WHAT WILL YOU FIND INSIDE?
WE RECEIVE 3 MILLION NEW ITEMS A YEAR.

The British Library is the national library of the United Kingdom, and one of the largest libraries in the world!

We receive a copy of every publication produced in the UK and Ireland. Our collection grows so quickly that we don’t know exactly how big it is, but we think there are around 170,000,000, yes, 170 MILLION items.

Members of the public can ask to look at anything in our collection, but they can only look at items in one of our 11 Reading Rooms. First though, they need a Reader Pass. We also have special collections on display in our exhibitions. Let’s go explore!

RIGHT, SO LET’S START AT THE PRINTING PRESS.
DOWN THE STAIRS TO THE LOWER GROUND FLOOR AND TURN LEFT (IT’S BY THE TOILETS)!!
Until printing was invented, writing was done by hand, which takes time. It would take a scribe a year to copy out a Bible, so books were incredibly expensive!

In Germany between 1454 and 1455, Johannes Gutenberg devised ‘moveable type printing’. This was a system that quickly created good quality and durable print. The golden age of printing had begun!

The printing press is important as it meant many many more readers had access to books and knowledge – once they had learnt to read of course.

A. How fast could a scribe hand-write a page of the Bible in the 15th century?

- 3 weeks
- 136 Days
- A Weekend
- 12 Minutes
- 4 Hours
- 12.4 Seconds
- All Night
- 1.5 Years

B. How fast could a page of the Bible be printed on a 15th century press?

- A Day
- 15 Seconds
- 12,400 Seconds
- 2 Hours
- 14 Years
- All of Monday
- 1 Month

PRINTING IS EVERYWHERE.
Since you woke up this morning, what printing have you seen?
Can you draw or write a list here?

READY STEADY Scribe

• Before you leave the lower ground floor, find & wobble around the amazing picture: paradoxymoron by Patrick Hughes.
Now go on upstairs and look around for the king’s library!
• It’s the huge glass tower of books running through the centre of the building.
When George III became King in 1760, he decided to form a new library: one worthy of an 18th-century monarch. He believed that reading, writing and sharing knowledge were vital.

He started by buying a whole library from Mr Joseph Smith. These books are mainly bound in white vellum, with red, green and black spine labels lettered in gold. Have a look: can you see any?

George then sent his agents around Europe to bookshops and fairs, to libraries and to private collectors to look for the most curious, the most splendid and the most useful books.

IF YOU WERE THE KING OR QUEEN WHAT WOULD YOU SEND YOUR AGENTS TO COLLECT FOR YOU?

AFTER GEORGE III DIED, HIS SON GEORGE IV GAVE THE WHOLE LOT TO THE NATION. LUCKY US!

WHAT DID THE KING ADD TO HIS LIBRARY?

GUTENBERG BIBLE
BOOKS BELONGING TO WILLIAM III AND MARY II
ELEPHANT
A FUN SWING
CIRCLE THE ONES YOU THINK ARE CORRECT
BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

GO ON UP TO THE THIRD FLOOR
HEAD TOWARDS THE MAPS READING ROOM, FIND THE KLONCKE ATLAS IN THE LOBBY. IT SHOULDN'T BE HARD TO FIND; IT'S THE WORLD'S SECOND LARGEST ATLAS...
The Klencke Atlas was given to King Charles II in 1660 by a merchant who wanted the King to help him in the future.

It was said that the atlas contained the entire knowledge of the world – quite a bold statement!

You might have noticed that you are right next to the Maps Reading Room. You are not allowed in, but you can look in through the windows! What do you think the Readers are studying?

CAN YOU NAME THESE COUNTRIES?

1. ____________________________ 3. ____________________________

2. ____________________________ 4. ____________________________

NOW GO DOWN TO THE UPPER GROUND FLOOR. FIND THE PHILATELIC COLLECTION - IT'S BETWEEN THE CAFE AND THE SIR JOHN RITBLAT GALLERY
In 1840 the world’s first adhesive stamp, the Penny Black, was sold, creating a global communications revolution!

Look in the cases on display. Can you find our Penny Black? Clue 1D = A Penny.

We have found some stamps with children on them that you might be interested in.

Take a look at Case 4 Slide 13 – Can you find the stamps showing King Alfonso XIII when he was three years old?

Alfonso was monarch of Cuba from birth as his father Alfonso XII had died the previous year.

Imagine being a three year old King, what sort of crazy laws would a three year old want to pass?

Or look at Case 7 Slide 11.

In South Africa during the Boer War, the town of Mafeking was besieged by Boer troops. Colonel Baden-Powell was in charge of the town’s defence and organised the local boys into a cadet force whose main task was to act as messengers.

Find the stamp of Sergeant Major Goodyear, the cadet leader, on his bicycle. Can you see Colonel Baden-Powell? He later formed the Scout Movement.

Stamps often tell stories. What story would you tell on a stamp? Have a go at designing your own stamp. Remember you haven’t got much space, so think hard first!

Practise here

Draw here

Penny Black - case 5, Slide 8

Now head into the Sir John Ritblat Gallery
This is where we keep just a few of our most important, popular and interesting items!

Have a look at some of our stunning and staggering books, pictures, manuscripts, maps and scrolls.

Now, are you ready for our next challenge? It will take you all around the world!

TRY AND WRITE A WORD OR LETTER FROM FOUR DIFFERENT ALPHABETS AND SEE IF YOU CAN LABEL THEM TOO.

OR, IF WRITING ISN'T YOUR THING, THEN TRY THE SAME CHALLENGE WITH ANIMALS. THIS GALLERY IS FULL OF SOME AMAZING ANIMALS. CAN YOU FIND FOUR TO DRAW?

HEAD TO THE MUSIC SECTION AND FIND THE BEATLES!
Have you ever heard of The Beatles? They are really, really famous. Use the headphones to have a listen.

THUMBS UP?  THUMBS DOWN?

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THEIR MUSIC IN THREE WORDS?

And finally!

This is the Treasures Gallery and you have seen some of the British Library treasures that we have chosen. What treasure would you like to see on display? Have you got a favourite illustrator or author?

Or maybe there is a book that you find really useful? Or maybe it’s not a book at all but a website? Now that would be radical... What will you put in your display case?

DRAW or WRITE

WHAT DID YOU FIND INSIDE?

I DON'T THINK THERE ARE ANY OF THESE?

14 MILLION BOOKS!

THE KING'S LIBRARY

PRINTING PRESS

8.25 MILLION STAMPS

ALPHABETS

ABC

4 MILLION MAPS

SMELLY ONES?

SCROLLS

MUSIC

ONE OF OUR LOVELY LIBRARIANS