



اللوفر أبو ظبي
LOUVRE ABU DHABI

ROADS OF ARABIA

Archaeological Treasures of Saudi Arabia

Hosted by Louvre Abu Dhabi,
with artifacts from the
United Arab Emirates

EDUCATORS' GUIDE



THE EXHIBITION

“ROADS OF ARABIA: ARCHAEOLOGICAL TREASURES OF SAUDI ARABIA”

Titled “Roads of Arabia: Archaeological Treasures of Saudi Arabia”, the fourth exhibition organised by Louvre Abu Dhabi focuses on the leading role played by the Arabian Peninsula as a place of exchange since the earliest times. Presented through more than hundreds of works, the visitor will discover a panorama of the different cultures that have followed one another in the Arabian Peninsula from prehistory to the modern period.

By presenting works from the collection of Saudi Arabia and a selection of objects from the Emirates, the exhibition reveals how the civilisations of the peninsula have advantaged the geographical position of the region. This is important as it comes at the crossing of the roads that connect the Indian Ocean and countries of the Horn of Africa (Somalia, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea) to Egypt, **Mesopotamia*** (present-day Iraq) and the Mediterranean world. It also highlights the importance of Arabia as the cradle of Islam. Since the 7th century, the two holy cities of Mecca and Medina have attracted pilgrims along the roads of the Hijaz (west of the peninsula).

The exhibition takes as its starting point the routes across and around Arabia – whether by land or sea, or for purposes of trade or pilgrimage – which were vital to the life of the peninsula. These roads encouraged the birth and growth of urban centres, promoted the prosperity of caravan cities, and brought new goods and ideas to local cultures through merchants or pilgrims visiting from afar. The exhibition presentation is a journey through time and space, from prehistory to the present day, and offers halts in some of the peninsula’s great oases and Islamic holy places.

Curators:

Dr. Souraya Noujaim,
General Commissioner,
Scientific Director at
Louvre Abu Dhabi

Noëmi Daucé,
Commissioner, Chief
Curator, Head of
Archaeology at
Louvre Abu Dhabi

Dr. Jamal S. Omar,
Vice President of
Antiquities and
Museums, Director
General of the
National Museum

Place:

Exhibitions galleries,
Louvre Abu Dhabi

Dates:

From 8th November 2018
to 16 February 2019

AIMS OF THE EDUCATORS' GUIDE

The aim of this Educators' Guide is to facilitate teachers' discovery of the exhibition, and to prepare a group visit or a guided visit. The "Questions for the Participants", encourage students to direct their attention and interest towards different details. The purpose of the questions is to initiate a group discussion about the artwork.

The guide is divided into five sections that mirror the layout of the exhibition. Each section suggests follow-up activities suited to the level of the students (Cycle 1 and Cycles 2&3), which can be implemented later in the classroom.

A glossary is included in the guide, to help teachers prepare their visit to the exhibition as well as to help with background information during the visit.

BEFORE

The guide allows teachers to prepare their visit using the provided practical information and descriptions, which are presented in the same order as the works in the exhibition.

Teachers may also present and work on photographs of the selected works before visiting the exhibition. Students will be able to compare the reproduction and the original during their visit to the museum.

DURING

The "Questions for the Participants" help direct the students' focus to the works and allow the teacher to animate the group's visit. Students can consider such subjects as the place of manufacture of the works, or invent dialogues between the figures represented.

AFTER

The "Questions for the Participants" can be answered in the classroom with the use of reproductions of the works seen in the exhibition. The Focus paragraphs for each work are designed to deepen and broaden the students' knowledge gained during the visit.

Lastly, we encourage teachers to visit the permanent collections to show students other works linked to the subject.

GENERAL MAP OF THE ROUTES OF ARABIA AND THE MAIN HISTORICAL SITES



CHAPTER 1: **FIRST STEPS ON THE ROADS OF ARABIA**

The first human species to venture onto the Arabian Peninsula from Africa was *Homo erectus* more than one million years ago. The discovery of many stone tools flaked on both sides, called bifaces by archaeologists, makes it possible to trace the routes taken during their migrations. Over hundreds of thousands of years following their arrival, the peninsula experienced many wet periods that made it easier for these hominids to live here. At that time, Arabia had a green landscape, with lakes and rivers. Its wet climate and abundance of food allowed *Homo sapiens* (or modern man) to prosper on the Arabian Peninsula.

During the **Paleolithic*** period (the first period of prehistory) human populations were **nomadic***, they lived from hunting and gathering. During the **Neolithic*** period, their way of life developed and some populations survived from the breeding of domesticated animals, such as goats and cattle. In the Arabian Peninsula, this period was marked by different processes from region to region. Some communities, mainly in the north, maintained a nomadic life.

ANTHROPOMORPHIC STELE

This stele is said to be **anthropomorphic***, that is to say that it looks like a human being. This one is of a man who stands about 1 meter tall. The stele is carved on both sides but emphasis is given to the front, in particular to the face, bust and hips. The face is very graphic, with eyes set close together and a straight nose that gives the figure a mysterious expression. The trapezoidal head rests directly on the figure's shoulders. There is a necklace on the figure's chest and two cords that run diagonally across the body. The hips are emphasised by a belt from which a double-bladed dagger hangs. All these elements allowed us to identify this figure as a warrior.

The stele dates from the 4th millennium BCE and was one of the first works made in the Arabian Peninsula. It is one of the earliest examples of the representation of the human figure. Many steles have been found right across the peninsula and they seem to have been related to the first sanctuaries of this period. Some were installed visibly to everyone, while others were buried with the dead. Taking into account the place where the steles were discovered (an open-air sanctuary or a burial ground), archaeologists suppose that these anthropomorphic steles were probably associated with religious and burial practices.

FOCUS: THE EVOLUTION OF THE FIRST POPULATIONS ON THE PENINSULA

The settling of the first humans in Arabia took place during the early **Paleolithic*** more than one million years ago. Having arrived from Africa, groups of *Homo erectus* probably travelled overland but it is also possible they crossed the Red Sea. We know of few sites for this period, however, their number increased during the 7th millennium BCE (**Holocene***), which demonstrates a resurgence of activity in this period.

