

# Look, Think, Do

## Mosque lamp activities



### Look

Look at the decoration on this lamp.

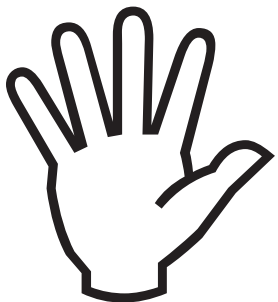
**Can you spot the little red cup,  
and the swirly writing?**



### Think

This lamp is from a Mosque – a Muslim place of worship. It would be lit with burning oil and hung by chains from the ceiling. The light would shine through the glass and make patterns on the walls around the mosque.

**What do you think this would  
look like?**



### Do

**Make your own lamp at home.**

**Cut a hole in a page of your sketchbook,  
or in an old cardboard packet or box.**

**Cover it with some of your colourful  
cellophane and let the light shine through.**

Enjoy the beautiful coloured shadows!



# Find out more

## Mosque lamp

Egypt or Syria, Damascus, c.1355

Glass, blown and enamelled

Egypt and Syria were united in the fourteenth century under Mamluk rule from Cairo, where many religious buildings were built by the sultans and their officials. The mosques and mausoleums were lit by oil lamps in glass holders, which were suspended from the domes by chains attached to holders on their sides. Mosque lamps of this shape were decorated with coloured enamel paint.

The Arabic inscription on the lower part of this lamp states that it was made by order of Shayku al-Nāsirī (d.1357), an amir (commander) who built a mosque, monastery and tomb in Cairo between 1349 and 1356. On the neck the writing is broken by his emblem, a red cup, which shows that he was cup-bearer to the Sultan, a very important role.

In addition to their practical and decorative functions, mosque lamps had a symbolic role. This one bears a passage around the top part from the Qu'ran, XXIV.35, known as the Sura (chapter) of Light:

‘God is the light of the heavens and the earth. The parable of His light is as a niche, in which there is a lamp’.

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Mosque lamp colouring

