



Irish  
Architecture  
Foundation

## ‘More Than Meets the Eye’

### Arts and the Curriculum – Visual Arts

**Overall Aim:** To investigate how exploring the narrative of a visual art exhibition or piece can enhance comprehension skills.

This session will explore how engaging in a gallery exhibit and / or exploring an artist’s work can be used to enhance learning and increase students’ skillset in English.

*(Examples of other curriculum links will also be made throughout the session. Additional lesson plans to be provided in information packs)*

#### Part One – Introduction to the Exhibition

The session will begin with a brief tour and discussion of the fine art photography exhibition in Gallery 2: ‘This Land Again’ by Peter Murray.

The participants will learn about the initial concept of the artist, the process of investigation through development to the finished product, and the techniques and skill which goes into the execution of such work.

#### Part Two - Exploring the narrative.

Equipped with the basic understanding of the work and the artist’s perspective we will begin to explore the narrative of the work.

#### All art has a story.

- The story of the artist themselves: the concept of the work, the reason they have an interest in the topic, the process they go through.
- The narrative of an exhibition: Why pieces are chosen to be exhibited together, the collective story/theme
- The story told by an individual piece: What the moment captures, the historical or social context, the theme or emotion, the impact or statement.
- The story of the collector: Why this piece was chosen and where it ends up.

We will focus on the narrative of the overall exhibition and then on one selected piece of work.

Much of the same language used in written comprehension is also used when exploring the narrative of a piece of art or an exhibition. This will be explored in detail through conversation and written exercises.

**Activity:**

In small groups please discuss and note down responses to the following questions.

1. What can you literally see in the exhibition? *Describe the content of the exhibition in one sentence.*
2. What is the overall mood or theme of the exhibition? *Reflective, proud, disgusted, curious, regal, playful. Peace, Romance, Conflict,*  
What are the overall themes or qualities which make you say this? Look at the *colours, textures, composition, quality, focus, subject matter etc.*
3. What do you think the artist is trying to convey or say with this exhibition?  
Give 2 reasons to justify your response. (you can refer to descriptive answers from 2)

Each group will elect a spokesperson to speak briefly about their group's interpretation of the work. Groups with conflicting ideas will be asked to elaborate on why they reached their conclusions and back it up using examples.

**Activity:**

In small groups please discuss and note down responses to the following questions.

4. What can you literally see in the image? *Describe the piece in one or two simple sentences.*
5. What is the overall mood of the piece? *Angry, soft, chaotic, serene...*  
Describe what you see that gives you this impression? Look at the *colours, textures, composition, quality, focus, subject matter etc.*
6. What do you think the artist is trying to convey or say with this piece?  
Give 2 reasons to justify your response. (you can refer to descriptive answers from 2)

Each group will elect a spokesperson to speak briefly about their group's interpretation of the work. Groups with conflicting ideas will be asked to elaborate on why they reached their conclusions and back it up using examples.

**Conclusion**

Discuss how very similar questions may be asked when analysing a poem, book chapter or newspaper article. Pay particular attention to how the way that language is coloured affects the mood, theme and overall feel of a piece.

## Expanding the lesson...

**Overall Aim:** To explore how using images or an exhibition as stimulus can be used as a starting point for original compositions.

### Activity:

Can you create a story from this exhibition?

Write one sentence for each image and then arrange them in order to create a narrative. Share this story with the rest of the group.

Expand:

In groups, source images or photograph a selection of places and scenarios. Pass them onto another group and create your own story from the images provided.

Try using only one sentence per image. How does it differ to the story your group had seen emerge?

Expand:

Choose your favourite story from the groups and write a short fictional piece based on the outline created.

### Activity:

Choose one image and imagine it is from a newspaper. Write a short article or news story about why this image is being featured. Present your story to the class and discuss how that changes your interpretation of the image.

Expand:

Each student can select (or be given) a different image and all the stories/articles can be collated to create a newspaper.

(Great resource for printing your own broadsheet: <http://www.newspaperclub.co.uk/>)

## Additional activities & Curriculum Links:

### Task One:

**Objective:** Develop comprehension, understanding and critical thinking by looking at the artistic merit and historical context of the work and the artist.

Choose one image and compare it with another piece along the same subject matter but by a different artist. Eg.

