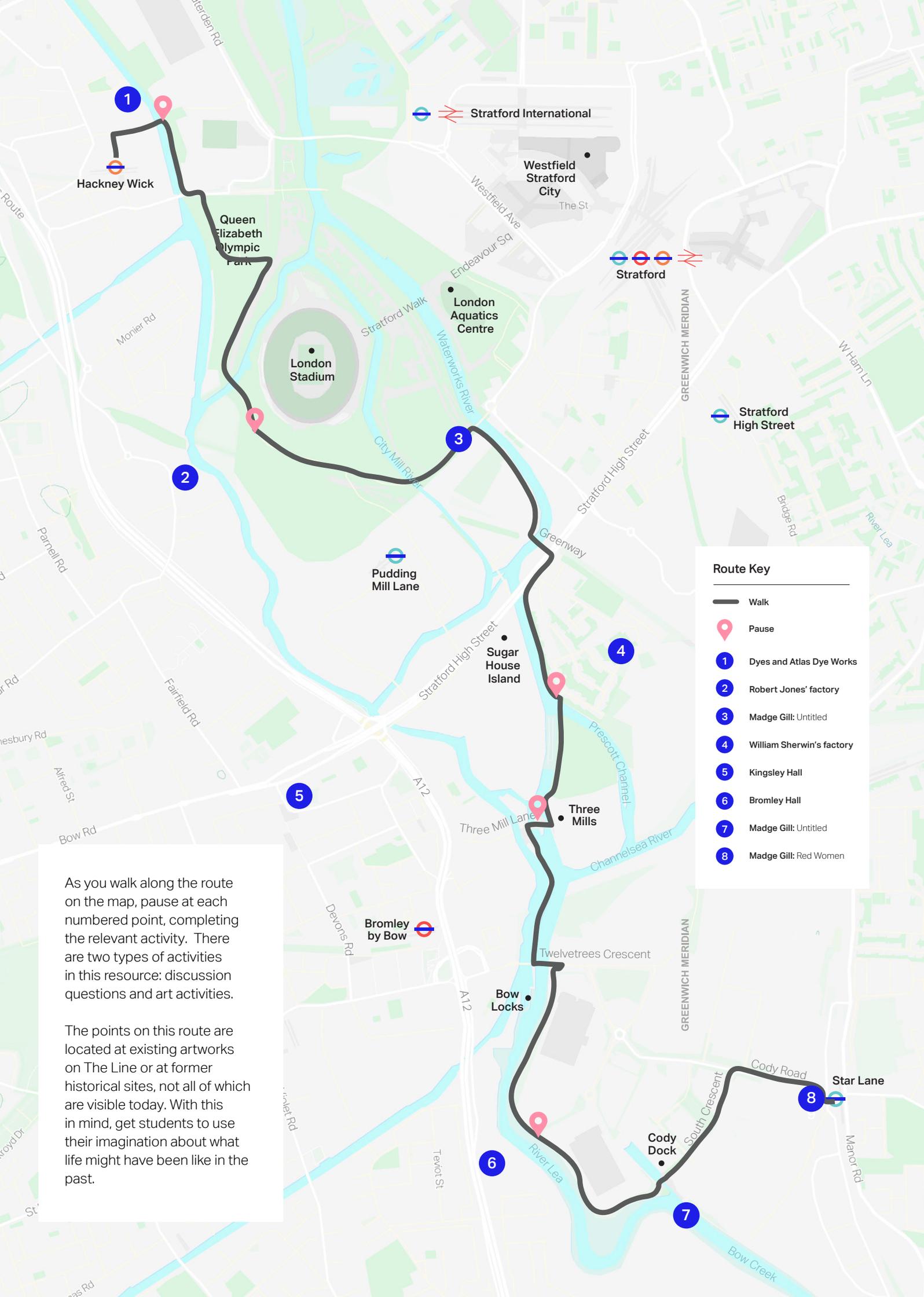


Nature in Mind

School trip resource

- Key stage 2 curriculum
- Duration: half a day
- History of the textiles industry
- Focus on Newham-born artist Madge Gill
- You will need: clipboards, paper and pens/ pencils



