



Stained Glass, 1250-1500

Under 11 activity – Christianity in 10 Objects



What shapes can you see?

What do you think they are made from?

Why do you think they look like this?

Where do you think they have come from?

Westminster Abbey is full of beautiful stained-glass windows. Nearly all the medieval glass has disappeared from the windows now, but over 30,000 small fragments of medieval glass were discovered under the floorboards when renovating the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Galleries.

How many windows do you think you could you make with 30,000 small pieces?

The type of glass found was grisaille glass (painting in black lines on clear glass). This colourless glass allowed more light into the building.

There are a few examples in the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Galleries of coloured medieval glass too:



One window shows Jesus going up to heaven, the other window shows the Holy Spirit descending to Jesus and his disciples.

Which window is which? How could you tell?

When today's Abbey was built in the 13th century, the stained-glass windows were used as a way of telling Bible stories to those who couldn't read the Bible or understand the Latin church services. Many of the windows would have shown scenes from the Bible or important characters from the Bible.

Talk with others

Do you know any important stories in the Bible? Do you have a favourite character from the Bible?

Activity: Design a stained-glass window for your home

Imagine you are in charge of designing a new stained-glass window for your home. Think about what you want to appear on it. It could be a story that is important to you. It could be an important or special event in your life.

You might want to take inspiration from the most recent window to be added to Westminster Abbey, here on the right. Known as the Queen's Window, this was added in 2018 and designed by British artist David Hockney on an iPad. How is it different to stained-glass windows you've seen before?



Extension

There were only fragments of stained glass found under the floor boards so we don't know how they would have looked in their original window.

Take a look at this fragment of a woman. We don't know who she is or what she might have been looking at.

Can you give this woman a story? Try writing a speech bubble, poem or short story about this woman.

It could begin, "She was looking at..."

Share your experience on Facebook or Twitter using #WAbbeyFun

