HERALDRY

Coats of Arms Uncovered!

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE PACK
Design your own Coat of Arms

LEABHARLANN NÁISIÚNTA na hÉIREANN

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Design your own Coat of Arms

In the exhibition, the class was introduced to the coat of arms, its functions and origins. A coat of arms, as a unique identifier, not only tells others who you are, but something about you as well.

This activity consolidates what the children learned in the exhibition and gives them the opportunity to imagine their own coat of arms, and to express the things that are unique about them – their hobbies, interests, hopes and dreams.

At the end of this document you will find a number of templates which you can use to make copies for each child. These are: a shield template; a motto/scroll template; and, an 'ideas' sheet.

You will also need:

_ blank paper
_ pieces of A3 card, in different colours
_ pencils
_ crayons and pencils
_ scissors
_ glue

This activity should take around 90 minutes, but you could make it longer by including additional elements of the coat of arms.

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Introducing the activity

Begin by recapping on what the class learned in the exhibition. The following questions may be useful in beginning a discussion about coats of arms:

_ How did coats of arms come about?

_ On the battlefield, what was the function of a coat of arms?
  What was the most important element?

_ What sort of design worked best on a shield?
  [One that could be 'read' clearly from afar]

_ What associations do children make with different colours?
  E.g., what colour makes them think of bravery, peacefulness,
  friendship etc.

Remind the class that as coats of arms developed from their battlefield origins, they became more sophisticated and their symbols gave more and more information about the bearer and their interests. [It was still important that the arms were not overloaded, however!] With this in mind, each child should think about the things they would like to represent them on their shield. This may include things they enjoy doing or are good at, or things (and people) that are important to them.

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Drawing the shield

The children should draw these things on to their shield template. Some
may prefer to sketch their ideas on blank paper first. Remind them that colours
can express abstract ideas such as bravery etc.

Once everyone has completed their shield, regroup and – if time permits –
encourage each child to briefly explain their shield.

Writing a motto

The next stage in the activity is to write a motto to place beneath the shield. The
following questions may be useful in beginning a discussion:

_ What is a motto?

_ What mottos do the children know? Does the school have a motto?

_ Does anyone remember the motto on the Dublin City Council arms?
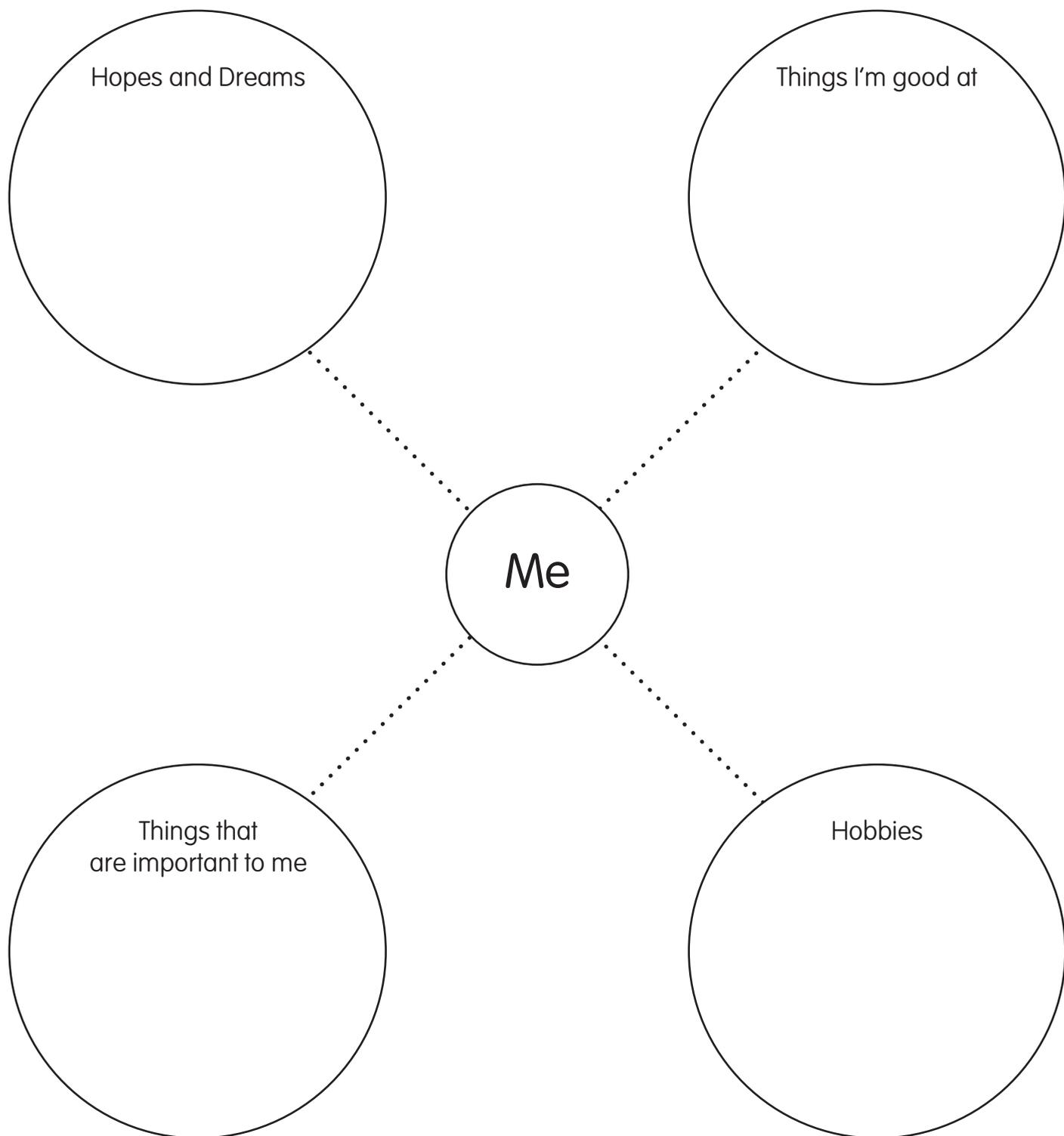 [Obedientia Civium Urbis Felicitas – Good citizens make a happy city]

