



STORIES OF OURSELVES

THIS SCHEME OF WORK DRAWS DIRECTLY FROM OUR RESEARCH INTO MASS OBSERVATION AND THE ROLE OF EVERYDAY CREATIVE PRACTICE IN SHAPING CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING, AS EXPLORED IN OUR ARTICLE MASS OBSERVATION, COUNTERCULTURE AND THE 'ART OF LIVING'. THE UNIT IS INFLUENCED BY TWO CONNECTED STRANDS OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND RESEARCH: OUR 12 MAY 2024 DIARY DAY, AND THE 'STORIES OF OURSELVES' EKPHRASTIC POETRY WORKSHOP, RUN AS PART OF THE BEING HUMAN FESTIVAL.

THE DIARY DAY PROJECT INVITED MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC TO SUBMIT REFLECTIVE PERSONAL WRITING IN THE STYLE OF THE ORIGINAL MASS OBSERVERS, REAFFIRMING THE VALUE OF ORDINARY VOICES AND NON-ELITE FORMS OF CULTURAL EXPRESSION. BUILDING ON THIS, THE BEING HUMAN WORKSHOP EXPLORED HOW VISUAL ARCHIVES, SPECIFICALLY THE WORKTOWN PHOTOGRAPHS, CAN PROMPT POETIC AND NARRATIVE RESPONSES, RECONNECTING PARTICIPANTS WITH PLACE, MEMORY, AND SHARED EXPERIENCE THROUGH EKPHRASTIC WRITING.

THIS CLASSROOM UNIT ADAPTS THAT APPROACH FOR KS3 LEARNERS, USING IMAGES AS A SPRINGBOARD FOR CREATIVE EXPLORATION. JUST AS EARLY MASS OBSERVATION BLURRED THE LINES BETWEEN OBSERVATION, IMAGINATION, AND SOCIAL COMMENTARY, THESE LESSONS ENCOURAGE PUPILS TO MOVE FROM SEEING TO FEELING TO WRITING. PUPILS ARE GUIDED TO ENGAGE DEEPLY WITH MOOD, VOICE, AND PERSPECTIVE, USING ART AND PHOTOGRAPHY NOT JUST AS DESCRIPTION PROMPTS, BUT AS OPPORTUNITIES FOR EMPATHETIC, IDENTITY-DRIVEN EXPRESSION.

IN LINE WITH OUR RESEARCH, THE SCHEME REFLECTS A BELIEF IN CREATIVE RESPONSE AS A DEMOCRATIC ACT: A WAY OF CLAIMING SPACE WITHIN CULTURAL DISCOURSE, CHALLENGING PASSIVE CONSUMPTION OF MEDIA, AND FOSTERING EMOTIONAL LITERACY. IT ALSO NURTURES INTERDISCIPLINARY THINKING, DRAWING ON LITERARY ANALYSIS, VISUAL INTERPRETATION, MEMORY WORK, AND ORAL STORYTELLING.

THIS SCHEME SUPPORTS A PEDAGOGICAL VISION WHERE WRITING IS MORE THAN SKILL. IT BECOMES A FORM OF CULTURAL PARTICIPATION AND REFLECTION, AN APPROACH THAT MIRRORS THE 'ART OF LIVING' ETHOS AT THE HEART OF MASS OBSERVATION.

PRODUCED IN RESPONSE TO OUR LATEST RESEARCH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GREATER MANCHESTER, SCHOOL OF ARTS, ENGLISH AND CREATIVE WRITING, THE SCHEME IS UNDERPINNED BY A TRIANGULATED FOUNDATION CONNECTING LITERARY CRAFT, CONTEMPORARY PRACTICE, AND CULTURAL TRADITIONS. THIS FOUNDATION ESTABLISHES ITS STATUS AS RESEARCH-INFORMED AND PROVIDES A FRAMEWORK WITHIN WHICH FURTHER SCHOLARLY AND PEDAGOGICAL INSIGHTS CAN BE INTEGRATED.

Scheme of Work: **Stories of Ourselves - Ekphrastic Writing at KS3**

Key Stage: 3 (recommended Year 8 or Year 9)

Length: 8 lessons (adaptable to 6 or 10)

Strand Focus: Reading, Writing (creative and analytical), Spoken Language

Unit Concept: Pupils explore the relationship between visual art and language by responding creatively and critically to a range of visual prompts, developing an understanding of how images can inspire narrative, poetry, reflection, and performance.

National Curriculum Alignment

Reading

- Read a wide range of fiction and non-fiction, including poems and short stories from varied authors and periods.
- Make inferences and refer to textual evidence.
- Recognise poetic conventions and understand how figurative language and structure shape meaning.
- Study setting, characterisation, and tone.

Writing

- Write for a range of purposes and audiences, including stories, poems, and descriptive writing.
- Use literary and rhetorical devices drawn from reading.
- Plan, draft, edit, and proof-read.
- Write accurately and effectively at length.

Spoken Language

- Participate in formal and informal discussion.
- Use Standard English confidently.
- Present work aloud, adapting tone and style for effect.
- Improvise and perform with impact.

