

Session outline

Historical enquiry study day The Spanish Armada

The story of the Spanish Armada is a great focal point for developing independent historical enquiry skills. The National Maritime Museum has unique collections and archives that bring this story to life as students discover why the Spanish Armada failed.

We start by discussing the context for the Armada and how the Spanish and English found themselves at war. Students prepare their own research questions, which shape their learning over the course of facilitated sessions throughout the day. Each session lasts between 30 and 45 minutes and you will be given a timetable for these workshops when you arrive at the Museum.

Working with sources

Students use hands-on investigation to explore the Spanish Armada. Using replica objects, they learn about life on board ship and how the Spanish and English adopted very different strategies. Students learn to use objects as evidence and consider how useful they are as primary sources.

Pictures and portraits

Teachers lead their students around the Queen's House as they examine and discuss a painting of the Spanish Armada from the Museum's world-famous collection of maritime

art. Working in small groups, students then hunt for more historical evidence among our Tudor paintings.

Museum archives and manuscripts

Students get a rare opportunity to get close to original 16th-century manuscripts including a spy book made for Francis Walsingham, Elizabeth I's spymaster. We discuss what the document reveals about Elizabeth's methods as a leader and consider the practical challenges for historians working with original sources.

After a day of discovery and discussion, students come together to share their findings and reflect on their learning, as well as identifying other questions that have arisen during their visit to the Museum.

Curriculum links

History, enquiry skills, analysis, Elizabeth I, Tudor England.

In the classroom

Visit our website for a variety of session-linked classroom activities to help you prepare for your visit and follow it up back at school:

rmg.co.uk/schools