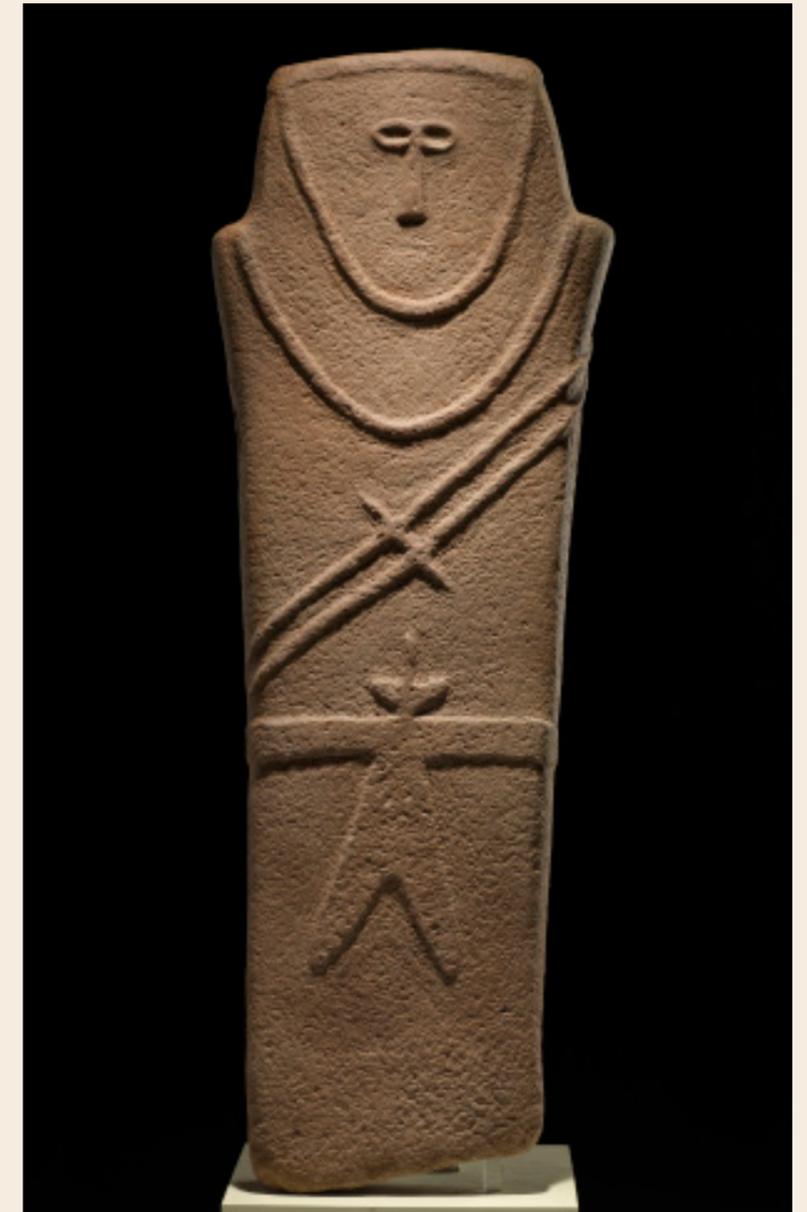
Ten thousand years ago in the Middle East, large transformations of prehistoric societies took place as a result of the development of animal breeding. Nonetheless, the hunter-gatherer way of life that had been prevalent in the region until that time continued to exist in Arabia, and a change to a sedentary lifestyle only occurred later.

During this period, the material culture was dominated by **lithic industry***. The discovery of tools cut from stone underlines the importance of hunting across the peninsula.

During the 4th millennium, the transition to the Bronze Age culture in the Arabian Peninsula brought profound transformation to the local societies with the use of metal. The landscape became marked by the construction of monumental tombs more than 2 meters tall made of undressed stone. In parallel, sanctuaries were built in which many **statue-menhirs*** and anthropomorphic steles have been discovered.

QUESTIONS FOR THE PARTICIPANTS

- **Look at the sculpture closely: What objects or elements can you identify?**
- **Describe this figure's posture. How is it represented? Note that the face is simplified. Identify the different parts of the body and missing limbs.**
- **What material is the sculpture made of?**
- **Where might it have been placed?**
- **What was its purpose?**



© Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage

Funerary stele with male figure
4000-3000 BCE
Saudi Arabia, Qaryat al-Kaafa, near Ha'il
Sandstone
Riyadh, National Museum

ACTIVITIES

CYCLE 1

Aim:

To make a copy of the **anthropomorphic*** stele presented in the chapter. Students should carve the forms of the stele in a soft material (soap) using a plastic knife, a small spoon and a paper clip.

Description of the Activity:

- Present the **anthropomorphic*** stele (in the guide) to the students, which they will reproduce. Alternatively, a quick search can be made for other steles that will provide other models to copy.
- The students then trace the shape of the soap on a piece of paper.
- Draw a picture of the stele inside the soap-shaped frame and then cut out the picture of the stele. The picture becomes the pattern they use to carve the stele in the soap.
- Place the picture of the stele on the soap and trace its outline with a pencil.
- Using either spoon or a knife, remove the parts of the bar of soap that are not required.
- When they have the overall shape of the stele, engrave the eyes, neck, dagger, etc. in the soap using either a pointed pencil or a paper clip. This way, they create a small reproduction of the anthropomorphic stele.

Activity Materials:

- 1 rectangular bar of soap per student (the size and colour are for the teacher to decide)
- A plastic knife, a small spoon and a paper clip to carve the soap

Useful links:

<https://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Soap-Carving>

<https://www.metmuseum.org/metmedia/video/metkids/metkids-create/create-a-soap-carving>

CYCLES 2 & 3

Aim:

In this activity, students will learn about the arrival of human beings on the Arabian Peninsula from Africa and the routes they followed. They will identify the first sites that these peoples occupied and their way of life. The activity focuses on the history and geography of the peninsula while stimulating the students' research skills.

Description of the Activity:

- In introducing the subject of this activity, the teacher can make use of the Focus point in the chapter. Depending on the age of the students, the teacher can help them find the information necessary or leave them to do it themselves.
- Different themes of the initial peopling of the peninsula and the first millennia of human activity can be tackled: the first sites inhabited, the first tools created, the ways in which society was organised (hunter-gatherers, animal breeding, a nomadic or sedentary lifestyle, etc.). Chronologically, the research should cover a period that ranges from the time of the arrival of human beings until the **Neolithic*** period. The themes to be tackled should be chosen between similar start and end dates.
- Following their research, the students should create a presentation (individually or in groups) to tell the rest of the class about their findings.
- They can also produce a large map of the peninsula that they fill in together with the results of their research (the names of sites, migration routes taken, etc.).

Activity Materials:

The students will need access to different sources of information to learn about how the peninsula was populated.