Unit Objectives

By the end of this unit, pupils will:

1. Understand the concept of ekphrasis and its literary history.
2. Analyse how writers respond to visual prompts using figurative language, tone, and structure.
3. Develop their own creative responses to visual material, choosing form and voice.
4. Evaluate and refine their writing, considering audience, structure, and clarity.
5. Share and reflect on their work through reading aloud and peer feedback.

Lesson-by-Lesson Outline

Lesson 1: Introduction to Ekphrastic Writing

Learning Objectives:

- Understand the concept of ekphrasis.

- Explore how writers describe and interpret visual art.

Activities:

- Read and discuss ‘Landscape with the Fall of Icarus’ by William Carlos Williams alongside the painting by Pieter Bruegel.
- Whole-class discussion on tone, interpretation, and perspective.
- Begin personal response journal.

National Curriculum Links: Reading poetry; making inferences; speaking and listening in discussion; vocabulary development.

Lesson 2: Close Reading and Visual Interpretation

Learning Objectives:

- Analyse how tone, word choice, and structure reflect a visual source.
- Build vocabulary and figurative language skills.

Activities:

- Read ‘The Moon Under Water’ and discuss its response to Humphrey Spender’s photograph.
- Identify figurative language and structural choices.
- Vocabulary task: matching figurative devices to examples.

National Curriculum Links: Recognising poetic conventions; analysing figurative language; developing vocabulary; using discussion to deepen understanding.

Lesson 3: Prose Responses to Images

Learning Objectives:

- Explore how prose can describe a scene or emotion prompted by an image.
- Experiment with descriptive and narrative prose techniques.

Activities:

- Read and discuss “Painful Choice” from *The Long-Winded Lady*.
- Small-group discussion: what stories can an image suggest?
- Write a short descriptive passage in response to a selected image.

National Curriculum Links: Writing for purpose and audience; writing imaginatively; reading for meaning; using Standard English in discussion.

Lesson 4: Personal Connection – Images of Home

Learning Objectives:

- Select and reflect on a personally meaningful visual prompt.
- Develop notes using imagery, character, and emotion.

Activities:

- Pupils bring in or select an image relating to their hometown or personal memory.
- Guided note-making: sensory detail, imagined or real stories, emotional associations.

National Curriculum Links: Reading for pleasure; planning writing; spoken language for developing ideas; vocabulary development.

Lesson 5: Drafting a Creative Response

Learning Objectives:

- Use structure and language to shape meaning in a chosen form.
- Begin an extended piece of creative writing based on visual stimulus.

Activities:

- Mini-lessons on beginnings and endings.
- Drafting session: prose, poem, monologue, or hybrid form.
- Peer discussion for feedback.

National Curriculum Links: Writing for a variety of purposes and audiences; applying literary devices; drafting and revising.

Lesson 6: Refining Language and Form

Learning Objectives:

- Edit for clarity, tone, and structure.
- Use figurative language and vocabulary effectively.

Activities:

- Editing workshop: sentence construction, vocabulary choice, figurative technique.
- Peer feedback and redrafting.

National Curriculum Links: Proof-reading and editing; using grammatical and structural knowledge; drawing on literary techniques from reading.

Lesson 7: Performance and Presentation

Learning Objectives:

- Perform written work with appropriate tone, pace, and expression.
- Reflect on how spoken language enhances meaning.

Activities:

- Rehearsed readings of final pieces.
- Pupils offer feedback on tone, clarity, and impact.
- Optional: record performances for a digital gallery or class anthology.

National Curriculum Links: Performing poetry; using spoken language effectively; listening and responding to others; using Standard English.

Lesson 8: Reflection and Evaluation

Learning Objectives:

- Reflect critically on the writing process and creative decisions.
- Write analytically about their own work and that of others.

Activities:

- Pupils write a short reflective commentary on their creative piece.
- Whole-class discussion: How does visual art inspire different types of writing?

National Curriculum Links: Summarising ideas; using subject-specific vocabulary; comparing texts; evaluating one's own writing.

Assessment Opportunities

Formative:

- Class discussion and oral presentations
- Reading journals and annotation
- Draft writing with teacher and peer feedback

Summative:

- Final creative writing piece (prose or poem) responding to visual stimulus
- Reflective commentary on process and choices
- Performance or presentation of writing

Differentiation

- **Support:** Scaffolding frames, sentence starters, group writing, guided vocabulary
- **Stretch:** Encourage formal experimentation (e.g. dramatic monologue, hybrid forms); incorporate intertextual references
- **EAL:** Visual stimulus supports comprehension; vocabulary building; bilingual reflections where applicable
- **SEN:** Clear modelling, extended time for tasks, multi-sensory materials, teacher conferencing

Resources Required

- A curated selection of visual prompts (including Worktown archive)
- Copies of example texts (Williams, Wilkinson, Salinger, Spender)
- Pupil-sourced images from their local context or personal archive
- Devices or paper for drafting, editing, and sharing work