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Art-Based Learning of Heritage
Languages through Didactic Innovation



Art and Fashion – The Wawel Heads

Museum visits are an excellent way to combine heritage language teaching and art. But what if no interesting museums are nearby? Here, virtual museums are a good alternative. In this workshop we aim to show how freely available online resources published by museums can be used for a wide variety of art-based learning activities.

Art and Fashion – The Wawel Heads

Participants' Profile : adults and children aged 12 and above

Maximum Number of Participants: 20 participants

Total Duration: 4–5 hours

Materials: computer with internet connection, data projector (optional), drawing or painting materials, fashionable head accessories (e.g. scarfs, fabrics, hats, caps. hair clips), printed visuals and texts

Language Skills: vocabulary, oral expression, reading and writing.

Other Skills: fashion history, drawing or painting, theatrical performance, history, art and art history

Levels: From A2 to C2

Developed by / Origin / Original language: Rupert Hasterok, Comparative Research Network e. V. – English



INTRODUCING THE WAWEL HEADS OF KRAKÓW'S ROYAL CASTLE

Time required: 15- 25 min

Materials: printed handouts,
computer with internet
connection, data projector
(optional)



Introducing the Wawel heads of Kraków's Royal Castle



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Activity 1 Step-by-Step

1. Set up the computer and, for a larger group, a data projector or prepare some handouts.
2. Welcome the participants

Welcome everyone to the workshop and explain its nature and purpose. If the participants don't know each other yet, you may want to organise a short icebreaker during which they have an opportunity to present themselves and get to know each other.

3. Tell the story of the Wawel heads

Briefly introduce the participants to the history of the wooden sculptured heads that decorate the ceiling of the Envoys' Hall in the Royal Castle of Kraków by using the online resources available on the website of the Virtual Museum of Lesser Poland (see below). You can, for example, ask them if they have already heard of the Wawel heads or visited the royal castle. Adapt your presentation to your target audience but don't go into too much detail yet. If you show a reproduction of a sculptured head, avoid using one that will figure in the next activity.



*Schoolgirl with rose wreath
(Xawer Dunikowski 1927)*



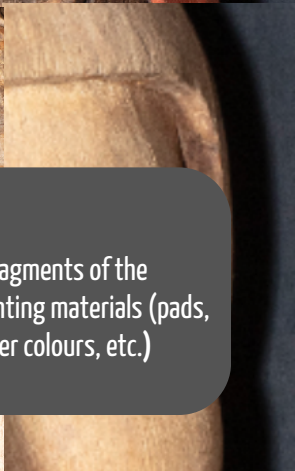
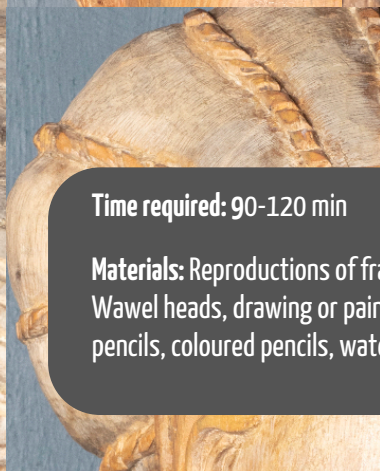
In a preserved contract from the year 1535, the workshop of Master Sebastian Tauerbach was commissioned to create wooden coffer, 194 carved heads and 194 rosettes for the Envoys Hall of the Wawel Royal Castle of Kraków, but no mention was made how they would be arranged. Three painters were to cover the sculpted elements with colours and gilding. However, when the work was nearly finished, it was destroyed by a fire that broke out on the Wawel hill in October 1536. The second ceiling built in the following years stayed in place until the early 19th century, when the occupying Austrian troops transformed the castle's rooms into military barracks. The ceiling was removed and the sculptures dispersed. Some were saved by Izabela Czartoryska and safeguarded at her Gothic house in Puławy; these were later confiscated by the Russians and sent to Moscow, before being restituted by the Bolsheviks in May 1922 after the Treaty of Riga (1921). Other sculptures ended up with the Tarnowski family in Kraków. Only 30 heads have survived in total. In 1927, the 30 surviving heads – less than a sixths – were installed in a newly fitted ceiling crafted by Władysław Kamiński at the request of the conservator Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz in what had become the Deputies Hall (Sala .Polska). Modern versions of the Wawel heads (see preceding page) have been created by Xawer Dunikowski in 1924.

