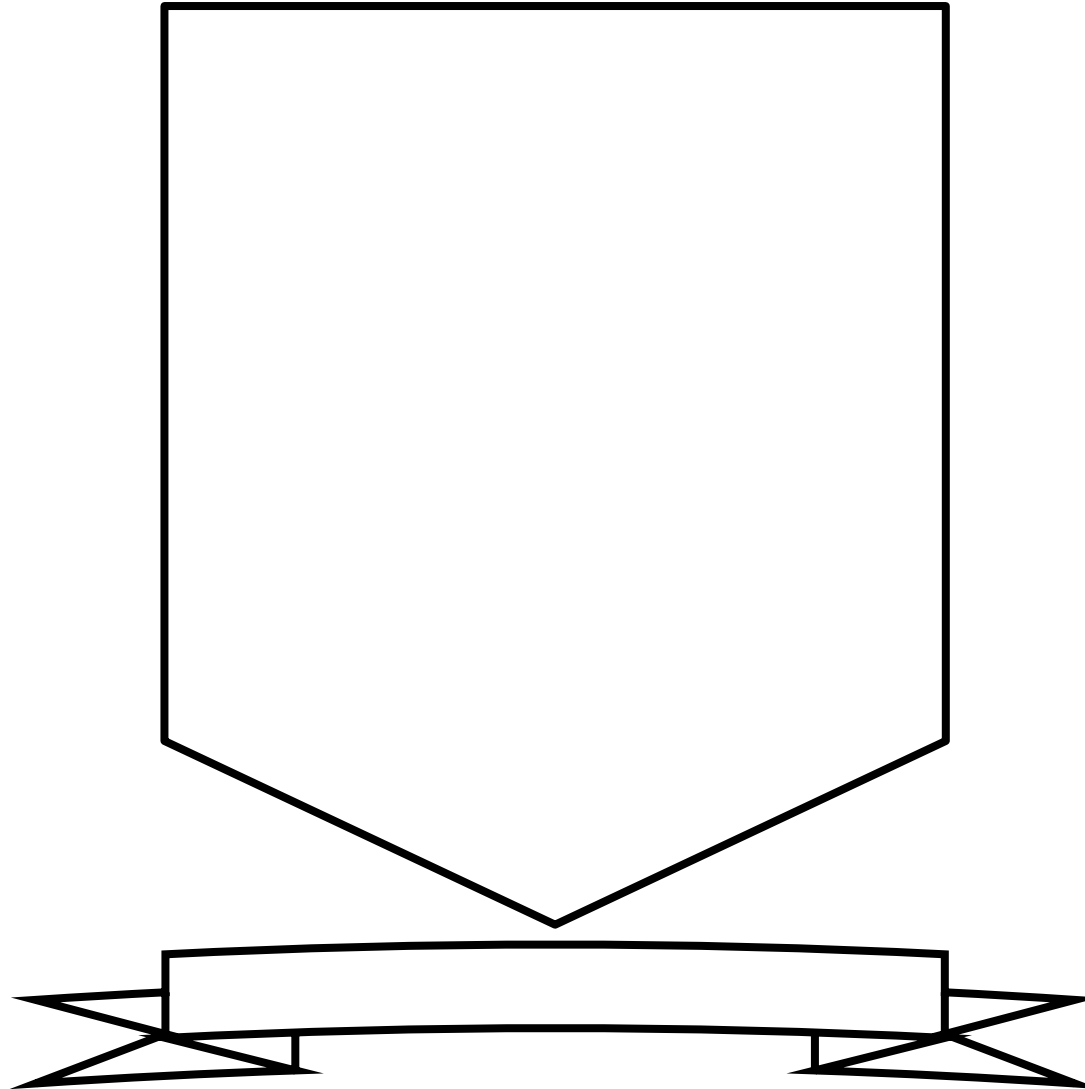
Conclusion:

Ask your students to reflect on the work they have done during this workshop. If there was anything surprising or interesting they found out. How many had seen the Buckinghamshire heraldry before or recognised the Royal coat of arms?

Think about the legacy that people left behind in designing and using their coats of arms and how many are still in use today. By looking at art associated with the former parish church of St Mary's in Stoke Mandeville, what can it tell us about the people who lived and died in this area. For example, did the painting of the coat of arms hanging in the church mean that the local people were very loyal to the English Monarchs at the time and perhaps shared their faith? Dated to 1700, during the reign of William III and Mary II it was painted towards the end of their reign following years of civil and foreign war. There had been a great religious divide in England at that time and with the crowning of William and Mary meant that England once again had a Catholic royal family. Did the people of Stoke Mandeville support this?

Art can tell us a lot about the past, it is a key source of historical information but often it is hard to extract the meanings and symbolisms hidden within it. Uncovering meanings from these pieces of art and knowing that they were displayed inside the church of St Marys allows us to contextualise them. This class has encouraged you to think about the hidden meanings behind, often quite everyday historic images.

Homework ideas -

- Research a historic coat of arms that relates to your family or where you live that has been recorded historically. Produce a poster on the image labeling the important symbols contained within the shield and surrounding images. Write your own description and do some research on it (c. 500 words).
- Enhance the sketch/ drawing of your coat of arms, build upon this as an outline and produce it in another medium such as paint, lino print or mixed media. Think about its use as a recognisable symbol and what medium would best represent you in replication of it.
- Make a study on a piece of church art from the Buckinghamshire area, this can include stained glass windows, textiles or even ceramic floor tiles as well as wall or canvassed paintings. Many churches now incorporate elements of modern art and your chosen art piece for study can be of any time period.