

# The Book of Kells

'Turning Darkness into Light'

Schools' Senior Information Pack

## Teachers' Guide



### Welcome!

We hope you and your students will enjoy the *Book of Kells: Turning Darkness Into Light* exhibition. This information pack was designed to help students explore the illustration, materials and language that make the Book of Kells so unique.

**This pack contains five worksheets and a Post-Visit Suggestion Sheet.**

- Early History of Ireland
- Materials and Methods
- Images from the Book of Kells
- The Scribes and Their Work
- The Long Room and Trinity College

Each worksheet provides students with an *Introductory* passage about a specific room in the exhibition. A *Fact Find* section follows in which students may answer questions based upon what they have learned from the Introductory section or from the exhibition itself. Finally, there is an *Activity* section for further exploration. If teachers wish to mix subject areas with their students, a perforated line indicates where the Introductory section can be separated from the Fact Find and Activity sections. *Permission for photocopying these materials is granted solely for educational use and not for resale.*

Your students should bring with them a notebook and pencils so that they can use the worksheets while they are in the exhibition. We recommend that you divide your class into five groups and let each group work within one area of the exhibition. This allows students to exchange ideas amongst themselves without one large group trying to manoeuvre around the exhibition. Photocopy the required worksheet for each member of the group.

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These worksheets may be used in a number of ways:

**PRE-VISIT:** You can give these worksheets to your students ahead of their visit or the Fact Find Questions can be answered once they are in the exhibition. Answers appear on the reverse of this sheet.

**IN-VISIT:** You may choose to give your students their worksheets immediately prior to their tour of the exhibition. In this case, completion of the Fact Find and the Activity sections will require more time.

**POST-VISIT:** The Suggested Projects Sheet has follow-up activities you may wish to explore with your students after your visit.

Once again, we hope you and your students enjoy your visit to the Old Library and Trinity College. You may phone Anne-Marie Duffley at 6082320 or fax her at 6082690 to book your class visit.

Designed and written by Molly Sullivan  
Produced by Trinity College Library

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### Teachers' Guide to Fact Find Questions

#### Early History

- Q. Why do we think the Book of Kells was created?
- A. To celebrate the centenary of St Colm Cille's (or Columba's) death.
- Q. What social divisions existed in communities in early Ireland?
- A. There were either slaves or hostages, peasants and soldiers, and tribal kings.
- Q. Who used pocket gospel books and why?
- Name one from the exhibition.
- A. **Missionaries to spread the Gospel.** The Book of Mulling or Moling and/or the Book of Dimma.

#### Materials, Methods

- Q. How were the folios (pages) of the Book of Kells created?
- A. Approximately 185 calfskins were used to make the Book of Kells. The monks would dip the skin in a mixture of water and lime and let it soak for a couple of weeks, then they would remove the skin from the soaking and scrape and pumice it to remove the hair. Next they would stretch and flatten each skin. Finally, it would be cut to form individual folios.
- Q. Can you name three of the ingredients used to colour the Book of Kells?
- A. Any three of the following: red lead and orpiment, lapis lazuli, copper.
- Q. How do the librarians identify the Book of Kells folio pages ?
- A. Verso means left; recto means right. The Trinity librarians assigned each folio in the Book of Kells with a number and the Latin signs for left/right.

#### Images

- Q. What is 'interlace'?
- A. A pattern of ribbon-like lines and spirals that are drawn over and under one another but are never repeated and are rounded-off.
- Q. Who are the four evangelists and what are their symbols?
- A. Matthew/Man, Mark/Lion, Luke/Calf, John/Eagle.
- Q. Name three reasons for the use of decoration in the Book of Kells?
- A. To tell the story of the gospels to those who could not read, to illustrate the lettering, and to impress people by its splendour.

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### The Scribes

Q. In what language is the Book of Kells written?

A. Latin.

Q. How did the scribes correct errors?

A. They used red crosses or red dots to surround ‘mistakes’.

Q. Name the four different types of scribes?

A. Scribe A wrote plainly and did not do any painting. He left that job to Scribe B who used coloured inks and liked to write in a fancier style. Scribes C and D copied the gospels of Saints Matthew, Mark and Luke.

