

WARM UP

1 Match the following objects with their Italian equivalent, then tick (✓) the ones made of glass in your home. Think of any other objects at home made of glass and add them to the list.

- 1 door
- 2 hob
- 3 table
- 4 shelf
- 5 roof
- 6 cupboard
- 7 lamp

- a  mensola
- b  tetto
- c  porta
- d  lampada
- e  credenza
- f  piano di cottura
- g  tavolo

GLOSSARY

**glassmaking:** *vetraria*  
**wealthy:** *benestante*  
**craft:** *mestiere*  
**gold-threaded:** *a filo d'oro*  
**craftsmen:** *artigiani*  
**lampworking:** *tecnica di soffiatura del vetro*  
**silica:** *silice*

## Murano, art of glass

Nowadays new techniques have been developed so that glass may be used in the construction of modern transparent structures. However, this use of glass is relatively new compared to its more traditional role in the art of making objects out of this material.

One exceptional example of glass-making can be found on the island of Murano situated off the shore of Venice. This island was already famous for its unique Murano

glass as far back as the 10<sup>th</sup> century and by the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the glassmakers on the island found themselves in a privileged position and married off their daughters to wealthy Venetian gentlemen. By the 16<sup>th</sup> century, almost half the population of Murano had something to do with this craft. For hundreds of years they were the leaders in this field, during which time they invented and mastered new ways of working glass, such as crystalline glass, gold-threaded glass, multicoloured glass, and many other decorative techniques which make them unique even today, and are still used by contemporary Murano craftsmen in their production of chandeliers and other precious objects.

There are now several factories in Murano too which deal with the mass production of glassware mostly for export, while the craftsmen still follow the traditional

techniques of the art of glassmaking. This process is rather complicated and follows a technique called 'lampworking', where the glass, made from silica, becomes liquid form at high temperatures, and before it turns into a solid, must be worked into shape by the craftsman.



[www.glassofvenice.com/about\\_murano\\_glass.php](http://www.glassofvenice.com/about_murano_glass.php)

## READING COMPREHENSION

**2 Read the text and answer the following questions.**

- 1 What has been made out of glass for centuries, and what has glass been used for more recently?
- 2 How did the glassmakers' social position on the island of Murano change between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century?
- 3 How did the Murano craftsmen improve their skills over the years?
- 4 Why must the craftsmen be skilled when working the glass into shape?

**3 Complete the following text with one of the words from the box.**

layers • effect • materials • tools • bubble • flowers • shapes

In the art of Murano glassmaking, different raw (1) \_\_\_\_\_ and techniques are used to create various (2) \_\_\_\_\_ and colours which distinguish this product from all others on the market. In the 'Millefiori' technique, (3) \_\_\_\_\_ of melted coloured glass are moulded into a star shape. After it has cooled, it is cut, and looks like lots of (4) \_\_\_\_\_, which is where it gets its name from. The craftsmen need to use special (5) \_\_\_\_\_ to achieve the (6) \_\_\_\_\_ they desire, and one of these is a blowing pipe, used to inflate the molten glass into a (7) \_\_\_\_\_.

## LISTENING

**4  2 Listen to an expert talking about the materials and colours used in Murano glass today, and fill in the missing information.**

Anyone who visits Venice can't resist the temptation of going across to the island of Murano to admire the famous Murano glass craftsmen at work. To give them more time to work the glass into the most wonderful shapes you can imagine while it is still soft, many craftsmen use (1) \_\_\_\_\_ agents which make the glass solidify more slowly. Sodium may also be used to make the surface of the glass (2) \_\_\_\_\_, while nitrate is used to get rid of any (3) \_\_\_\_\_. Various colours and combinations of colours are also used to make each creation unique. The colour (4) \_\_\_\_\_ is achieved by mixing (5) \_\_\_\_\_ and cobalt, while a (6) \_\_\_\_\_ solution is used to create a (7) \_\_\_\_\_ red effect.