Route Key

-  Walk
-  Pause
-  1 Dyes and Atlas Dye Works
-  2 Robert Jones' factory
-  3 Madge Gill: Untitled
-  4 William Sherwin's factory
-  5 Kingsley Hall
-  6 Bromley Hall
-  7 Madge Gill: Untitled
-  8 Madge Gill: Red Women

As you walk along the route on the map, pause at each numbered point, completing the relevant activity. There are two types of activities in this resource: discussion questions and art activities.

The points on this route are located at existing artworks on The Line or at former historical sites, not all of which are visible today. With this in mind, get students to use their imagination about what life might have been like in the past.

Textiles history along the route of The Line

This resource has been tailored to the KS2 curriculum and aims to provide lesson starting points that you can deliver to your students, inspired by art and heritage points along the route of The Line. The focus of this particular resource is on the history of the textiles trade around the areas of Stratford and Bow as well as artworks by late artist Madge Gill whose work is exhibited on The Line.

Madge Gill (1882-1961), who lived and worked in Newham 1920-1961, was a self-taught artist. She explored different techniques and formats including paints, inks and textiles. The hardships she faced in her life saw her turn to spiritualism and making. Her drawings often feature repetitive patterns of flowers, swirling shapes, architectural forms and checkerboards.

1

Dyes and Atlas Dye Works

Prompt question: What is a dye?

A **dye** is a substance made from plants or chemicals which is mixed into a liquid and used to change the colour of something

- What things can we change the colour of? E.g.: hair, clothes, food...
- Why might we want to change the colour of these things?

Physical Geography and Human Geography link: Atlas Works Factory on the River Lea and its use for textiles trade in relation to the topic of sustainability.

Built in 1863, Atlas Works was one of few Victorian factories in Hackney Wick to survive until the late 20th Century. It was one of the earliest producers of

synthetic (chemical) dyes for sale. Previous to this, dyes were made from plant sources, such indigo, woad and turmeric.

There was plenty of water nearby to the factory (the River Lea) to wash away excess dyes or chemicals.

Word association activity: In pairs share with each other words that come to mind when you think of the word "sustainability". These might be: environment, protection, nature, time, future....

The Atlas Dye Works Factory made use of fresh running water from the River Lea in producing its dyes. As a result of the production, chemicals from the factory were passed into the river.



*Atlas Dye Works
Photo credit: Raw
Materials, Bow Arts*



Woad plant



Indigo plant



Turmeric

Discussion:

- What effect could the chemicals have had on the River and its water?
- Which organisms are likely to have been impacted by the chemicals?

Pairwork: What would we tell the factory owners?

Ask your students to imagine that they were able to travel back in time and speak with the factory owners before they emptied waste from their dye production. How could we persuade them to consider ways of disposing their waste in a considerable way?

Additional fun fact:

The building itself was said to have been in the Arts and Crafts style. This was when a group of people in the late 19th century attempted to re-establish the skills of craftsmanship threatened by industrialisation.

The building remained a dye works until the early 20th century, from which it had various uses until it was completely knocked down in the 1980s.



A building in the Arts and Crafts style

Madge Gill: Untitled c1930-1954 x 10, ink on postcards

Example prompt questions:

- What forms and shapes are you seeing in the works in front of you?
- Why might Madge Gill have found it enjoyable to draw these?
- These works are enlarged versions of postcard drawings - can you guess how long it took Madge Gill to draw these?

Gill was known to create over a hundred postcards in a single evening and these ten black ink drawings reflect her most recognisable style and medium. Although repetitive in nature, each postcard is unique.



3

Robert Jones' Factory

Robert Jones & Co (1760-80) produced an extensive range of high quality textile goods and his furnishing fabrics were highly reputable in the Georgian times.

