

Developing Language Skills through Museum Collections: Teachers' CPD Notes

Stage: Early, first and second level



Introduction

Museums, and the objects and artworks contained within them, provide a unique opportunity for teachers to build upon and enrich their classroom teaching. By providing the chance to get up close to, and even handle, a diverse range of objects, museum education facilitates learning through context.

It's this contextual learning that makes museums wonderful places to develop language skills – talking, listening, reading and writing. And the immersive, sensory learning environment is particularly ideal for pupils who require additional support with language or communication.

With literacy being a key priority in Scottish schools, it important that museums respond to this and highlight the opportunities they can offer for out-of-school learning.

The activities listed in this resource were created following a CPD session delivered in partnership with Glasgow Education Service's Dyslexia Support Services, and the English as an Additional Language Team. They relate to displays at Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, but most could translate to other museums and collections. Teachers can use the ideas and adapt them for their own purposes and visits. For pupils who may struggle with the written tasks, why not bring i-pads and ask them to record their responses verbally? They may find it easier to do this in their first language.

Play I-spy [early level]

Using an individual painting or a group of objects within a display, play i-spy.

This game develops an awareness of initial letter sounds and reinforces vocabulary.

'I spy with my little eye, something beginning with "g"'

Answer: grapes!



Still Life with Fruit and Oysters, c.1640–75, by Jan Pauwel Gillemans I.

Clapping Syllables – animal hunt [early level]



This activity develops phonological awareness through a fun game of find and seek.

Show a picture of an animal on display. Pupils have to name the animal and then go and find it.

Once found, they repeat the name of the animal but this time, stress the syllables, e.g. 'el-e-phant'; clapping with each syllable.

You can extend the activity by changing clapping for movement, whereby pupils have to walk or jump like that animal for each syllable.

Step Into the Frame [first, second level]

Choose an interesting artwork. Landscapes, cityscapes and interiors work well for this task!

Tell pupils to imagine you have a magic teleporter that can take them 'into the artwork'. Now ask them to complete these statements to make a sensory poem.

- I can smell
- I can touch.....
- I can see
- I can hear
- I can taste



The Druids – Bringing in the Mistletoe, 1890, by George Henry.

If Paintings Could Think! [first, second level]



Pupils choose a portrait. In pairs they talk about the person or people in that portrait. What are they wearing? Where are they? What might they be doing?

Now, individually, pupils do a very quick sketch of one of the characters and write inside a 'think cloud' what their character could be thinking.

If the pupils could ask someone in the portrait a question, what would they ask?

In the Orchard, 1885–86, by James Guthrie.

Find the Mystery Object – Describing Words [early level]

Choose a painting with interesting objects featured within it. Now find real examples of these objects and place them in separate feely bags.

Pupils are chosen to come out and feel an object from one of the bags, without looking at it. They describe the object to their classmates, who have to guess what it is, and then find it in the painting.

This is a great way to introduce adjectives and also consolidate vocabulary. You can even add in sounds that feature in the artwork, which develops listening skills.



Still Life, 19th century, by David Horn.

Back to Back Describing [second level]

Pupils work in pairs and are given a pencil, sheet of paper and clipboard. One pupil chooses to do the describing, and the other the drawing. The pupil who is drawing takes the materials.

The describer chooses an object or artwork. Their partner should not look at it and instead face away, so they are standing back to back. The pupil describing now has to give as much verbal information about their chosen item whilst their partner draws what they hear.

This task develops vocabulary (positional words and adjectives) as well as listening skills.



