

Three ways to 'paint' a poem 1: Collage

Literacy/Art

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To use words as a starting point for painting
- To use collage to explore mood rather than exact representation
- To understand abstract forms of expression
- To link words to images

SKILLS TARGETED

- Collaboration
- Interpreting text
- Expressing mood through colour and texture
- Art and design

RESOURCES

- Paper and card in a range of colours and textures. Scrap paper works well for collages
- Small amount of very contrasting coloured paper
- Watered down PVA glue (60/30) in containers large enough to dunk the paper
- A1 or A2 sugar paper for the background
- *Anthem for Doomed Youth* by Wilfred Owen (extracts below)
- *The Mule Truck* by Paul Nash
- *We Are Making A New World* by Paul Nash
- *Sappers' Work: A Canadian Tunnelling Company* by David Bomberg

There are more useful paintings at IWM website in their Collections section

SUGGESTED TIME SCALE

1-2 sessions

WHAT THE CHILDREN NEED TO KNOW

- What collage is – how to create a collage using paper and glue

Step 1

Read the extracts from Wilfred Owen's poem *Anthem for Doomed Youth*, below, and look at the paintings.

Discuss with the children the idea that neither the poet nor the painters create accurate reports or descriptions of war in the trenches – instead they create an 'impression' which is, in many ways, more powerful.

Step 2

Discuss with the class what range of colours could represent earth (eg, shades of brown), sky (grey to yellow) or figures (black silhouettes). Explain that collage works best if you stick to a limited palette of colours.

(You could have some very vivid colours for contrast, but don't give them out straight away, and limit their use so they are most effective!)

Step 3

Organise the children into groups of four. Explain that each group will work together to build up their picture on neutral-coloured sugar paper.

Step 4

Explain that each person will have responsibility for a different part of the picture depending on their scene, eg, earth/sky/stuttering rifles rapid rattle / shellburst.

They will need to work collaboratively, and negotiate what is to be placed where.

Step 5

Explain that they will layer up their picture using different scraps and textures of paper to create their scene.

They should tear rather than cut the paper, as this tends to be more free and expressive.



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Step 6

They should think about the mood they want to create: do they want a lot of sky, or more battlefield? What difference would it make? If the paper is the battleground, how can they show “the monstrous anger of the guns”, for instance?

Step 7

Remind the class that the collage is about creating an impression – not an exact representation.

Step 8

Once the majority of the composition is complete, offer each group one sheet of very vibrant, contrasting coloured paper. They can use this strategically to provide a visual ‘shock’ in their work – as in the sun in Paul Nash’s painting *We Are Making A New World*.

Step 9

Once the collages are complete, you could use them as a stimulus for sound and movement. For example:

- Ask the groups to compose a soundscape to accompany their collages.
- Ask the groups to devise a way to speak the lines represented in their collages, and to accompany the lines with a freeze-frame or movement.

SUCCESS CRITERIA

- Children will collaborate to create their collages
- They will create an imaginative interpretation of the poem
- They will create an impression, and understand that there is no right or wrong way to represent the poem
- They will build a scene using a limited palette
- They will understand the use of vivid colour as contrast



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**EXTRACTS FROM:
ANTHEM FOR DOOMED YOUTH**
by Wilfred Owen

What passing bells for those who die
as cattle?

Only the monstrous anger of the guns.

Only the stuttering rifles rapid rattle...

Nor any voices of mourning save the
choirs –

The shrill, demented choirs of wailing
shells...

But someone was still yelling out and
stumbling and floundering

Like a man in fire or lime...

Dim through the misty panes and thick
green light,

As under a green sea, I saw him
drowning.