CHAPTER 2:

AT THE DAWN OF NAVIGATION: THE FIRST SEA ROUTES IN THE GULF

The first camps of **Neolithic*** fishing communities were established on the southern Gulf coast in the 6th millennium BCE. The sites in the Emirates, such as Marawah, Umm al-Quwain and Akab (later) provide examples of the way these early communities lived. They subsisted on the resources provided by the mangroves and lagoons (food, building materials, and goods to exchange).

Evidence of the consumption of tuna, a fish that lives in deep waters, shows that the fishermen in these first communities ventured away from the coastline in their boats. The discovery of vases made by the Obeid craftsmen in **Mesopotamia*** (Iraq today) offers evidence of the first interregional trade that existed in the Arabian Gulf. This would have taken place by ships sailing from port to port along the coast between the peninsula and Mesopotamia.

While contact seemed to lessen in the 4th millennium BCE, maritime trade increased again in the early 3rd millennium, peaking between 2500 and 1700 BCE, when the ships of the Dilmun merchants plied the waters of the Gulf from the trading posts of Tarut and Bahrain. They would visit the Land of Magan—likely the Oman Peninsula—picking up minerals and copper ingots which they then distributed to the lands of the Gulf coast. In exchange, products such as ivory combs, cornelian, painted vases and no doubt other, more perishable items flowed to the Emirates coast from Central Asia, the Indus Valley, southeastern Iran and Mesopotamia.

VASE FROM MARAWAH

This vase stands about 20 centimetres high. It has a high neck and rounded **belly*** made using **clay coil*** (a primitive technique used in pottery). The painted decoration is quite complex, with bands of triangles on the neck and chevrons and dots on the belly. These motifs are found in many pottery traditions.

The vase was discovered in a house of a **Neolithic*** village located on Marawah island, about 100 kilometres west of the city of Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates) and about 15 kilometres from the coast. It is associated with the Obeid culture, which developed in **Mesopotamia*** in the 6th millennium BCE. The geometric motifs on the pottery allow us to link the vase with the Obeid culture. This ceramic vase is one of the earliest vases found in the Emirates.

FOCUS: THE FIRST SEA ROUTES

Several archaeological excavations confirm the settlement of communities of fishermen on the shores of the Arabian Gulf from the 6th millennium BCE.

The abundance of resources provided by the sea stimulated populations to remain in one place on the coast and to become sedentary.

In the United Arab Emirates, the archaeological sites of Marawah, Umm al-Quwain and later Akab provide evidence of the way of life of the communities that lived from the marine resources available to them. Marawah is one of the earliest Neolithic villages known in the Arabian Peninsula. The site has revealed ten or so stone houses divided in three parts that date from the start of the 6th millennium BCE. These houses provide evidence of the permanent presence of fishermen on the site.

The first long distance exchange occurred in the Arabian Peninsula in the beginning of the 6th millennium. The discovery of pottery in the peninsula's East Coast, which is typical of that found in the Middle East Region, for example the vase found in Marawah Island in the UAE and in Dosariyah in Eastern province, Saudi Arabia; testify to the links that the fishing communities had with Southern Mesopotamia.

QUESTIONS FOR THE PARTICIPANTS

- **Look closely at this vase: what shape does it have?**
- **In what colour is it painted?**
- **Do you recognise the motifs used in its decoration?**
- **What was the vase's function?**



© Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi

Vase with geometric decoration imported from Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq)
5500 BCE
United Arab Emirates, Marawah Island
Painted terracotta
Abu Dhabi, Department of Culture & Tourism

ACTIVITIES

CYCLE 1

Aim:

Create a two-dimensional vase using coloured sand. The vase should be based on the one in this chapter or the students can choose a different vase they saw in the exhibition.

Description of the Activity:

- The teacher first shows the students a photograph of the vase presented in this chapter. Alternatively, the students can draw a different vase in the exhibition.
- Each student takes a sheet of adhesive paper. The paper has squares printed on it to make it easier for the students to recreate the motifs.
- Using a pencil, each student draws the shape of the vase and its decoration on the adhesive paper.
- With the assistance of the teacher, they take off the removable part of the adhesive paper (or polyphane) leaving the sticky part that they can colour with the sand.
- Using the cutter, the teacher creates the motifs that the students colour using the sand. They can either colour using one coloured sand at a time (in which case they remove the paper of all the motifs that will be the same colour), or they can do the motifs one at a time.
- If adhesive paper is not available, the activity can be carried out using normal white paper and glue. The students draw and cut out the motifs of the vase, then they add glue to them and sprinkle sand onto the glue.

Activity Materials:

- Sheets of adhesive paper (or sheets of polyphane)
 - A pencil
 - A cutter (to be used by the teacher)
 - Coloured sand
- If adhesive paper is not available:**
- A sheet of white paper
 - A pencil
 - Glue
 - Coloured sand

CYCLES 2 & 3

Aim:

The students use their imagination to write a text on the vase from Marawah.

Description of the Activity:

- The teacher first shows the students the vase from Marawah presented in this guide. Using the descriptive sheet, the teacher explains where the vase was found in the United Arab Emirates and its origin (Mesopotamia).
- The students then look up where Mesopotamia lay and find the different places on the east coast of the Arabian Peninsula that used to trade with the region.
- They then use their imagination to write a text about the vase. They should imagine how it arrived in the Emirates by putting themselves in the place of a merchant who sailed on the Gulf, or of a fisherman who lived on its shores.

Activity Materials:

The activity combines research and writing. The written part might be a poem, a piece of text, a speech, etc.

PREPARATION FOR CHAPTER 3: RELIEF CARVING OF A DROMEDARY

This sandstone relief carving is of a **dromedary***. It was found in Umm an-Nar (United Arab Emirates), an island in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. The block of stone may have decorated the entrance of a tomb. Other carvings of animals have also been found in Umm an-Nar. They are usually realistic representations.

These relief carvings come from the high point in the culture at Umm an-Nar. Archaeologists have unearthed large circular towers in the villages and monumental collective tombs there. The objects found in the tombs reveal the trading relationships that existed between the Arabian Peninsula, Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley (Pakistan today).

The dromedary represented in this relief is wild, the domestication of the dromedary didn't occur until the end of the 2nd millennium BCE. This animal is perfectly adapted to the desert climate. It can cover long distances between oases, travel rapidly and carry heavy loads. Its domestication led to the exponential development and use of roads across the peninsula by caravans.

FOCUS: THE UMM AN-NAR CULTURE

In 1959, archaeologists from Denmark initiated the journey of archaeology in the United Arab Emirates when they began to excavate on the island of Umm an-Nar (Abu Dhabi). The characteristics of its local culture were revealed for the first time.

