

# Size Matters! The Ardabil Carpet

Islamic Middle East, Room 42

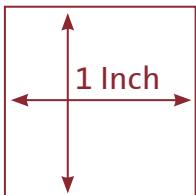


**Find the Ardabil Carpet in the centre of the gallery.**

The carpet is nearly 500 years old and is one of the biggest Islamic carpets ever made.

It was made entirely by hand by tying knots of fine coloured wool onto a silk mesh.

It took over four years to make, with 20-30 weavers working on it.



**Guess how many knots went to make up a piece of carpet this size?**  
(circle which you think)

- 3 or 4      34      304      3,400



**Find a small picture of Shah Tahmasp and his swords near the carpet.**

The carpet was made for Shah Tahmasp, who became ruler of Iran when he was only 10 years old. As he grew up he had to overcome many challenges to his authority. He also became a great patron of the arts.

**Why do you think Shah Tahmasp would have wanted a carpet like this?**

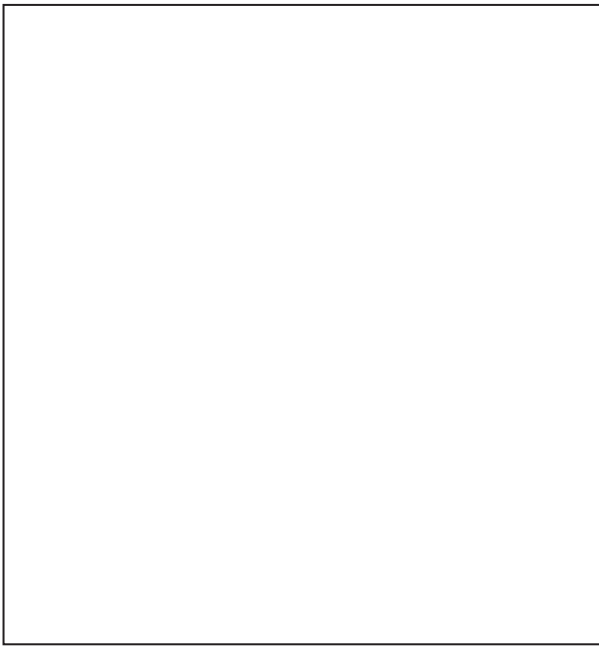
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**The carpet shows three of the four design elements in Islamic design.**

**Geometric patterns**

**Plant-inspired patterns**

**Calligraphy (handwriting)**



**Choose a detail that shows one of these design elements. Draw it in the box.**

The fourth Islamic design element is **figurative art (people)** but this was not allowed in religious buildings. The figurative element is missing from the carpet because it was made for a religious building – a holy shrine to one of Shah Tahmasp’s ancestors.



**Find a piece of Iranian art that is not religious and has figures on it.**

Write down what it is

\_\_\_\_\_ **Draw one of the figures here**



**What do you think a very rich and powerful person today would choose to own as a status symbol equivalent to the Ardabil Carpet?**

\_\_\_\_\_

For Shah Tahmasp, commissioning such a beautiful carpet for a holy shrine was also a way of showing his commitment to his Islamic faith and beliefs, an important part of his identity.

**How would you choose to express faith and beliefs important to you – they could be religious, political or other?**

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