The V&A collection has several examples of his fabrics. One of the pieces is a rural scene showing animals and birds set amongst a rugged landscape and ruins and follies." Its delicate design was made by two engraved copper plates. This was a new process of printing on fabric introduced into England in 1756 from Drumcondra, Ireland.



4

William Sherwin's Factory

The first calico (cotton) printer in England is said to be William Sherwin of West Ham who kicked off the industry in Stratford. "Calico grounds" formed on the marshes between Stratford and the Abbey Mill. By 1811, 360 people were employed in the industry.

Dye-fast textiles are able to keep their colours without bleeding or fading when light is shone on it. Before this production of textiles, colour would fade quickly!

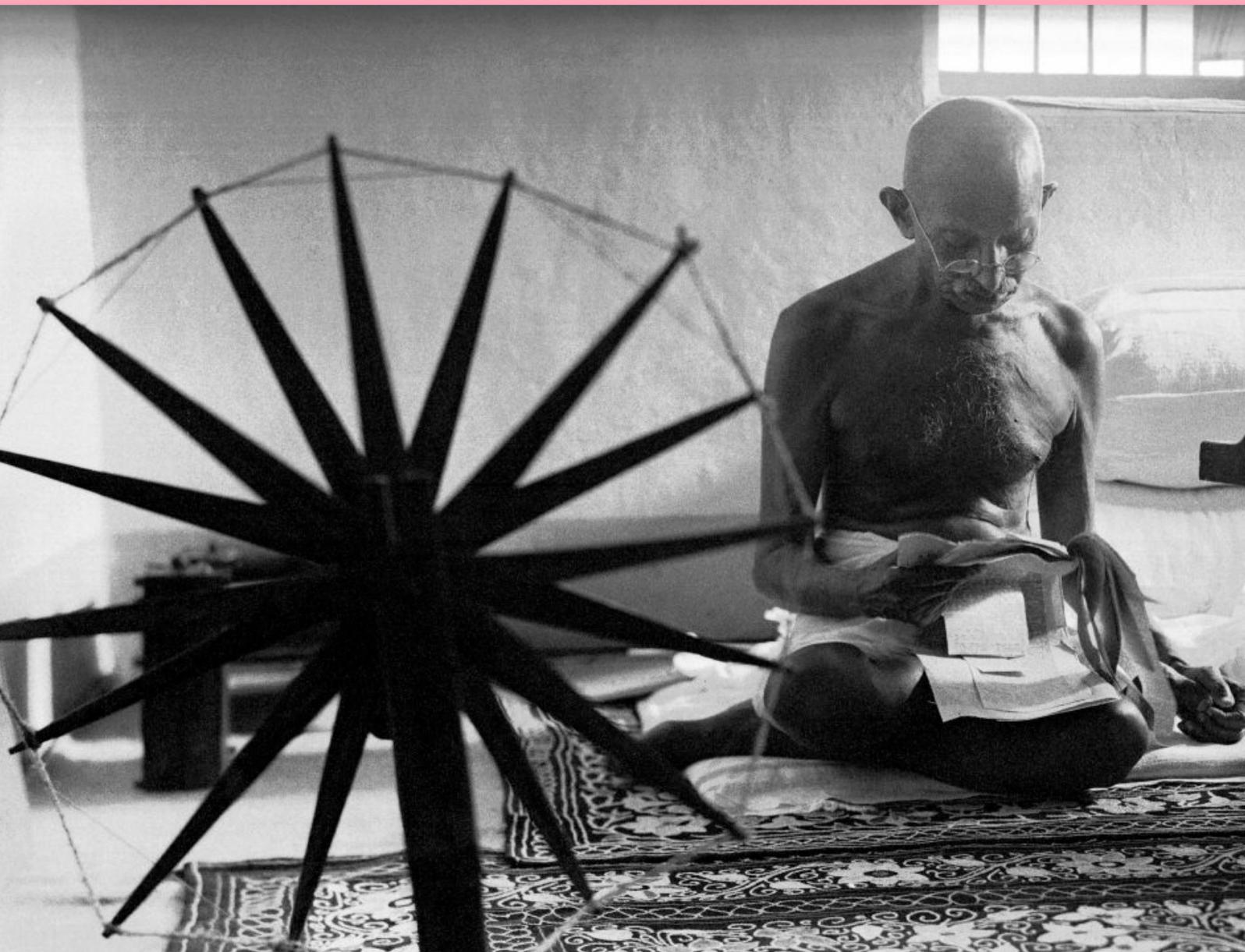
5

Gandhi in Kingsley Hall

Mahatma Gandhi stayed at Kingsley Hall at Bromley-by-Bow for three months in 1931, spinning cotton and negotiating India's future.