This was the first archaeological site to be excavated in the United Arab Emirates. It is a major Bronze Age site, the largest on the south shore of the Arabian Gulf. It is contemporary with the Sumerian and Akkadian empires (Mesopotamia). Umm an-Nar was a unique place and survived on fishing and trade.

Its culture is known throughout the Omani peninsula and peaked in the late 3rd and early 2nd millennium BCE. This original culture was nonetheless open to the world and part of the vast network of trade in goods and raw materials that connected Mesopotamia, the worlds of India and Persia, and the distant territories of Central Asia.

QUESTIONS FOR THE PARTICIPANTS

- **Look closely at this relief carving, do you recognise the animal?**
- **What do you think the animal was used for? What did it carry?**
- **Consider the composition as a whole. How is the image in each panel constructed? How do they fit together?**
- **How was this relief carved?**
- **Where do you think the slab was placed?**



© Moesgaard Museum

Slab decorated with a dromedary
2300-1800 BCE
United Arab Emirates, Umm an-Nar
Limestone
Abu Dhabi, Department of Culture & Tourism, Al-Ain Museum

CHAPTER 3:

THE INCENSE ROADS

In the second half of the 1st millennium, long-distance trade intensified. The **dromedary*** was domesticated to transport goods as it was stronger and faster than a donkey, and encouraged the trade in incense and myrrh on the roads of Arabia.

The many routes, known as the “Incense Road”, lay on the western side of the peninsula. Starting from the south, it ran up the coast of Gaza (Palestine) and was used until the birth of Islam in the 7th century. The southern part of the Arabian Peninsula was an important area for the production of aromatics and also where goods were traded with Africa and India. Around the same time, merchandise from these countries reached the western coast of the peninsula.

Commercial traffic on the roads of Arabia quickly became a political issue, and many kingdoms prospered thanks to the use of these roads. The oases in particular, which were essential to supplying caravans with provisions, developed into prosperous trading cities. However, these land routes began to decline in the 1st century CE, when the trade route through the Red Sea gained importance.

STATUE OF A KING OF LIHYAN

The statue was discovered on the site of Al-'Ula with the head separated from the body. The face had been hammered away (only the ears and part of the turban that covered the head remained). The statue represents a king of Lihyan (the oasis of Al-'Ula in north-western Saudi Arabia today). The king is seen standing with his legs together, and is more than 2 meters tall, although the lower part of his legs are missing. His arms are close to the sides of his body. His left hand is closed while the right is broken from the elbow.

The covered head, belted rectangular tunic and bracelet on the left arm signifying the nobility of the figure are unique to Lihyan sculpture. The statue dates from the 4th–3rd centuries BCE. Its style is similar to a series of statues found in the temple of Dedan, which belongs to a tradition of regional sculptures. The muscles of the arms, knee, torso and abdomen are prominent. This sculpture, like others found at Dedan (Al-'Ula), shows traces of **polychromy***. These last two characteristics are visually similar to a style imported from Egypt. It seems that this colossal statue stood at the entrance to a temple.

FOCUS: THE KINGDOM OF LIHYAN

Inscriptions found in the oasis of Al-'Ula in the north-west of the Arabian Peninsula mention the presence of a "King of Dedan" from the 7th century BCE. Later, during the Persian and **Hellenistic*** periods, inscriptions were made with the names of rulers described as the "King of Lihyan", after the name of the tribe. Statues, sometimes colossal, of these rulers have been found on the site of ancient Dedan (Al-'Ula), which was the capital of their kingdom.

From the 5th century BCE, the Kingdom of Lihyan played a leading role in the caravan trade. A Minaean community (from Yemen) was also settled on this territory. As with other large oases, the enrichment and development of the kingdom was linked to the success of the trade routes. Al-'Ula lay at the crossroads of these paths and the kingdom demanded the payment of a tax and a sum for the right to pass from each caravan and in exchange provided food, water and protection. The resulting prosperity helped to transform the oases into important cities and busy trading places.

The domination of the Lihyanites over the north-west of the Arabian Peninsula lasted for five centuries. The kingdom seems to have ceased to exist at the end of the 2nd century BCE.

QUESTIONS FOR THE PARTICIPANTS

- **Look closely at this sculpture: how are the different parts of the body represented? How is the figure dressed?**
- **What is the figure's posture?**
- **What do you think the statue was used for?**
- **Where might it have been placed?**
- **How do you feel while standing in front of this statue?**



© Musée du Louvre - Thierry Ollivier

Monumental statue
400-100 BCE
Saudi Arabia, Al-Ula
Red sandstone
Riyadh, Archaeology Department Museum, King Saud University

FRAGMENT OF A STATUE FROM QARYAT AL-FAW

This head came from a bronze sculpture that was probably of a man. Judging by the size of the head (40 cm high), the full sculpture was life-size. It was found on the site of Qaryat al-Faw (700 km south-west of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia). It has been dated to between the 1st century BCE and the 2nd century CE. The damaged face has full, rounded cheeks, a small, well-defined mouth, and eyes with the pupils carved out. The hair with curls is simulated by long twists evenly arranged on the top of the skull and hanging down over the back of the neck.

These characteristics make the statue comparable with Graeco-Roman and **Hellenistic*** sculptures. The original treatment of the curls suggests it was produced by a local workshop. Several examples of this type have been found across the peninsula and attest the existence of a southern Arabian sculpture tradition influenced by Western models.