**Landscapes:** Peter Murray (photographer) with Eoin Butler (painter)

**Portraiture:** Sally Mann (photographer) with Van Gogh / Matisse (painters)

**'Realism':** Gustave Courbet with Thomas Eakins

**The Last Supper:** Leonardo daVinci with John Byrne (at Blooms Lane, Lower Ormond Quay)

Discuss how much knowing about the artist's views or background influences your opinion or biases the piece.

Discuss how seeing the piece as part of a body of work rather than in isolation increases or decreases the strength of the message.

### **Curriculum Links:**

Art, Craft & Design: Make links between your artwork and those of other artists etc from different countries and historical periods.

English: Comparing different genres on the same thing, approaching text from a variety of critical viewpoints

Religious Education: Learn about one of the major world religions in detail

History: Finding and analysing source material

### Task Two:

**Objective:** Visualise a physical environment through text comprehension and then use research and evaluation skills to source an image to represent that environment.

After reading a news article, poem or chapter of a study piece, ask the students to find and photograph, or source an image online of a location which they feel best suits the description, mood and location of the text.

### **Curriculum Links:**

Geography: Exploring the world of human activities and what influences and shapes it. Finding and exploring source materials.

English: Develop an awareness of how language is chosen to achieve certain effects.

Art: Investigate by looking and recording your observations and experiences.

Biology: Investigating human impact on an ecosystem.

### Task Three

**Objective:** Use artist images and statements (or in this case video lectures) to enhance the learning and understanding of oil production and its socio and environmental impact.

**'Watch' Edward Burtynsky photographs the landscape of oil -**

[http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/edward\\_burtynsky\\_photographs\\_the\\_landscape\\_of\\_oil.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/edward_burtynsky_photographs_the_landscape_of_oil.html)

In stunning large-format photographs, Edward Burtynsky follows the path of oil through modern society, from wellhead to pipeline to car engine -- and then beyond to the projected peak-oil endgame.

Look through and choose 4 images from the 'Oil' collection on <http://www.edwardburtynsky.com/>

Use the questions from the taster session as a stimulus for discussion in different subject areas.

**Curriculum Links:**

Geography: Exploring the world of human activities and what influences and shapes it. Finding and exploring source materials

Art: Learning about the design process, composition and the narrative of a body of work.

History: Developing appreciation for the society we live in, acknowledging change and developing research skills.

CPSE: Playing a part in protecting the environment and making a difference.

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**TED is a fantastic resource. All of the images talked about in these lectures can be found online, in books or on exhibition.**

**You can explore other lesson plans across the curriculum using some of the following**  
*(I've specifically chosen photographic works due to their accessibility):*

**Photographing the Hidden Story:** Ryan Lobo has traveled the world, taking photographs that tell stories of unusual human lives. In this haunting talk, he reframes controversial subjects with empathy, so that we see the pain of a Liberian war criminal, the quiet strength of UN women peacekeepers and the perseverance of Delhi's underappreciated firefighters.

[http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/ryan\\_lobo\\_through\\_the\\_lens\\_of\\_compassion.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/ryan_lobo_through_the_lens_of_compassion.html)

**Curriculum Links:** CPSE, History, Art

**Photos that Changed the World:** Photographs do more than document history -- they make it. At TED University, Jonathan Klein of Getty Images shows some of the most iconic, and talks about what happens when a generation sees an image so powerful it can't look away -- or back.

[http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/jonathan\\_klein\\_photos\\_that\\_changed\\_the\\_world.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/jonathan_klein_photos_that_changed_the_world.html)

**Curriculum Links:** CPSE, History, Art

**Yann Arthus-Bertrand captures fragile Earth in wide-angle:** In this image-filled talk, Yann Arthus-Bertrand displays his three most recent projects on humanity and our habitat -- stunning aerial photographs in his series "The Earth From Above," personal interviews from around the globe featured in his web project "6 billion Others," and his soon-to-be-released movie, "Home," which documents human impact on the environment through breathtaking video.

[http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/yann\\_arthus\\_bertrand\\_captures\\_fragile\\_earth\\_in\\_wide\\_angle.htm](http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/yann_arthus_bertrand_captures_fragile_earth_in_wide_angle.htm)

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**Curriculum Links:** CPSE, Biology, Physics, Art, Geography