

Mosque Lamp

This activity has been designed as a starting point for looking, talking and doing together. The **Look** and **Think** activities should take 5 -10 minutes.

The **Do** activities might take longer depending on the task and how creative you are feeling!



Mosque Lamp

Damascus, Egypt or Syria, c. 1355

Glass, blown and enamelled,

C.4-1949

Given by the National Art Collections Fund in commemoration of the centenary of the Fitzwilliam Museum's opening in 1848



Look

This glass lamp is decorated with beautiful Arabic writing.

What colours and patterns can you see?



Think

A mosque is a Muslim place of worship. Lamps like this one are hung from the ceiling by its handles or 'lugs'.

Can you imagine the beautiful shadows the light would have cast on the walls of the mosque when it was lit?



Do

[Follow these easy steps to make your own lamp](#) to cast shadows and light at home.

The Arabic writing on the mosque lamp contains a special message about God.

If you could project a special message to someone what would it read and why?



Mosque Lamp

Egypt and Syria were united in the fourteenth century under Mamluk rule from Cairo, where many religious buildings were erected by the sultans and their officials. The mosques and mausoleums were lit by oil lamps in glass holders, which were suspended from ceilings by chains looped through the protruding 'lugs' on the sides. Mosque lamps of this shape, decorated with coloured enamels (coloured glass paint), had become standard by the late 1200s. This spectacular mosque lamp is the finest piece of Middle Eastern glass in the Museum's collection.

The Arabic inscription on the lower part of this example states that it was made by order of Shayku al-Nāsirī (d.1357), who built a mosque, monastery and tomb in Cairo between 1349 and 1356. On the neck, the inscription is broken by his emblem, a red cup, indicating that he was cup-bearer to the Sultan. In addition to their practical and decorative functions, mosque lamps had a symbolic role. Like a number of others, this one bears a passage from the Quran, XXIV.35, known as the Sura (chapter) of Light it reads: '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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Do: make a shadow lamp

You will need:

Coloured scrap material
Paper plate or card
Scissors
Sellotape
Yoghurt pot

Steps

1. Draw a circle around the yoghurt pot in the middle of your card and cut out the circle.
2. Cover the hole in sellotape.
3. Cut out shapes from your coloured scrap and stick on the sellotaped hole and then cover with more sellotape.
4. Make a small hole in the base of the yoghurt pot.
5. Stick the circle over the top of your pot,
6. Find a dark area and shine a light through your lamp.
7. Enjoy all the beautiful shapes and colours!