Researchers have long speculated on the meaning of the Wawel heads, who they represent, whether they were allegories, how they are associated with astrological themes or may have illustrated the character science then prevalent. What is obvious is that they depict fashionable head apparels of the early modern period but also of earlier historical or even mythological times as they were then perceived. One advantage they offer to historians of costumes resides in their three-dimensional character that brings out details not evident in contemporary paintings, engravings and other works of art. Even though only the head and neck are portrayed, they tell us a lot about the represented persons.



Online Resources

- The website of the Virtual Museums of Lesser Poland reproduces digitised images of the Wawel heads, including a 3D model of the Envoys Hall's ceiling that let us inspect the heads from different angles, as well as descriptions of the heads in English and Polish. There you can find also an article in English by Anna Wysznińska, 'Keep your head', on fashion and the Wawel heads, which has been used for this learning module, and a presentation in Polish by the same author, 'To się na głowie nie mieści!' ('This doesn't fit my head!') on the fashion of historical headwear.
- Irena Turnau's *Słownik Ubiorów* (1999) is a dictionary of Polish technical terms for historical costumes from the medieval period to the 19th century, which can be used to create a glossary or vocabulary list. A digital copy is accessible here.
- Valerie Cumming, C. W. Cunnington and P. E. Cunnington (2010) *The Dictionary of Fashion History* can be consulted for English terms here.
- Kazimierz Kuczman (2004) *Renesansowe głowy wawelskie*, Kraków: Zamek Królewski na Wawelu - Państwowe Zbiory Sztuki, 2004. (A digital copy is available in the digital library Polonia here.)
- Przemysław Bociąga 'A View from the Top: The Heads of Wawel' is a travel blog on the Wawel heads on the website 3 Seas Europe.
- A video on the sculpted heads crafted by Xawer Dunikowski in 1924 can be watched here.



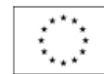
LETTING YOUR IMAGINATION RUN FREE!

Time required: 90-120 min

Materials: Reproductions of fragments of the Wawel heads, drawing or painting materials (pads, pencils, coloured pencils, water colours, etc.)

Letting Your Imagination Run Free!

Activity 2 Step-by-Step



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1. Explaining the task

Hand out to each participant a printed reproduction of a fragment of a Wawel head, as shown on the previous page, or use a small sample of fragments for a larger group. Use the fragments provided or other ones prepared by you. Ask the participants to draw or paint the full head as they imagine it by using the utensils made available to them. To help inexperienced artists you may want to provide templates of a head with its main features, such as the eyes, nose and mouth.

2. Presenting the imagined heads

Gather the participants in a circle and ask each, or some of them, to present their work of art by giving the depicted person a name, evoking some of his or her characteristics and explaining their aesthetic choices. Who might the person be? Why is he or she wearing this particular headgear or has adopted a particular hair style?

3. Comparing with the original Wawel heads

Show the participants reproductions of the original heads on a screen or by pinning printed-out versions on a wall next to the drawings or paintings. Ask them to describe the heads. What forms and colours are dominating? What are the materials used? Complement their observations by using the descriptions of each head published on the website. For linguistic support, you may want to distribute a vocabulary list with the names of colours, materials and more technical fashion terms.



WHOSE HEAD IS IT?