Stress that a motto should be a short, aspirational sentence and that
the children's mottos should not just reflect who they are, but the kind of person they
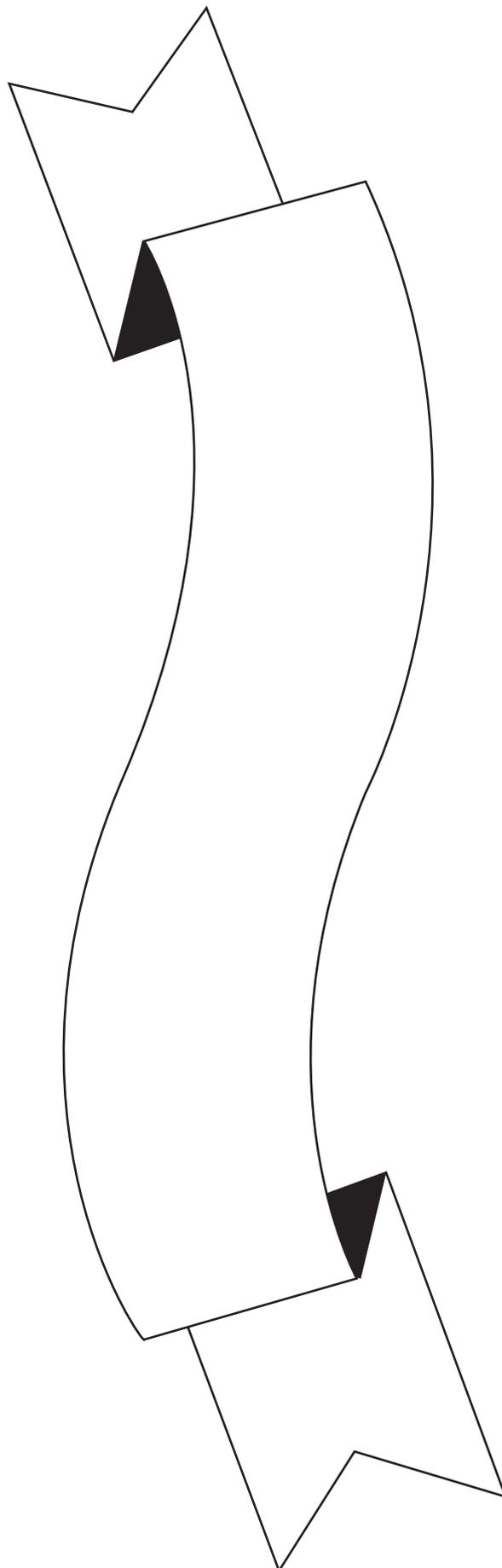want to be, perhaps alluding to their hopes and dreams, e.g.
'A kind person who is good at football' or 'brave, strong and a good friend'.

Give the class an 'ideas' sheet each and encourage them to write down keywords
under each of the headings. When the children have done this, they should
formulate a short sentence incorporating some of these words to use as their motto
and write this on to their scroll template.

Assembling the coat of arms

When the children have finished, they should cut out their shields and mottos and
stick them on a piece of card. If time permits, the class may enjoy regrouping and
explaining their completed coats of arms to each other.

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Hopes and Dreams

Things I'm good at

Me

Things that
are important to me

Hobbies

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