

Action sheet A

Whom do you remember?

WHO IS REMEMBERED AND WHY?

1. Read the (Hi)stories at the Museum info sheet. Then discuss the following questions:

- Are women forgotten more often than men?
- What does this say about the people writing history?
- Did the writing of history change?
- Whom would you remember in 100 years?



Take notes!



2. Look at the Double Door info sheet. Does this example change anything about how you view the history?

Info sheet

(Hi)stories at the Museum

OF OBJECTS AND PEOPLE

The Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin is one of the largest collections of art from countries influenced by Islam. That's why it offers a good insight into the history of Islamic art and culture. But what people and stories are behind the objects? Sometimes the objects themselves bear names, e.g. of artists or clients. But this wasn't always the case, which is why objects with names are rare. Names of women can be found even less frequently at the museum.

WRITING HISTORY

History becomes less tangible the further the events lie in the past. Focusing on a few famous people is one way of examining the past. But this has often limited the history to a king or conqueror. And these famous people were almost always men. History is thus often told as a succession of rulers and their achievements. Hardly any information can be found today about the other people who contributed to the various events. This means that barely any women or minorities are found in history.



Info sheet

Signed double Door

| | |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|
| Object | Double Door |
| Inventory no. | I. 1383 |
| Period | Dated 999 AH / 1590 AD |
| Place | Iran |
| Material | Wood with silver and ivory inlays |
| Size | 1.98 m tall, 1.34 m wide |

THE DOUBLE DOOR

The double door is lavishly designed with ornaments, animals and inscriptions. The wood was also decorated with silver and ivory inlays. The inlays that were preserved indicate that many more of them were attached to the door. The carvings were intricately executed and form braided ribbon ornaments, arabesques, floral scrolls and animals. The object was meant to show that no expense or effort was spared. The name of the female donor is on the top right. Kulum Aqa Khanim bint Schadi Bik Warschaq donated (waqf) this door. It's not known which building it belonged to. On the top left, the artist Ustadh Hidayat Allah immortalised himself. The fact that he positioned his name at about the same height as that of the donor indicates that he had great prestige.



DONATIONS

Awqaf (sing. waqf, faith-based donations) were made at all times in Islam-influenced history and were subject to certain rules. One rule was that you could only donate something that was completely in your own possession at the time of the donation. Women thus had their own possessions at their disposal. Contemporary sources have shown that the women from the upper classes were very well-educated. Women in ruling families, for example, had contact with famous poets and thinkers of their time. The donations included religious shrines or valuable manuscripts. But women also donated trade bases (caravanserai), bridges or roads. This contributed to the infrastructure of the entire country. As a result, women were also politically active, at least indirectly.

Info sheet

Double Door



Action sheet B Part 1

Who is overlooked?

Read the poem! Bertolt Brecht wrote it in 1939:

QUESTIONS FROM A WORKER WHO READS

Who built Thebes with the seven gates?
 In books are the names of kings. Did the kings haul up the lumps of rock?
 And Babylon, repeatedly demolished – who rebuilt it so many times? In which houses
 in radiantly golden Lima did the builders live?
 Where did the masons go on the night they finished the Great Wall of China? Great
 Rome is full of triumphal arches. Who erected them?
 Whom did the Caesars triumph over?
 Did Byzantium, often praised in song, only have palaces for its inhabitants? Even in
 fabled Atlantis, on the night
 the ocean engulfed it, the drowning screamed for their slaves. Young Alexander con-
 quered India. He alone?
 Caesar defeated the Gauls. Didn't he at least have a cook with him? Philip of Spain
 wept when his fleet went down.
 Didn't anyone else cry?
 Frederick the Second won the Seven Years' War. Who else won it? Every page a victory.
 Who cooked the victors' feast?
 Every ten years a great man. Who paid the bill? So many reports. So many questions.



What is the first thing you think of when you
 read this poem? Write it down!

Action sheet B Part 2

Who is overlooked?

... AND FOR WHAT REASONS?



Rewrite the poem! What questions do you have for the writing of history? Which persons are you interested in and who should be remembered? Change the poem's title and thus the perspective.

IDEAS TO THINK ABOUT

- Who is speaking?
- Who is asking the questions in the poem?
- Which perspective are you writing from?
- Would Caesar still be remembered if he didn't have money, education and power?
- Who thinks of the people who lost battles or were the victims?

You can name specific historical people or generally describe social groups.