Time required: 60-90 min

Materials: reproductions of the Wawel heads



1. A short introduction

Use for this activity Anna Wyszynska's text 'Keep your head!' or its Polish version (see Online resources). Thus, explain to participants that fashion can be considered as a long succession of styles of personal appearance over time, some short-lived, others appearing almost timeless, such as the Wawel head of a philosopher on the left side of the previous page. These styles tell us a lot about who a person is and how he or she wants to be perceived by others. Even a head alone is a rich source of information. Art historians have noted that the Wawel heads represent very different kinds of persons and suggested that the surviving sculpted heads fall into one of three categories: 'archaic' (e.g. ancient or biblical), 'contemporary' (that is typical of the first half of the 16th century) or 'mythological'. The latter are characterised by imaginary attributes, such as that of the winged jewel worn by the woman pictured on the right of the preceding page.

2. Guessing game

Gather the participants around a table on which you have laid out reproductions of the Wawel heads or in front of a (pin) wall to which you have them affixed. Then ask them to guess to which of the three categories a particular head might belong, what kind of person it may represent and why they think so. Discuss the findings with the group.

3. How do art historians interpret the Wawel heads?

As a final step, present how art historians and historians have interpreted the Wawel heads and what sources they use, such as historical paintings or illustrated manuals from the early Polish Renaissance period and earlier times. Here we focus on contemporary heads. Below are some examples, but feel free to choose others. Don't forget to clearly explain difficult technical terms with which the participants may not be familiar or provide them with a printed-out glossary or vocabulary list.



Could this be the head of a nun?

During the late Middle Ages, all married women and widows were expected to cover their hair, neck and cleavages, as well as sometimes parts of their face. The hair was tightly piled up at the back of the head and then covered with an under-cap or a scarf before a bonnet was placed on the head. The so-called cushion bonnet or mobcap placed over the hair also hid the forehead and the ears. Cheaper versions were made of linen, more expensive ones of brocade embroidered with silver, gold and pearls.

The veil depicted here, which resembles the visor of a helmet, is called a wimple (podwika in Polish). It was commonly worn by women in Greater Poland (Wielopolska) but also found in Lesser Poland (Małopolska), as shown below in the portrait of Queen Anna Jagiellon as a widow by the painter Marcin Kober who spent time at the court in Kraków. As elsewhere in the early 16th century in Central Europe, it covered the chin, the cheeks and the mouth but the neck and the cleavage started to be exposed. The wimple survived in the habit of female religious orders for at least another two centuries.



Queen Anna Jagiellon as a widow



A woman with a wimple covering her mouth



A woman with a cap

A “German-type” cushion bonnet

In this female head, the hair shows on the sides of the face and the neck and cleavage are no longer hidden. The bonnet is decorated with radially sewn curly gold strings. On the edge of the bonnet a flap, or billiment, has been added – a strip of fabric embroidered with metal threads and pearls. Such billiments, which were also sewn on other parts of clothes (cuffs of shirts, necklines, skirts, etc.) in the 16th century, were sometimes embellished with letters that formed a motto or an anagram.

Historians have identified this head as the portrait of a lady-in-waiting or a burgher, that is a member of the wealthy bourgeoisie. This kind of cushion bonnet can indeed be found in numerous German paintings and graphics of the 15th and 16th centuries. Since the late Middle Ages, bonnets had started to change rapidly before giving rise to specific local styles in the 16th century. At the same time, this resulted in a variety of bonnets, as can be seen in the female headwear of the St Mary's Altar by Veit Stoss in Kraków.

A net cap of Italian origin

This Italian-style bonnet is worn at the back of the head, with the curly hair falling on the forehead and to the sides of the face. The only decoration are a brooch and the simple flap on the edge of the cap. It is thought that the head represents a lady-in-waiting from the retinue of the Queen. A somewhat similar net cap is found in a wood cut portrait of Queen Bona Sforza by Decius from ca. 1518 (see below).



