

# THE FITZWILLIAM MUSEUM

## EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

### Do- It- Yourself

#### The Story of Herman

#### Key Stage 2

This is one of our range of DIY resources, which aim to provide you with what you need to teach your pupils in the galleries. We hope that the following teaching ideas include some which are suitable for your needs. As we do not know your pupils, or the specific aims of your visit, these ideas may need adapting, but we hope they will act as a springboard. Each idea includes signpost sequences all of which point to pupil interaction with the exhibits, *example prompt questions written in italics*, and information. Many are followed by suggested extension ideas that can take place in the galleries. 'Into Action' sheets, which are linked to these teaching ideas, are available for pupils to use in the galleries.

When you are talking in front of the painting, or any work of art in the Museum, be very careful not to touch it yourself. Also, as the children sit down in front of the painting make sure that they can all see the painting – the gallery lighting can make this difficult if the children sit too close. Often it is better to sit the children a little further back to give them a good view.

### Aims of the Story of Herman session

- To develop children's ability to look closely at paintings.
- To encourage children to think about the context of a painting.
- To link paintings and story to provide a familiar context for learning from paintings.
- To encourage children to enjoy paintings and to want to see more.
- To stimulate a desire for children to make paintings themselves.

## Galleries used in this session

Gallery 15

Gallery 28

## The Story of Herman

Take children to Gallery 15, the Dutch Gallery. Sit them down comfortably on the floor, or stand, in front of

### *Portrait of a Young Man* by Gerrit Dou, Museum No: 35.



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Our story starts with this picture of a young man, looking thoughtfully to the left.

*What can you see in the picture?*

*How old do you think he is?*

The young man is about 9 years old, and his name is Herman van der Meyde.

*What is he wearing?*

Draw the children's attention to the feather on the hat, the darkness of the clothing, and the fact that his clothing is armoured.

*What does his clothing tell us about him?*

Fine fabrics and armour show that he's from

quite a well off family.

*Why do you think the artist made this picture?*

This is probably a commissioned portrait. Who might have paid for it? Discuss how in those days this would have been the only way to have a record of what someone looked like. Now we can take photographs. Also think about whether everyone could have their portrait painted – only the wealthy.

*Do you think his life is like your life? What would school have been like for him?*

*What would he have learnt?* Greek, latin, and a lot of Bible study.

Encourage the children to draw comparisons between a child's life now and that in the past.

*Herman lived about 300 years ago. He lived in a town which was on a river and had a windmill. There's a picture of his home town near to where you're sitting now. Can you see it?*

Move the children so that they can see:

### ***A view of Cleves from the Mill Bridge* by Jan van der Heyden**

(No picture is available). This painting is located on the wall adjacent to the first painting, about two paintings further along.

*Which continent do you think this town is in? Is it Africa? It's European - how do you know?*

This is the town called Cleves, where Herman grew up. It was previously in Holland, now in Germany (located on Dutch-German border).

*What was life like there?*

Get the children to look closely at the picture. There's a lot going on. The town was a busy rural town. People from the countryside all around would come to Cleves to buy and sell things/

*Herman was quite well off - what might his Dad have done for a living?*

Possible answers could include working on the windmill, working as a member of the church and so on. In reality, Herman's dad was a farmer - he owned land on which he kept sheep. He sold the wool, as well as the meat and he made a good living. He also bought and sold other people's wool which made him more money.

So Herman grew up and when Herman grew up, he didn't like the old portrait of himself as a nine-year old, and thought it was probably time for a new one to be painted. For starters, he was a little embarrassed by the feather on his hat in the old portrait.

He wanted the new portrait to show him as the man he had grown up to be - someone who is relaxed, and knows how to have fun and cause mischief, someone who is wearing a large stylish hat.

Remind children of the rules of the Museum (no running, no touching, no leaning on anything) and then ask them to go and find the painting.

When they have found it the children should sit down in front of the painting.

Ask the children to find the portrait of the man they think is Herman.

***Portrait of an unknown man by Franz Hals, Museum no: I50.***



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Well done! Here's our man.

*Why did you choose this painting?*

*How does it look different from the portraits around him?*

He is portrayed as more laid back than the subjects of the other portraits. He is slouched over, and is not wearing the expensive clothing that the men in the other portraits are wearing.

*Can you think of any adjectives to describe Herman in this picture?*

This is Herman in his early-Twenties. After being tutored when he was growing up, he became a bit of a problem for his dad, and was a bit rebellious. He spent a lot his dad's money having a good time, and was more interested in fun than work.

Finally his dad got fed up of Herman's partying. He said "I'm not giving you any money from now on. Not a single coin! Go out and earn something for once in your life!".

Herman realised he had no choice, and needed to go out and find a way to earn his living.

*What could Herman do? How could he earn some money?*

Look around the gallery and find a painting that shows Herman doing a job of some kind.

After they have had a few minutes to get ideas, ask some of the children to share their thoughts. Great ideas but let's go and find out what really happened to Herman.

***Shipping before Dordrecht* by Simon de Vliegner, Museum no: 105.**



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Point out Herman, with his back to us sitting next to a gentleman in a red jacket – on a boat in the foreground. He is going to become a merchant, with his cousin Jan, who he is travelling with. He has heard all about the treasures of the Far East, and is off to make his fortune.

*What do you think the differences*

*are between Herman's life in Cleves, and life on the seas?*

*What is taking place in this picture?*

Ships are being loaded with supplies because the journey ahead will be very long.

*Why are there so many ships?*

A trip like this would be part of a large expedition, where they would be hoping to find large amounts of goods they could sell, and make a fortune.

They set sail on the 31<sup>st</sup> July 1661 on a warm summer's day. At first Herman adjusted well to his life on the seas, although from time to time he suffered from seasickness. After the novelty of being at sea wore off it became boring because all they had to look at was the sun, the sea or the clouds!

We are now about to set sail on our own voyage to the Far East where we can set our eyes upon the many treasures and unusual objects that Herman may have discovered on his adventures there.

**Lead the children downstairs to Gallery 28: Arts of the Far East.**

So now we've travelled east across Europe. Think about the sea journey that Herman would have taken – round Africa, across the Indian Ocean to China – you could use a map of the world to show his route. (see last page for map of Dutch Empire in 1648).

Encourage the children to think about how the objects in this gallery reflect the part of the world in which they were made. Ask them to look around and choose an object that they think is particularly Chinese. You may want to discuss their choices or move them straight on to completing the tasks on the Into Action sheet 1 or 2 (differentiated).

Now lead the children back up to gallery 15 but warn them that on our journey back to the Netherlands we may run into a spot of bother. At this time the Dutch were at war with the English and the English navy could attack Dutch ships at any time. Find a painting of a sea battle and sit down in front of it.

***The four days' battle* by Abraham Storck, Museum no: 106.**



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Herman's journey home did not go as smoothly as he and his shipmates had hoped. A week before finally arriving in the Netherlands safely, after five long years away from his family and friends, Herman's ship came under

attacked from the English navy led by the infamous Captain-General George Monck, the Commander-in-Chief of the English fleet. After four days of fierce fighting Herman and the rest of the Dutch fleet overcame their enemy and the English were finally defeated.

Hooray! Herman's back home!

In small groups, the children can be asked to choose a painting, and interpret it to explain how Herman's story ended.

*Did people like the goods he brought home to sell?*

*Did he make a fortune or did his treasure end up as junk for a market stall?*

*Did he carry on being a merchant, or did he have to become something else?*

See Into Action sheet 3.