Gandhi always travelled with a handloom and a spinning wheel so that he would not be reliant upon the colonial masters for his clothing, effectively creating his own textiles cottage industry. Gandhi spun fabric for an hour every day in his "cell" at Kingsley Hall. He was recognised throughout the world by his hand spun dhoti, the same simple clothing that many men wore in Indian villages. It was his uniform of protest. The motif of the spinning wheel became part of the Indian flag.

Gandhi left his spinning wheel to Kingsley Hall when he returned to India.



6

Bromley Hall

Thought to be one of the oldest brick buildings in London, Bromley Hall dates from 1485 (the Tudor period).

From the 1680s to the 1820s it was owned by various members of a distinguished Quaker Family, who developed it into one of the largest calico printing factories on the River Lea. Bromley Hall was ideal for a textiles factory as it had extensive grounds for the printing works and access to the Lea for a steady water supply, crucial to the process.



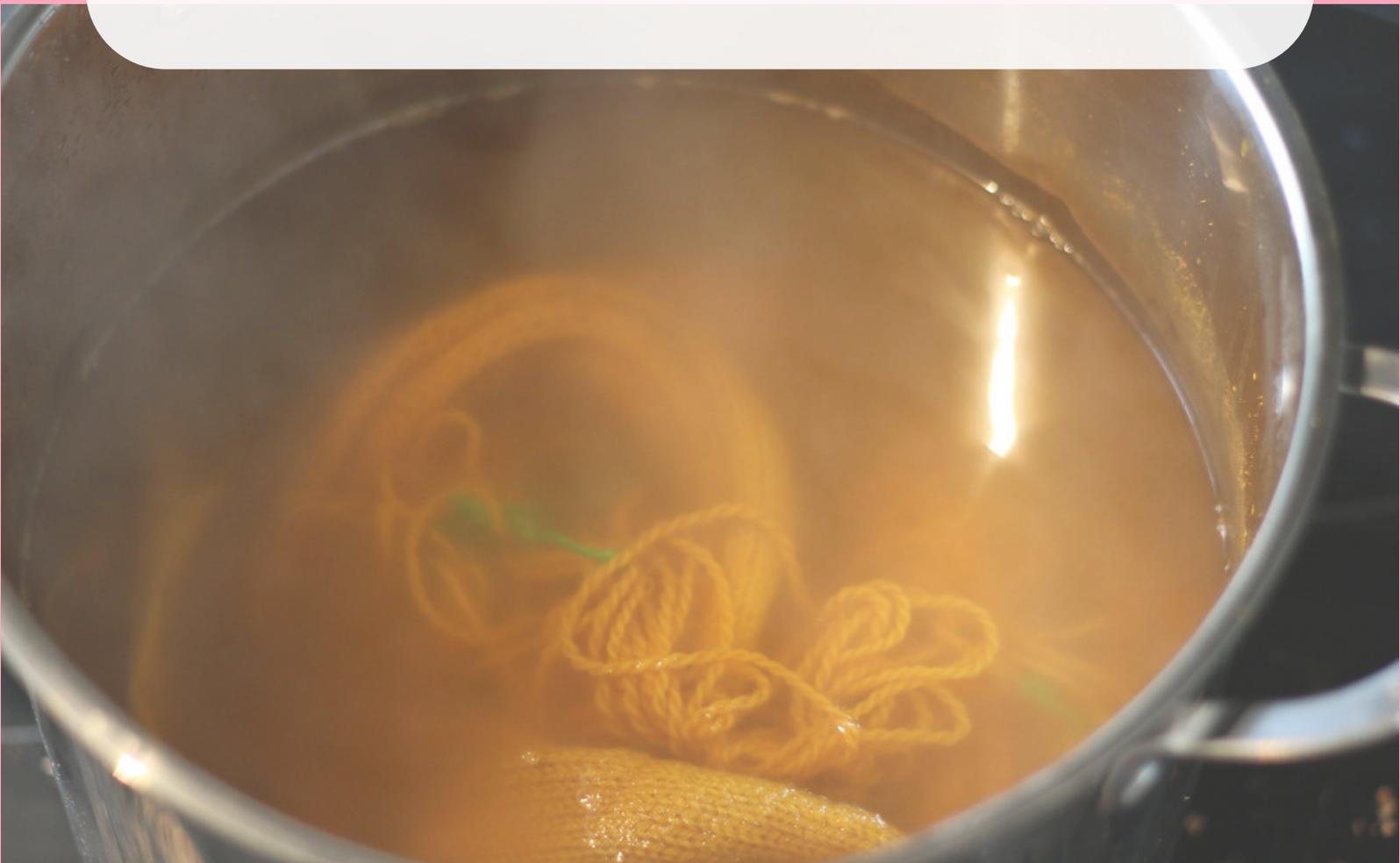
Science activity: discussing the natural dyeing process