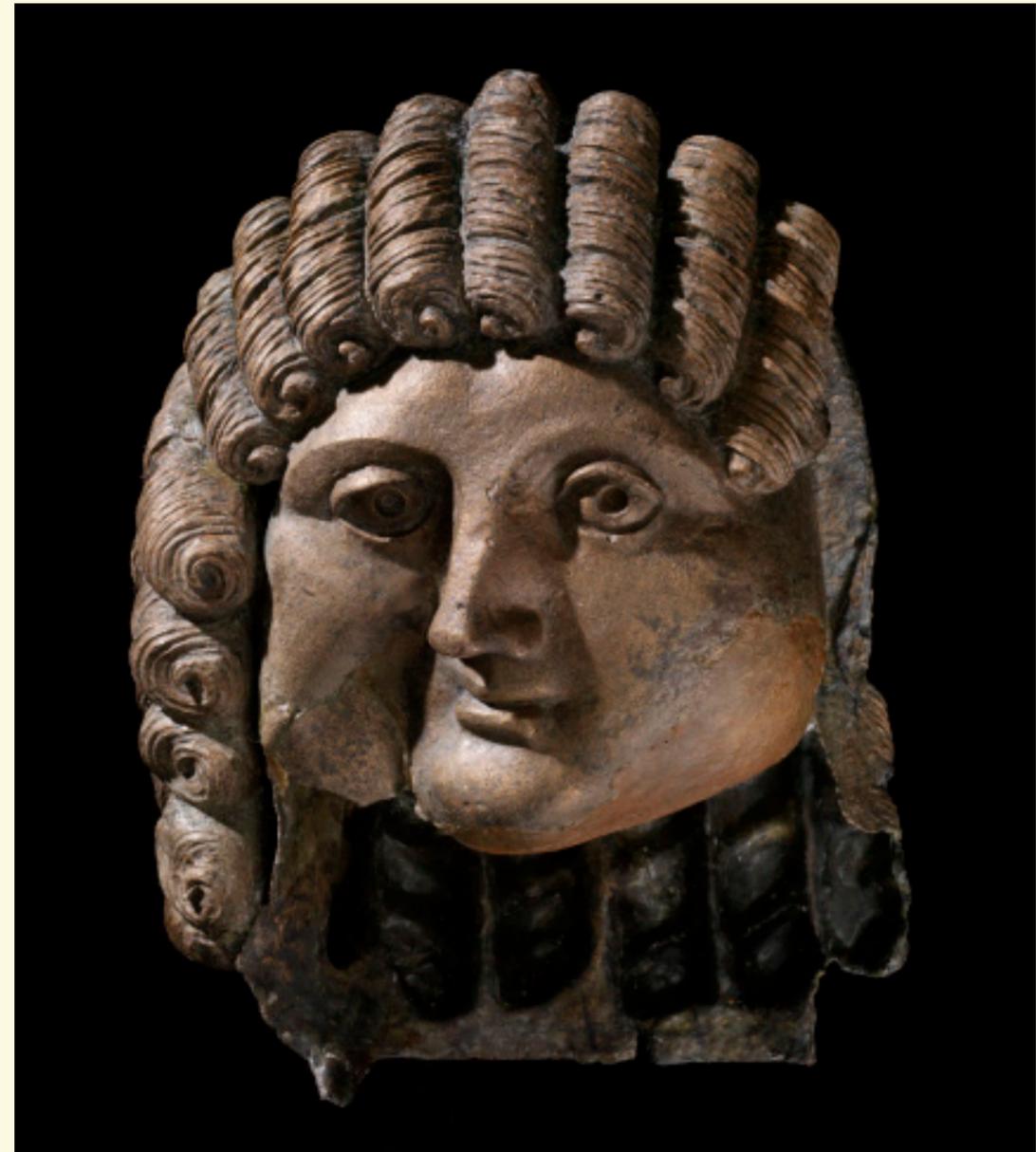
FOCUS: QARYAT AL-FAW: A TRADING CAPITAL IN THE HEART OF ARABIA

Qaryat al-Faw lies on the north-west edge of the Rub' al-Khali, the "Empty Quarter", 700 kilometres to the south-west of Riyadh (Saudi Arabia). The city controlled the road that led from the south of the peninsula to the Arabian Gulf. It was a trading post belonging to the Minaean kingdom (a tribe that originated in what is today Yemen) during the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE. Excavations of the site during the 1960s revealed the remains of a large city with a cemetery and a commercial district that included a caravanserai and sanctuaries. Qaryat al-Faw was an open, undefended town that was a halt on caravan routes for travellers, merchants and pilgrims from the different kingdoms of Arabia.

At the start of the Common Era, the upper class of the town's inhabitants adopted a culture largely influenced by **Hellenistic*** fashions. Several bronze statuettes that have been found on the site reflect this influence, representing in particular Greek divinities.

QUESTIONS FOR THE PARTICIPANTS

- **Look closely at this head and describe it. How is the man represented?**
- **What material was used to make this sculpture?**
- **Can you describe the expression or a feeling suggested by this face? What was this person feeling? What impression does he make on you?**



© Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage

Head of a man
100 BCE-200 CE
Saudi Arabia, Qaryat al-Faw
Cast bronze
Riyadh, Archaeology Department Museum, King Saud University

ACTIVITIES

CYCLE 1

Aim:

In this activity students make a painting of an oasis using different materials (paint, sand, shells, leaves, etc.). They learn to create their own desert landscape.

Description of the Activity:

- The teacher discusses the importance of oases to the caravan trade routes, reminding the students of the collection of taxes, the supplying of the caravans with food and water, and the prosperity that the oases enjoyed as a result of the caravan routes.
- The students then create their image of an oasis. They create a picture on an A4 size sheet of card using brushes and sponges and paint, and can also stick sand, palm leaves, etc. on it with glue.

Activity Materials:

- A4-sized card
- Paint
- Brushes and shaped sponges (for example, in the form of palm trees)
- Leaves, sand or other natural elements
- Glue

CYCLES 2 & 3

Aim:

The aim of this activity is for the class to create their own board game on the theme of the trade routes in the Arabian Peninsula. Taking games like Trivial Pursuit, Risk, Through the Desert and Caravan as examples, the students invent their own rules and create a game linked with the exhibition.

Description of the Activity:

- After their visit to the exhibition, the students start thinking and creating a board game. This group project can be carried out over several sessions and with teachers of different subjects.
- The students take inspiration from the works they saw in the exhibition and the peninsula's trade routes to create a game. This allows them to deal with the subject of the exhibition in a fun manner.
- The teacher can use the links to create a game with the class related to the exhibition.
- The teacher may also look at the additional examples mentioned above for more ideas.

Activity Materials:

To be decided with the class and teacher depending on the type of game chosen.

Useful links:

<https://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Game>

<https://www.wikihow.com/Play-Trivial-Pursuit>

CHAPTER 4:

THE PILGRIMAGE ROADS

Mecca and Medina are the two holy cities of Islam. It was in these cities in the heart of the Hijaz (the west of the Arabian Peninsula) that Islam was born in the 7th century CE. After his departure for Medina in 622, the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) and the first Islamic community that had formed around him, won over the rest of the peninsula and continued to expand after his death. His successors, the **caliphs***, expanded the boundaries of Islamic reign to the empires of the Byzantines (Turkey and eastern Europe) and the Sassanids (Iran) in a short period.

In 661, the first Islamic dynasty of caliphs, the Umayyads, transferred the centre of power to Damascus in Syria. However, due to the holiness of the cities of Mecca and Medina, pilgrims continued to travel through the Hijaz, which remained a melting pot and a region of exchange on account of its geographical location. Hijaz is the Arab word for “barrier” and the region was so named on account of the chain of mountains that runs down its east side (making passage into the interior of the peninsula difficult) and by the Red Sea to the west.