Queen Bona Sforza

Historians have attributed the Wawel heads to persons living at the time or representatives of contemporary social groups, while others have emphasised links to the then prevalent character science or astrological themes. More particularly, this head has been associated with the planet Venus.



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A maiden with a net cap



A young woman in a hat of ostrich feathers

Exotic materials for decoration

In addition to bonnets, Renaissance women also wore hats and berets, either placed directly on the loose hair or on top of a bonnet. Berets, such as today's Basque beret, are a type of hat with a relatively fitted crown and a narrow, rolled (and often slit) brim. Renaissance berets were flatter and had a large variety of brims whose slits were often decorated with tied strings and shields. Ostrich feathers were a prestigious decoration, introduced through European trade with Africa. During the 15th century they were so rare that only persons of the highest status were using them, notably for men's helmets of parade and tournament armour, before being slowly adapted by bourgeois fashion. On the head to the left, they embellish a red hat held in place on the pinned-up hair by a strap or ribbon, as can be seen in the 3D model of the Wawel heads available on the website. Historians assume that the head represented that of a lady-in-waiting at the Queen's court.



A headwear for the powerful and wealthy

What looks like a turban is in fact a tied bonnet, net cap or snood, decorated with a rosette at the front, worn here by a man with a trimmed beard. Such snoods were commonly found in Lesser Poland on the heads of men at the Jagiellonian court or wealthy burghers. Numerous examples are, for instance, present in painted, engraved or medallion portraits of King Sigismund I the Old (1506–1548) and his advisors, Chancellor Krzysztof Szyszkowski and Wojciech Olbracht Gasztołd, or the royal banker Sewerin Boner. Historians trace back the snood to Germany, perhaps the fashion in Nuremberg, while others assume an Italian influence, as in the female bonnet reproduced earlier. The astrological interpretation associates the head with Jupiter or the Sun.



*Portrait of Sigismund I the Old,
Duke of Poland and
Grand Duke of Lithuania
by Hans von Kulmbach*



A man in a net cap



*A man in a hat on a cap
with ear flaps*

A double headgear

Already in the Middle Ages, men wore a linen bonnet at home and donned a hat on top of it when leaving the house. This man with a moustache wears a black bonnet with ear flaps, surmounted by a sort of red beret. The sculpted head may have been inspired by a courtier, nobleman, official or burgher. Other Wawel heads are portrayed with similar low and shallow hats. The one below has more particularly been attributed to a member of the Habsburg family because of his prominent chin and drooping lower lip. However, it remains uncertain whether the sculpture represents Emperor Ferdinand I of Habsburg, father of Sigismund II Augustus, Emperor Charles V, Maximilian I or another person. In any case, since the 14th century, court fashion inspired a wide variety of headwear across Europe.



A youth in a flat head



A wise official?

This man wears a felt cap with a rolled-up brim. The convex seams that hold the four pieces of fabric together are clearly visible. The trimmed beard surrounding an expressive face suggests a certain age and therefore wisdom. The head is thought to represent that of an official. It has also been presumed to be linked to the influence of the planet Mars.



A boy in a cap

A young man's simple cap

The realistic features of this teenage boy with large, wide-open eyes, a straight nose and prominent lips stem from his slightly skewed cap. It has been suggested that he represents a valet.



A bearded man with a felt cap



WHAT WOULD THE WAWEL HEADS
LOOK LIKE TODAY?

Time required: 50-60 min

Materials: various kinds of hats
and caps, scarves, costume
jewellery, hair pins, make-up, etc.

What would the Wawel heads look like today?

Activity 3 Step-by-Step



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1. Introduction to the activity

Ask participants to imagine what contemporary heads would look like? What would be the major differences and continuities in fashion when compared with the medieval and Renaissance periods? Are hats and caps still worn as frequently? During all seasons? And also indoors? Which materials dominate today? What about hair styles and, for men, facial hair? What does this say about the way that people present themselves or want to be perceived? Is fashion still as strongly linked to social status? In the Middle Ages and the early modern period there existed so-called sumptuary laws which defined what a person was allowed to wear or prohibited to wear. By what factors are fashion and its choice shaped today?



