

Hidden Heritage

The unseen history of Stratford Road

myroute Resource Pack



Photo: Jas Sansi

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Welcome to the *My Route* learning resource pack

Introduction to *My Route*

My Route was an 18 month Heritage Lottery Funded project delivered by Sampad South Asian arts from February 2014 until August 2015.

My Route explored how the first three miles of Stratford Road in South Birmingham changed physically and culturally over the last 70 years, working with residents to examine six different themes; trade, demographics, faith, language, architecture and cuisine.

The project focussed on the wards of Sparkbrook, Springfield and Hall Green.

About Sampad

Established in 1990, Sampad is a dynamic development agency for South Asian arts based in Birmingham, in the UK.

It plays a significant role regionally, nationally and beyond, in promoting the appreciation and practice of the diverse artforms originating from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

Through its work Sampad serves, supports and initiates South Asian arts in all its forms working with youth, community, education and professional artists.

Hidden Heritage

This was an activity developed with South & City College Hall Green Campus during *My Route*. Over a series of lessons it explored how architecture can reveal hidden functions/uses of buildings – particularly places of worship. The architecture was captured through photography by students, with the final edited pieces available on the *My Route* website.

How to use this resource

This resource has been created for Key Stage 5 students as part of *My Route's* educational legacy. It has been designed for teachers to use in their classroom, with all the required materials being easily accessible within the school.

As part of the pack there is a teachers' guide, which provides context and information relevant to the Stratford Road which they might need to deliver the sessions – particularly if it is used as part of a local case study. However, not all the information will be found here, as independent and group research forms a large part of the suggested activities.

Included in this pack is original archive material from the project's research. Suggested activities are designed for teachers to pick and choose from, with them being easily adaptable depending on the modules the students are studying, or if they have different time constraints.

For more information please visit the *My Route* website at www.myroute.org.uk

Religious Studies

- Religion and the Visual Arts
- Religion and contemporary society
- World religions
- History of Christianity/Islam
- Religious Studies Foundations
- Religious Studies Investigations

Art and Design

- Visual communication and meaning
- 2D visual language
- Working in 3D
- Produce and develop ideas
- Contextual references

Architecture

Stratford Road hosts a diverse and historically significant range of architectural styles, many of which have been listed – which means their architecture and appearance cannot be changed and is protected for future generations to enjoy. From grand Victorian buildings, like the Bordesley Centre, to modernist and post 1960s buildings, the road reflects the changing fashions, trades and preferences which have influenced its physical appearance.

The famous Birmingham architect William Henry Bidlake designed several significant buildings on the road, such as the grade 1 listed building St Agatha's, styled in the Gothic Revival style of 1898. His other church, situated at the other end of Stratford Road near Hall Green, was built between 1932 and 1933 as what was formerly the Sparkhill United Church but has now been converted into a Pakistani restaurant. This building has a distinct Romanesque style, and marks a step away from his usual Gothic designs.

Another Church of architectural significance is St. John's Church, situated in Sparkhill and designed by architects Martin and Chamberlain. Built in 1888 its chisel-cut, red brick form emulates the Early English Gothic style on the outside but has a contrasting interior contemporary to its time.

Martin and Chamberlain also designed the Ladypool Primary School, built in 1885. This is an example of Victorian Gothic, a style championed by the firm. Its cascading tiled roofs; brick, terracotta and mosaic walls are woven into a superb 'Arts and Crafts' inspired building and, its interior iron 'arches' encapsulates some of their iconic designs.

Sparkhill Library was built in 1902 and designed by Arthur Harrison, originally as a council house, before becoming a public library in 1923. Next to this building is Sparkhill Swimming Baths, designed by Hurley Robinson and built in 1931 in the modernist style.

Religion

From the 1800s until the early 1990s, Christianity was the predominant religion found around Stratford Road, and there are many examples of beautiful places of worship that highlight the different congregations, some of which are mentioned above.

The 1950s and 1960s saw many churches offer increased community services, with welfare and community support becoming the focus of some church services. This was particularly true if the church had a congregation made up of a migrant community, such as the Irish.