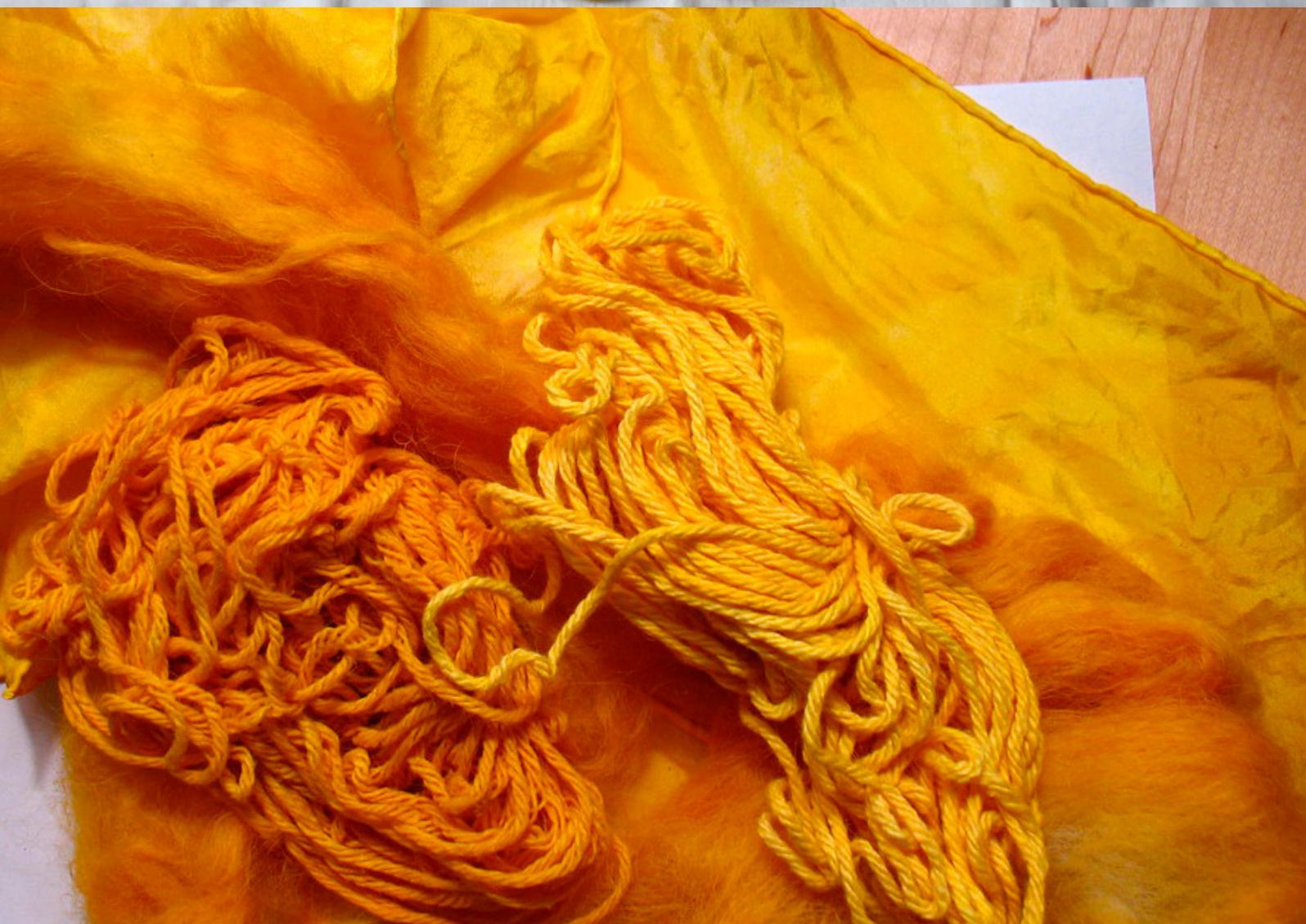
The majority of natural dyes are vegetable dyes from plant sources—roots, berries, bark, leaves, and wood.

