Look Closer: Hands-On Activity

Make Your Own Sundial!

Look at the shape and design of this object.

Do you know what it is and what it was used for?

This object is called an astrolabe.

It was invented by the ancient Greeks and perfected by Islamic scientists. They used it to establish and measure the positions of the sun, moon, planets, and stars.

It was also used to calculate and tell the time of the day, a bit like the clocks of today! The astrolabe is a famous instrument for timekeeping, but there were many other ways to tell the time in ancient times. Many people used a sundial.

Let’s make a sundial.

Hands-On Activity

Materials: paper plate or paper, scissors, stick, markers

Use your paper plate or cut a paper into a circular shape. Colour it as you wish.

Now find a thin piece of wood in your neighbourhood park or your backyard and stick it into the centre of your plate.

Go outside and find a sunny place. Leave your sundial and watch how the shadow of the stick moves with the hours. You can also mark your sundial with hours similar to those on your clock and then try and tell the time!

Image: Astrolabe, Spain, 14th century, bronze, engraved and inlaid with silver, diameter: 13.5 cm, AKM611