The Pentecostal Churches had many of the newly arrived African Caribbean communities in their congregation from the 1950s as services would have more of an emphasis on scripture, bible study and prayer. Nowadays, the different Christian sects and denominations along this road face many challenges, namely a decreasing congregation, as many of the worshippers are leaving the area and moving into areas like Shirley and Acocks Green.

South Asians filtered onto Stratford Road during the latter part of 1950s and 1960s, but the majority came to live and work in the area in the 1970s. Purpose built places of worship for these faiths didn't exist in the same form as they do today. Religion tended to be a domestic matter, with a dedicated area to worship in a room in one's lodging. For many, when they first arrived, there were no formal places of worship for them to pray at, and so houses became the informal meeting place for communal worship.

Ever since the late 1960s, when large populations of Mirpuri and Kashmiri migrants settled in Sparkbrook and Sparkhill, there has been a noticeable increase in the amount of Muslims in the area. Over time mosques were built, with the Amanah Masjid built as part of the Muath Trust at the gateway of the Stratford Road in

Sparkbrook and more recently mosques appearing towards Hall Green, with the Hall Green Mosque being the first registered Mosque established in the area in 2005.

Similar patterns can be found in the other religions, such as in Sikhism. In the 1960s the nearest Gurudwara was in Smethwick, which many Sikhs would travel to from Sparkbrook. As in the case of the Irish, the Gurudwara had a key role to play for the Sikhs in their cultural expression – it made them feel at home. Today you will find the purpose built Guru Nanak Gurudwara South Birmingham, which opened in the 1990s.

The Hindu community saw an exponential growth in Birmingham after 1965. Initially many of the Hindus would hire out rooms to celebrate their main festival, Navratri, but in the 1970s and 1980s, the community started to fundraise to purchase a space of their own for their spiritual and community needs. The old cinema on Walford Road was purchased in the 1980s and became the Shree Ram Mandir Temple.

Activities: Art & Design Research

Suggested timeframe: 2 lessons (one for research, one for presenting)

Resources Required: Access to research materials (internet/library) – see suggested reading list, stationery

Outcomes

- Students are able to identify different architectural styles
- Students develop a contextual appreciation of how fashions can change with time
- Students develop their knowledge of influential styles
- Students develop independent research and groupwork skills
- Students develop communication skills

Plan

Explain to the students that Stratford Road highlights examples of many different architectural styles such as;

- ◆ Romantic/Romanesque
- ◆ Gothic Revivalist
- ◆ English Gothic
- ◆ Modernism
- ◆ Arts and Craft
- ◆ Victorian

Divide the students into groups and give them each one architectural style to research. Ask them to look into the following;

- ◆ When it was popular and if certain geographical locations favoured it
- ◆ What recognisable characteristics it used (e.g. statues, iron casting, brickwork, geometric shapes)

- ◆ If there were any influential and leading architects who worked in this style
- ◆ What contextual events or fashions helped develop this style
- ◆ If the design was associated with a particular type of building e.g. churches, libraries

Ask each group to create a presentation which answers these questions, as well as mood boards which help convey the characteristics for each architectural style. Get them to present back to each other on their findings.

Activities: Hidden Heritage

Suggested timeframe: 10 minutes

Resources Required: Photographs from the 'Architecture Group', page 9.

Outcomes

- Develop their ability to identify different architectural styles
- Critical thinking and looking for evidence

Ask the students to look at photographs entitled 'Architecture Group' on Page 9

- ◆ What architectural style do they think each building belongs to and why?
- ◆ What do they think the building is used as now? Why?
- ◆ Do they think this has always been the buildings function? Why/why not?
- ◆ If the function has changed, why do they think this building was selected for the new one?



South & City College Hall Green Campus, ESOL Students



Photo: Katy Wade



Photo: David Richardson



Photo: Jas Sansi



Photo: Katy Wade



Photo: Simi Obra



Photo: Simi Obra



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Photo: Jas Sansi



Photo: Jas Sansi



Photo: Kris K



Photo: Jas Sansi



Photo: Katy Wade

Activities: Faith & Architecture

Suggested timeframe: see each activity

Resources Required: Photographs from the 'Religious Spaces Group' (page 20), photographs from 'Architecture Group' (page 9), access to research materials, recommended reading list and stationery.