Examples of contemporary headwear and hair styles



2. Creating your own stylish head

Ask participants to choose among the available materials and use them to create their own fashionable headwear and, if possible, hair style. Then invite them to present themselves to the group by referring to the fashion choices they have made and by adopting a language and body language characteristic of the person thus portrayed. Other members of the group are allowed to comment or ask questions.

3. Forming a tableau vivant

To end this activity, ask participants to form a tableau vivant, that is to arrange themselves silently and without moving in a scene in which the invented persons are likely to interact with each other in a real-life scene.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EDUCATORS
AND TEACHERS



Preparation:

- Make yourself familiar with the online resources you are going to use.
- Prepare a detailed lesson plan tailored to your audience and decide whether you want to hold the workshop in Polish or English.
- Create a glossary or vocabulary list of costume technical terms, colours and fabrics for a hand-out, if necessary with translations.
- Reflect on whether you prefer to show images on a screen or with the help of print-outs.
- Ensure that participants bring their own painting or drawing materials or provide them.
- Ask participants in time to bring various fashionable headwear and accessories for the 3rd activity.

Expected output:

- Learners practise vocabulary and oral expression by using them in different contexts.
- New vocabulary is better memorised through the accompanying creative activities.
- Participants learn more about art and fashion during the Polish Renaissance, as well as the latter's history.
- Enhanced creativity and soft skills such as team work and communication skills.



Adaptation/Application of the method

- **a group with varied language proficiency**

The workshop can be held in the heritage or the majority language with elements of the former, depending on proficiency levels. If these vary considerably, consider letting participants work in tandems or small groups (incl. children and their parents). If appropriate, paraphrase difficult words or sentences in easy language or give translations.

- **other languages**

Similar activities based on virtual museums can be conducted for other languages by using this learning module as a template, but this will require considerably more preparation, such as for identifying appropriate online resources and creating a lesson plan.

- **bilingual/multilingual options**

The activities can be adapted to bilingual or multilingual settings. In the latter case, vocabulary lists or a glossary must be prepared for several languages, and the historical context has to be made more explicit, as participants are likely to lack knowledge of more specific Polish cultural and historical references, although fashion trends very much take place in a transnational context.

- **cultural context**

Art and fashion transcend borders in early modern Europe and partly beyond. Moreover, Renaissance Poland and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth define key moments in European history.



- **other age groups**

The workshop has been designed for young people and adults with at least some interest in art and fashion. It can be adapted to younger children by simplifying the tasks and reducing the vocabulary to be used. You may also replace task where writing skills are necessary by repeating the titles out-loud. You might need also reduce the number of photos to choose by making children work in small groups. For the photo walk session; make sure that each group of children is accompanied by an adult.

- **outdoor version**

Except for the last activity, the workshop has to take place indoors. However, it can be held in preparation of a visit to the Wawel castle (e.g. during a planned holiday trip or excursion to Kraków) or to any other museum or exhibition with a similar thematic focus.

- **distance-learning option**
 - Online or blended settings are possible but will require adaptation and produce less interaction between participants.
 - To avoid lengthy online sessions, activities should be split and some of the tasks be conceived as individual homework. Participants would only meet online for presentations by the facilitator and to discuss individual results in a plenary session.
 - Distance-learning needs more self-discipline and autonomous learning, which limit participation to older children and adults.



- **challenges**
- Although the Wawel heads through their realistic features are accessible without much previous knowledge of art or history, some participants may lack the motivation to delve into more technical aspects. Activities should therefore be adapted to include all members of the audience, especially in mixed groups of older and younger participants or with very unequal proficiency levels in the heritage language.
- To avoid difficulties of comprehension of less advanced learners in a group with different language proficiency levels, stick to the list of words that you share with your participants.
- **options for parents**
- Parents interested in the subject can explore the Wawel heads, art and fashion together with their child or children, best in the course of an intergenerational workshop, but will need time for preparation – not always obvious! – and have a basic knowledge of Polish history and culture or of fashion if they wish to conduct the workshop on their own.