TOMBSTONE OF AL-GHALIYA

This tombstone, which was found in the al-Ma'la cemetery in the north of Mecca, commemorates two people. On one side an epitaph refers to a young woman who died in the 9th century. On the back of the stele, written the other way up, an inscription mentions a religious man who was buried in 1275. The reuse of steles was not uncommon at al-Ma'la as the local stone was extremely heavy and difficult to cut.

The front is written in **Kufic*** script, a very stern angular form of writing. The elegant frame and floriated script give the tombstone a feminine touch. It is dedicated to al-Ghaliya, daughter of 'Abd al-Jabbar. The epitaph proceeds as follows: the basmala (an opening prayer from the Quran), then the name of the deceased girl in the set phrase "Place [name] among the companions of Muhammad in Paradise".

Al-Ma'la cemetery was where important individuals were buried during the early years of Islam. Several hundreds of steles like this one have been found there, remarkable for their quality and the variety of their scripts. Very early on, Arabic script became a form of decoration in the Islamic world. It has become the subject of aesthetic and prescriptive research, in particular with regard to its use of Quranic inscription. The hundreds of steles that have been found provide historical and artistic evidence of the diversity of the people who were buried in the holy cities.

FOCUS: THE PILGRIMAGE ROADS

Islam came into being in 610 in the Hijaz region (in the west of the Arabian Peninsula), specifically in the city of Mecca when the Prophet Muhammad received the divine message. For 22 years, the Angel Gabriel spoke the Quranic revelations to Prophet Muhammad that were to form the basis of the Islamic faith and religious practices. The collation and compiling of the 114 surahs of the holy book were commanded by 'Uthman, the third Rashidun **caliph*** (644–56). This marked the start of the annual pilgrimage to the Holy Mosque in Mecca, one of the five pillars of Islam. Each year a crowd of pilgrims travelled to the Hijaz and also visited Medina, the place where the Prophet was buried.

The roads across the whole of the Arabian Peninsula, which had been used for trade since Antiquity, were then taken by pilgrims. For the caliphs during the centuries that followed, the maintenance, construction and control of these roads were a major economic, political and religious task. Several roads led to the pilgrimage sites. The one that linked Mecca and Iraq was called "Darb Zubayda", after the wife of an Abbasid caliph from the early 9th century for her role in its development namely in supplying of water along the route. Other land routes linked Syria, Egypt and Yemen to the holy places, and then there were also sea routes. Both types contributed to the prosperity of the cities, towns and ports that they passed through. They also greatly encouraged the exchange of goods and travel of ideas throughout the peninsula, but also beyond with other regions of the Islamic world until they were replaced by the advent of modern travel in the 20th century.

QUESTIONS FOR THE PARTICIPANTS

- **What is this object? Describe it.**
- **Look at the script used. What type of writing do you think it is?**
- **How is the text decorated? What form do the letters take? What impression does this decoration make on you?**
- **What do you think this text says, and what was the purpose of this tombstone?**



© Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage

Tombstone of al-Ghaliya, daughter of 'Abd al-Jabbar
800-900
Saudi Arabia, Mecca,
Al-Ma'la cemetery
Basalt
Riyadh, National Museum

DOOR OF THE KA'BA

These door panels come from the Ka'ba. They date from 1635–36 and remained in the Ka'ba until the 20th century, only to be replaced by the current doors. The Ka'ba is a large pre-Islamic cubic construction at the centre of the Holy Mosque (Masjid al-Haram) in Mecca. All the world's Muslims turn to face the Ka'ba during their daily prayers. During the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, Muslims from around the world travel for Hajj, one of its parts is to walk around the Ka'ba seven times (an act of worship called the circumambulation). The pilgrimage has roots that date back to pre-Islamic times. The Ka'ba has been demolished and rebuilt a few times in its history. The last time was following a flood in 1630, when the water reached the height of the door's bolt.

Although this door is made of wood, the decoration is covered with gilded silver leaf. On the back, the wood has been left bare. The decoration is composed of two bands of epigraphs in the upper section. One is a passage from the Quran and the other is a commemoration and prayer to Sultan Murad IV (1623–40) for his commissioning to renew this Ka'ba door. A set of plant motifs (a dense network of stems, half-palmettes, leaves and flowers) adorns the rectangle beneath the inscriptions. An insert in the form of an arch encloses a third band of epigraphs and a large **mandorla*** extended by two pendants. This follows a design that was commonly used in carpet-making and book-making.

FOCUS: MECCA AND MEDINA, THE HOLY CITIES

The Islamic era officially began in 622, twelve years after Prophet Muhammad received the first divine revelation. It started with the Hijrah, the emigration of the Prophet and the first Muslims from Mecca to Medina following the hostility they faced. With his companions, Prophet Muhammad gradually won over the rest of the peninsula to the new religion. In 632, Prophet Muhammad was buried in Medina. The two holy cities of Islam, Mecca and Medina, quickly became a factor in power struggles over the centuries.

Following Prophet Muhammad, the Umayyad (661–750) and Abbasid (750–1258) caliphs and their successors in the region sought to establish their hold on these cities. Fatimid Egypt (969–1171) played a vital role in the 10th century by providing food and opulent wall hangings for the Ka'ba, built before the Islamic period. The Mameluke sultans (1250–1517) then took control of the area before being replaced in 1517 by the Ottomans (1299–1923).

All took great care to maintain, rebuild and beautify the holy places. They also made numerous donations to the shrines: keys, locks, forms of lighting, silk hangings, furniture to hold copies of the Quran, manuscripts, incense burners, etc. The donations they made and the maintenance of the holy places were a way for rulers to assert both their power and their faith.

QUESTIONS FOR THE PARTICIPANTS

- **Look closely at this door: try to find and describe the different motifs on its decorations**
- **What material was used to make the panels?**
- **Do you know the building to which the door belonged? What is its function/significance?**



© Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage

Door of the Ka'ba
1045 AH/1635-36
Saudi Arabia, Sanctuary of Mecca
Wood, engraved and gilded silver lining on a wooden core
Riyadh, National Museum

ACTIVITIES

CYCLE 1

Aim:

In this activity, students learn about the different routes taken by pilgrims across the peninsula and the halts they made on these roads that led to the holy places. With the help of their teacher, the students fill in a small notebook on the subject of pilgrimage, complemented by drawings and photographs.

Description of the Activity:

- First, the teacher talks with the students about the different pilgrimage routes. They look up the various starting and arrival points and the halts that the pilgrims made on the roads. Maps, searches on internet, etc., can be used to fill out the task.
- When the students have the required information, they create a small notebook – either individually or in groups – on the subject of pilgrimage, sticking in photographs, drawing landscapes and writing descriptions depending on their age and level. They can imagine that they are pilgrims who describe their journey.