Outcomes

- Knowledge about the function and importance of one/several places of worship
- Independent research and critical thinking skills
- Knowledge about how different faiths pray
- Knowledge of religious architecture
- Group work
- Presentation skills
- Knowledge about how faith operates in modern times

Icebreaker activity (10 minutes)

Ask the students to choose from one of the following faiths (or pre select if you are studying one as part of a religious studies qualification);

- ◆ Christianity
- ◆ Islam
- ◆ Hinduism
- ◆ Sikhism

Ask the students to identify which photographs from the religious spaces group show places and worship/ spiritual home for the selected religion.

Research (45 mins)

Ask the students to undertake some research into what form and requirements their chosen religion usually has for its 'Religious Spaces Group'. For example;

1. Does it need to face a certain direction?
2. Are separate prayer areas needed?
3. Are altars or statues required?
4. Are women and men usually separated?
5. Are pews or prayer mats used?
6. Are there any decorative features that are usually visible?

NB. If possible, you may wish to arrange a visit to a local place of worship to help students with this research.

Applying their learning activity (15 mins)

Ask the students to get into groups, so that they are with people who have been researching the same faith. Based on their research, and on examples seen in the photographs, ask them to undertake the following activity. Look at the photographs entitled 'Architecture Group' on page 9. Are there any buildings which they think could meet the basic requirements for their faith?

Look at the photographs entitled 'Architecture Group' on page 9.

Things to consider;

- ◆ How big is the building?
- ◆ Has it many floors?
- ◆ Can they see any parking space?
- ◆ Are there any windows?

Group activity (50 mins)

Ask the students to get into groups and design a brand new purpose built place of worship for the religion they were allocated or chose. Ask them to consider the following;

- ◆ What will the building look like – will it follow any architectural designs they have seen already?
- ◆ How many rooms/spaces will it have?
- ◆ Will it be multi levelled or one storey?
- ◆ Does it need a kitchen?
- ◆ What decorative features should be included? – e.g. stained glass windows, symbols, statues
- ◆ Where will people worship?
- ◆ Ask the students to then present their designs to each other, explaining why they have added certain elements/designs to the building.



Photo: Katy Wade



Photo: Jas Sansi



Photo: Kris K



Photo: Jas Sansi



Photo: Katy Wade



Photo: Jas Sansi



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Photo: Jas Sansi



Photo: Jas Sansi



Photo: Jas Sansi

Activities: Religious Symbolism and Design

Suggested timeframe: see each activity

Resources Required: Photographs from the 'Religious Spaces' group, access to research materials, recommended reading list, stationery, PowerPoint (optional).

Outcomes

- Developed knowledge about a/several places of worship
- Developed 2D drawing skills
- Knowledge about how art can communicate to viewers
- Development of design and working to a brief
- Communication and presentation skills
- Teamwork

Activity 1 (One lesson: 35 mins research, 15 mins feedback)

Explain to the students that many religions use symbolism and artistic styles to decorate their places of worship. Put the students into groups of about four or five, and allocate them a religion to research. Ask the students to research some of the patterns, symbols and images associated with their religion of choice, and then feedback to the class why they are used/if they signify anything.

Activity 2 (Two lessons: one to design door and put proposal together, one to present)

Tell the students that a new multi-faith centre is being opened. The owners would like a new decorative door to be created, which welcomes people from all faiths to the building. Split the students into groups of three and tell them that they will be competing against each other to win the commission. Tell them that they will present in front of the class, and that you will be judging the winner based on the following;

- ◆ Attractiveness of the design
- ◆ The meaning behind the design
- ◆ How inclusive to people of different faiths it is
- ◆ How well they present their proposal (e.g. clarity of points, contributions from all group members, use of persuasive language)

Get the groups to present to each other their design and select a winner.

Suggested Reading

http://www.ancient-symbols.com/religious_symbols.html

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