Tags:

reading, spelling, writing, speaking, pronunciation, listening, vocabulary, syntax, creativity, artistic skills, organisation, orientation, non-verbal expression, cultural, intercultural, digital skills, self-confidence, intergenerational, science-related, body movements, painting, singing, theatre, collage, 1 kid activity, 2 and + kids activity

Lesen, Rechtschreibung, Schreiben, Sprechen, Aussprache, Zuhören, Wortschatz, Syntax, Kreativität, künstlerische Fähigkeiten, Organisation, Orientierung, nonverbaler Ausdruck, kulturelle, interkulturelle, digitale Fähigkeiten, Selbstvertrauen, generationsübergreifend, wissenschaftsbezogen, Körperbewegungen, Malerei, Gesang, Theater, Collage,

lecture, orthographe, écriture, expression orale, prononciation, écoute, vocabulaire, syntaxe, créativité, compétences artistiques, organisation, orientation, expression non verbale, culturelle, interculturelle, numérique, confiance en soi, intergénérationnel, scientifique, gestuelle, peinture, chant, théâtre, collage

czytanie, ortografia, pisanie, mówienie, wymowa, słuchanie, słownictwo, składnia, kreatywność, zdolności artystyczne, organizacja, orientacja, ekspresja niewerbalna, kulturowe, międzykulturowe, umiejętności cyfrowe, pewność siebie, międzypokoleniowe, związane z nauką, ruchy ciała, malarstwo, śpiew, teatr, kolaż,

citire, ortografie, scris, vorbire, pronunție, ascultare, vocabular, sintaxă, creativitate, abilități artistice, organizare, orientare, exprimare non-verbală, culturale, interculturale, abilități digitale, încredere în sine, intergeneraționale, legate de știință, mișcări ale corpului, pictură, cânt, teatru, colaj, olvasás, helyesírás, írás, beszéd, kiejtés, hallgatás, szókincs, szintaxis, kreativitás, művészi készségek, szervezés, tájékozódás, non-verbális kifejezés, kulturális, interkulturális, digitális készségek, önbizalom, generációk közötti, tudományhoz kapcsolódó, testmozgások, festészet, éneklés, színház, kollázs,

القراءة، التهجئة، الكتابة، التحدث، النطق، الاستماع، المفردات، بناء الجملة، الإبداع، المهارات الفنية، التنظيم، التوجيه، التعبير غير اللفظي، الثقافية، بين الثقافات، المهارات الرقمية، الثقة بالنفس، بين الأجيال، المتعلقة بالعلم، حركات الجسم، الرسم، الغناء، المسرح، الكولاج،

читання, правопис, письмо, говоріння, вимова, аудіювання, словниковий запас, синтаксис, креативність, художні навички, організація, орієнтація, невербальне вираження, культурні, міжкультурні, цифрові навички, впевненість у собі, між поколіннями, пов'язані з наукою, рухи, тіла, живопис, спів, театр, колаж

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Images of contemporary headwear have been created with the help of artificial intelligence software, in this case Adobe Firefly.

Other images are credited as follows:

Portrait of Anna Jagiellon by Marcin Kober, Wikimedia Commons, Source: Stanisław Lorentz (1984). Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie: malarstwo. Arkady. [ISBN 83-21332-01-3](#), p. 36

Queen Bona Sforza, wood cut by Decius, Wikimedia Commons, Source: Decius I. L. De vetustatibus Polonorum liber I. De Jagellonum familia liber II. De Sigismundi regis temporibus liber III. Cracoviae, 1521

Portrait of Sigismund I the Old by Hans von Kulmbach, Wikimedia Commons, [National Museum in Poznań](#).