Activity Materials:

- Notebook
- Photographs
- Drawing materials
- Map of the peninsula

CYCLES 2 & 3

Aim:

The students are directed to investigate the routes that led to the places of pilgrimage and the destinations of the pilgrims. The aim of the activity is for them to familiarise themselves with the practice of research and the geography of the peninsula.

Description of the Activity:

- At the start of the activity, the teacher goes back over the fourth section of the exhibition and offers the students guidance on the research they will do.
- The activity introduces the students to different themes related to the pilgrimage roads: the halts, the means of transport, the management of the holy places by the caliphs, etc.
- At the end of the activity, the students will create a map on which they can draw the different pilgrimage routes and localise the most important stopping places.
- They can also give a presentation of what they discovered through the research they have done in the classroom.

Activity Materials:

The students will need access to various resources to find information on the pilgrimage roads that run through the peninsula.

CHAPTER 5:

TOWARDS MODERNITY

During the rule of the Abbasid caliphate (750–1258), the shores of the Arabian Gulf experienced strong economic development thanks to the growth of large ports like Basra (in modern Iraq), Siraf (in modern Iran) and Sohar (in modern Oman). Exchanges with China led to the importation of high-quality ceramics that influenced local production. However, between the 11th and 14th centuries, the region underwent a decline in commerce due to the shift of goods transportation to the Red Sea. In the 14th century, the expanding ports of Hormuz (in modern Iran) and Julfar in the emirate of Ras al Khaimah regenerated commerce in the Arabian Gulf. Archaeological finds in different sites in the eastern provinces of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates attest the variety and quantity of trade that occurred in the region.

During the 19th century, the Ottomans began a modernisation policy with a series of reforms (the Tanzimat era, 1839–76). As part of this development, the Ottoman sultan Abdulhamid II (1876–1909) decided to build a railway line to link Damascus (Syria) and Medina (Saudi Arabia), running through the Hijaz (western region of the Arabian Peninsula). The purpose of this line was to facilitate the pilgrimage to Mecca, to encourage trade between Damascus and Medina, and to promote Ottoman rule over the region. With the advent of the 20th century, the Arabian Peninsula entered the modern age. The ancient forms of transport, such as the donkey, horse and **dromedary***, were substituted by cars, trains, lorries, steamships, planes, etc.

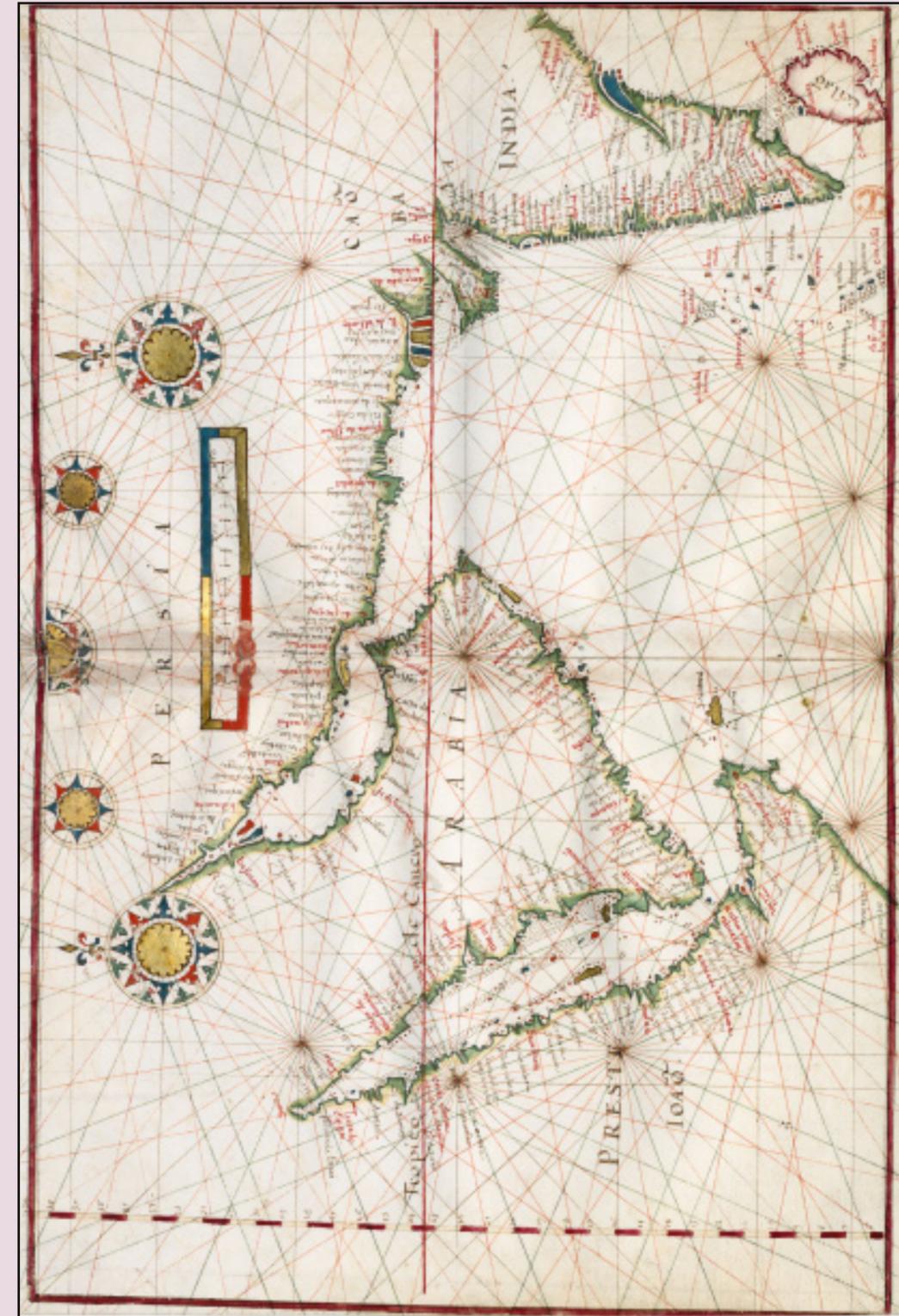
NAUTICAL ATLAS

The Portuguese cartographer João Teixeira Albernaz is known to have been very prolific. In total, he produced 19 **atlases***, making a total of 215 maps. This **nautical*** atlas of the world was made around 1640 and contains 20 maps with plans of the different ports and coastlines known in the 17th century. This type of book is called a portolan, a sea map made by the early navigators. Here, the coasts are marked in green, large islands in red, and small ones in pale colours and gold. The scale of each map is given in a blue and red cartouche, telling you the ratio between the distance on the map and the distance in the real world.