### The Long Room

Q. How are books organised in the Old Library?

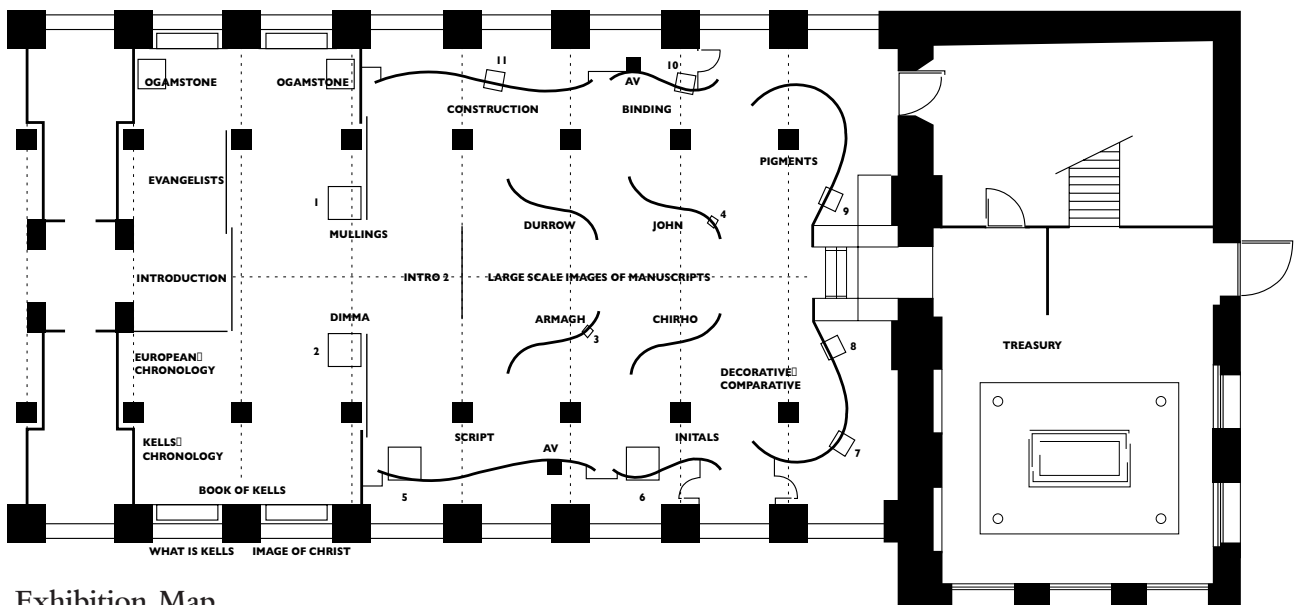
A. Each shelf is marked with a letter and each book is assigned a number.

Q. Who created the vaulted ceiling and when was this project finished?

A. Sir Thomas Deane and Benjamin Woodward in 1860.

Q. What rights did the 1996 Proclamation promise the people of Ireland?

A. It stated that it guaranteed ‘religious and civil liberties, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens.’ It also declared ‘its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and all of its parts, cherishing all children of the nation equally.’



Exhibition Map

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### Suggested Project Sheet

The following are suggestions for *Post-Visit* projects that you and your students can explore.

- Ask your class to imagine that they are scribes and they are creating a very rare, important book. What would it be about? What materials would they use to make it? What would the illustrations be? Who would they want to read this special book? Have them write out their ideas. Alternatively, maybe they can make a book as an art project. Have them base this project on what they know about book-making from the exhibition.
- Divide your class into groups. Without using the same group divisions that toured the exhibition. Ask your students to make a map of the exhibition as they remember it. What were some of their favourite things in the exhibition? Have them describe these in their map.
- Have the students create a poem using their experience of and information from the exhibition. Again try dividing the class into groups to do this exercise. Have each member of the group write one line. Keep the poem going for as long as they can in the time allotted them. Have each group read or perform the poem to the rest of the class. Can they continue it?
- Ask your students to create a diary of a week in the life of a scribe. Where is the monastery located in which he lives? What is his daily routine? What is his job within the monastery?
- Ask your students to create an illustration for a special manuscript. Ask them to use some of the techniques they saw in the exhibition such as ‘interlace’. You can enhance the project by buying calligraphy pens for them to try out. These are easily purchased in any arts and crafts shop.
- Have your students create a short story by asking them to make-believe that they are a group of monks waiting for a rare and special colour to use on a manuscript they are illustrating. Ask them to tell you how they think that the mineral (i.e. lapis lazuli, the blue pigment) travelled to Ireland. How did they come to hear about it? How did they bring it to the monastery?

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- Open a science discussion with your students. You can discuss the minerals used in the exhibition by playing the following game: The minerals you saw in the exhibition were used by the monks to create pigments. These pigments made up the colouring that illustrated the Book of Kells. Today we have very different uses for these minerals. Minerals consist of chemical compounds which themselves are made from elements. An element is a thing which cannot be decomposed chemically and which constitutes all matter. See if your students can correctly match the elements listed here with the questions below:
  - a. Calcium, b. Sulphur, c. Hydrogen, d. Oxygen, e. Copper, f. Arsenic, g. Aluminium, h. Lead
  1. Which element does the body take in when it breathes? (d)
  2. Which element is used to make household pipes that carry water? (e)
  3. Which element is found in milk and is good for your teeth and bones? (a)
  4. Which element has been removed from petrol to make it more environmentally friendly? (h)
  5. Which element is combined with oxygen to make water? (c)
  6. Which element is found on the tip of a match? (b)
  7. Which element is used to make cooking foil? (g)
  8. Which element is a poison? (f)

Below are some books for further reading that you and your students may enjoy. They can be purchased in the Bookshop at the Book of Kells exhibition or in other bookshops.

### Suggested reading:

*Exploring the Book of Kells.* George Otto Simms

*Scribes and illustrators.* Christopher DeHamel.

*The Book of Durrow: A Medieval Masterpiece at Trinity College Dublin.* Bernard Meehan.

*The Book of Kells: An Illustrated Introduction to the Manuscript in Trinity College Dublin.* Bernard Meehan. Published by Thames and Hudson, Ltd.

Answers: 1) d 2.) e 3) a 4) h 5) c 6) b 7) g 8) f