Conversation Starters [first, second level]

There's lots of questions we can pose which do not focus on having right or wrong answers, or having specific prior knowledge. Here's some examples which can develop curiosity and observation skills. Use fun ways to introduce them, such as putting them in a bag, or writing them onto a large dice which pupils take turns to roll and answer:

Sample questions:

- Can you find something in the gallery that makes a sound?
- Choose an object and do a mime of it. Can your partner guess what it is?
- Which object would you most like to take home with you and why?
- Pick an object. Can your partner guess what it is by asking 10 questions? You can only answer 'yes' or 'no'

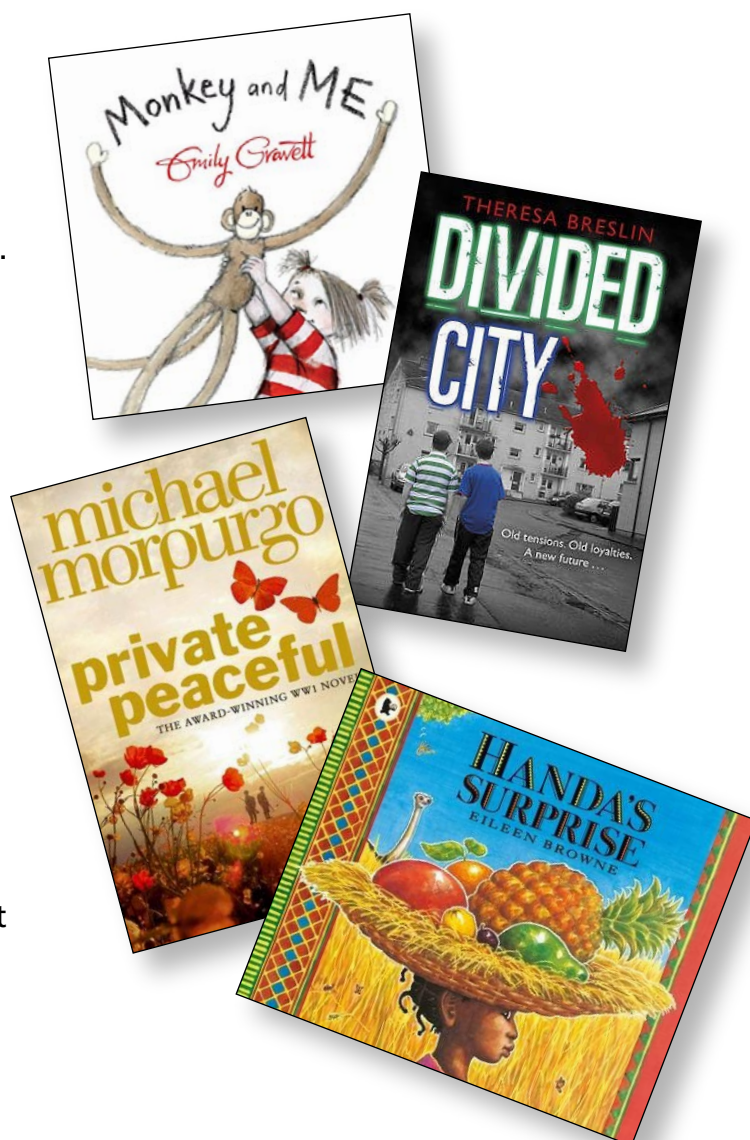


Link with a Class Story or Novel [all levels]

From picture books to historical novels, museums are a great place to put stories in context. They often contain objects or artworks that relate to events, people or places in stories and help bring them to life.

Glasgow Museums' collections can support a wide range of themes and topics. Here's just a few:

- *Monkey and Me*, by Emily Gravett [early level]: finding animals from this book on display at Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum
- *Divided City*, by Theresa Bresline [second level]: exploring sectarianism through a facilitated workshop at St Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art
- *Private Peaceful* by Michael Morpurgo [second level]: learning about soldiers' lives during WW1 during a workshop at Glasgow Museums Resource Centre
- *Handa's Surprise* by Eileen Brown. Can you find, in the museum, some of the animals which feature in this story?



Booking a visit

If you would like to book a visit to any of our museum venues, please call the bookings team on 0141 276 9505 / 9506 or alternatively email: museums.schoolbookings@glasgowlife.org.uk

You can complete most of the activities in this booklet on a self-led basis around the museum, without the need for input from one of our Learning Assistants. However we do recommend that you do a familiarisation visit in advance,

to identify which galleries/displays you think would work best for each task. You can then check at the time of booking that these areas of the museum are not already booked out for another school workshop. You may want to make a note of some key vocabulary to introduce to your pupils before they visit.

If you would like to borrow clipboards and pencils, please ask our bookings team.