The twelfth map shows the north-west area of the Indian Ocean around the Horn of Africa, the Red Sea, the Arabian Peninsula and the coastlines of Persia and India. Navigation in the Indian Ocean was made easier by the knowledge handed on by Arab explorers and Portuguese navigators during exchanges that took place on the Arabian Peninsula. Sailing on the Indian Ocean was made possible by understanding the behaviour of the monsoons, and thus knowing the best season to sail to India.

QUESTIONS FOR THE PARTICIPANTS

- **What is this object? Describe it.**
- **Try to find words written on the map.**
- **What is the script used? Can you read it?**
- **Do you know what part of the world is shown on the map?**



Nautical Atlas of the World
João Teixeira Albernaz, d. 1662
About 1640
Portugal
Ink, pigments and gold on vellum
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Maps and Plans Department

© Bibliothèque nationale de France

ACTIVITIES

CYCLE 1

Aim:

To familiarise students with travel accounts written by navigators or travellers.

The teacher can introduce the students to the Arab tradition of the *Rihla*, or “travel account”. These were often written in the form of a travel diary, with an outline of the route to be taken along with political, economic and historic observations. Ibn Jubayr is the best-known figure in this literary genre, in particular for the descriptions of his journeys to Mecca and Medina.

Description of the Activity:

- The students are asked to either read or listen to the accounts of Arab sailors/travellers, whether real or fictional, to become familiar with this type of narrative.
- The teacher can then turn to the accounts by the Arab navigators Ibn Majid (1418/35–1500), Ibn Jubayr (1145–1217) or Ibn Battuta (1304–1377). Other possibilities are given by the tales of Sindbad the sailor or the travel book written by Marco Polo (1254–1324), which describes his trip to China on the Silk Road.
- The teacher will then ask the students to illustrate a part of the account using the means at their disposal (paints, felt pens, pencils, collage, etc.).

Activity Materials:

Accounts or tales by navigators or travellers.

CYCLES 2 & 3

Aim:

To consider the development of the means of transport used on the roads of Arabia.

To compare them on the criteria of speed, comfort and carrying capacity. If carried out with a math teacher, the students can work out the relationship between distance, time, speed and weight carried.

Description of the Activity:

- The students first look up the different means of transport used in each era, both overland and by sea (donkey, **dromedary***, horse, train, lorry, plane, boat, etc.).
- They consider them all in terms of speed, time, comfort, load carried, etc.
- They then make a comparison between these different means of transport.
- They might also draw a map in which the cities of the peninsula and the world are joined by the different means of transport they have investigated, in the style of this projection of a hyperloop:

<http://www.konbini.com/wp-content/blogs.dir/3/files/2017/02/carte-metro-hyperloop.jpg>

Activity Materials:

The students will need access to information on the means of transport used in the peninsula.

GLOSSARY

Anthropomorphic:

Attribution of human characteristics to non-human forms or objects.

Atlas:

A book of maps that represents a given area while including one or several themes (geographical, economic, historical, astronomical, etc.). The term appeared at the end of the 16th century even though collections of maps had existed before that period.

Belly:

The rounded section of a pot.

Caliph:

The caliphs were the rulers of the Muslim world who followed on from the Prophet Muhammad. The caliph had both spiritual and temporal powers. It was his duty to maintain the unity of Islam and all Muslims had to obey him.

Clay Coil:

One of the earliest techniques used in ceramics was to create long rolls of soft clay and arrange them together to create a ceramic form. This technique was used by all civilisations before the invention of the potter's wheel.

Dromedary:

An Arabian camel, especially one of a light and swift breed trained for riding or racing.

Hellenistic:

The Hellenistic period (from "Hellada", meaning Greece) followed the conquest of a great part of the Mediterranean world and Asia by Alexander the Great between 335 and 323 BCE. The Hellenistic period lasted until the Roman conquests in 30 BCE.

Holocene:

A geological epoch that began 10,000 years ago and that is still continuing. During this interglacial period, Homo sapiens has diversified the technologies he uses, organised his habitat more efficiently, and adapted his life in society.

Kufic:

Developed in the city of Kufa (Iraq), kufic is one of the earliest forms of Arabic calligraphy. The first examples of the Quran are written using kufic. The script uses a strict, rigid and angular base line.

Lithic industry:

In archaeology, this term represents the set of objects made of stone that were deliberately transformed by man. For example, simple tools, weapons and other objects.

Mandorla:

(Italian: mandorla = almond) the term refers to an oval form used in painting in which images of holy figures are sometimes shown.

Mesopotamia:

A historic region in the Middle East that lies between two rivers – the Tigris and the Euphrates. Today most of this region falls within the borders of Iraq. Mesopotamia was where writing was invented.

Nautical:

This word describes anything related to the sea.

Neolithic:

A period in prehistory (meaning before the invention of writing) that came after the Paleolithic and Mesolithic periods. During the Neolithic, major social and technological developments occurred linked to new ways of living: agriculture and animal breeding. The term generally signifies the period in which populations became sedentary.

Nomadic:

This word describes peoples and societies whose way of life is based on recurring movements. It is the opposite of "sedentary", meaning a way of life centred on one place and with few journeys.

Paleolithic:

The first period of prehistory (before the invention of writing) when humanity existed entirely from hunting animals and gathering plants and fruits. Paleolithic populations were nomadic. The period is divided into three parts: the Lower, Middle and Upper Paleolithic.

Polychromy:

The use of several colours (Greek: poly = several; khroma = colours). It is different to monochromy, which means the use of one colour only.

Ptolemaic:

Refers to a Hellenistic (Greek) dynasty, that of the Lagids, descendants of Ptolemy, a general of Alexander the Great. This dynasty ruled over Egypt from 323 to 30 BCE, when Egypt was conquered by the Romans.

Statue-menhir:

(From Brittonic, a Celtic language: *maen*, « stone », *et hir*, « long ») is a standing megalithic monument carved to show the human form, sometimes with attributes like clothing, weapons, and tools.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Educational activities are offered in **Arabic, English and French.**
Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, starting at 9:30am

Museum is **closed on Mondays.**

Guided Tours: 60 minutes

Workshops: 90 minutes

CONTACT US

Call Centre: +971 600 56 55 66

Louvre Abu Dhabi Education Department:

education@louvrebudhabi.ae

Find us on Social Media



Or visit us at

www.louvrebudhabi.ae