Natural dyeing is a very old process. Archaeologists have found evidence of textile dyeing dating back to the Neolithic period, about 6000 years ago.

Show the images of the water changing colour and ask your students what they see is happening in the images: [plant in water, changing colour of water...] Ask them why they think this might be happening [shaking of bottle, applying of heat etc...]

Some plants (including vegetables!) produce dyes with or without heat. The common way to take the colour out of a plant is to heat it inside a container of water. The heat causes the particles of colour in the plant to move out of the plant into the water.. Then the fabric is added to the pot which contains the liquid dye, called a "dye bath" and usually, the longer it is left in the pot, the stronger the colour of the fabric at the end...





Madge Gill: Untitled, Nature in Mind

This 60-metre installation over the River Lea is a section of a drawing that shows Gill at her most exploratory and highlights her use of free-flowing leaves, petals, abstract forms and spiderwebs. Her unreserved use of colour imbues the work with life. The original artwork was transposed onto the bridge over the course of two days, with two cranes required to attach a PVC banner, in three parts, to the bridge with screws.

Example prompt questions:

- What shapes and forms are you seeing in the artwork?
- What colours are you seeing in the artwork?
- Why do you think Madge might have drawn these works?

Art activity: Drawing wildlife or plants for an etching

Using 3 things that you see in front them, ask your students to spend 5-10 mins drawing 3 wildlife or plants that they can use for a design for an etching [see follow on activity mentioned below]. Before they start drawing, ask them to question why they chose the things that they chose and whether the things they chose have a relationship between each other (for example, is one the predator of the other?)



Madge Gill: Red Women, 1949, pencil and ink on paper

Context: Gill created her work on whatever she could find, from postcards to large-scale calico up to 100ft long. Red Women was created in a single evening, on the reverse of the original drawing she wrote 'May 19 – 49. Evening 8pm'. Working along a roll of paper, the artist would have been unable to see the full drawing whilst making it.

Well-being related discussion: Pair your students up and ask them to consider what they are seeing in front of them- what they can tell about the characters from how Madge Gill has drawn them? What do their expressions tell about how they might be feeling?

Then ask them to discuss what the characters are doing in the scene. Ask the children to pick 2 characters and to role play what they might be saying either to each other or to other characters in the scene.

To read more about links between roleplaying and well-being, please check this link: <https://www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind/self-care/playing/>

