BESIDENCY RESOURCE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

In 2017, BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art and artist/writer Stevie Ronnie embarked on a project with Northumberland C of E Academy. Working with two groups of year 7 students initially in a classroom setting, Stevie Ronnie facilitated a series of sessions exploring the work of Canadian artist Rodney Graham. They explored new physical and visual ways of engaging with the words and language of contemporary art to produce a sound collage that was installed into the gallery space at BALTIC alongside a major exhibition of Rodney Graham's work.

The intention throughout was to help the students to develop their literacy skills in the context of their art lessons in a playful and stimulating manner. While we were doing this, we needed to ensure that the usual curriculum criteria, lesson planning, reflection, measurement and evaluation of the students' success and paperwork that is required in a secondary school setting were maintained. This project was about the students developing their artistic skills to produce their own original artworks while simultaneously growing as writers and gaining confidence in the use of language as a creative and reflective tool.

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

This resource is designed to share some of the methods that were employed while delivering this project. It contains a suggested evaluation method that can be used to measure literacy development, notes on the learning objectives for the sessions, printable templates and suggestions on possible ways that each of the sessions can be adapted to respond to the work of other artists who may be particularly relevant or accessible to the group that you are thinking of working with.

WHO IS THIS RESOURCE FOR?

The resource is for art teachers and arts educators and the sessions can be delivered in a gallery or art classroom context. We delivered each session in 1 hour but they can be easily extended or shortened to fit your own particular circumstances. The method and resources described can be delivered as standalone sessions or can be combined to create a programme of art lessons that are specifically designed to develop creative literacy skills.

We worked through the activities in this resource looking at Rodney Graham's work. The techniques can be equally applied to the work of another artist, perhaps someone who you are already planning to look at as part of the curriculum or the artist/s who are currently exhibiting in a gallery where you are working.

LITERACY EVALUATION HANDOUTS

The evaluation sheet was designed to measure the way in which the literacy of the students developed over the course of the project. Students were asked to fill out the same sheet twice; once at the beginning of the project and a second time during the final session.

In addition to its use as an evaluation resource it was also an integral part of the learning during the sessions.

It was a useful learning tool for two particular reasons; firstly the students developed their understanding of Rodney Graham's work by reflecting on it and imagining how they could respond to it creatively; and secondly they were using writing as the medium in which they were responding, which helped to develop their literacy skills. The questions used were based on Bloom's taxonomy and challenged the students on several different levels from describing what they could see through to proposing an original work of their own in response to the artist's work. The repetition of this evaluation tool later in the project allowed us to measure the development of the students' literacy levels in a way that was useful without the pressure of a formal assessment. It was important to ask the students to write their name and the date on the back of the sheet so we could identify when they had completed the task.

This evaluation sheet could be adapted to fit any artwork by simply adding an image to the template included with this resource on page 5. When we gave out the evaluation handouts, we asked the students to spend 5 minutes answering the questions in words. We left it open for the students to respond in the way that was comfortable to them (lists, proper sentences, brainstorming, etc.) As we supported the activity we tried not to coach them at all in their responses so as to capture a true reflection of their current writing ability.

1. What can you see in this artwork?

2. What does this artwork make you think and feel?

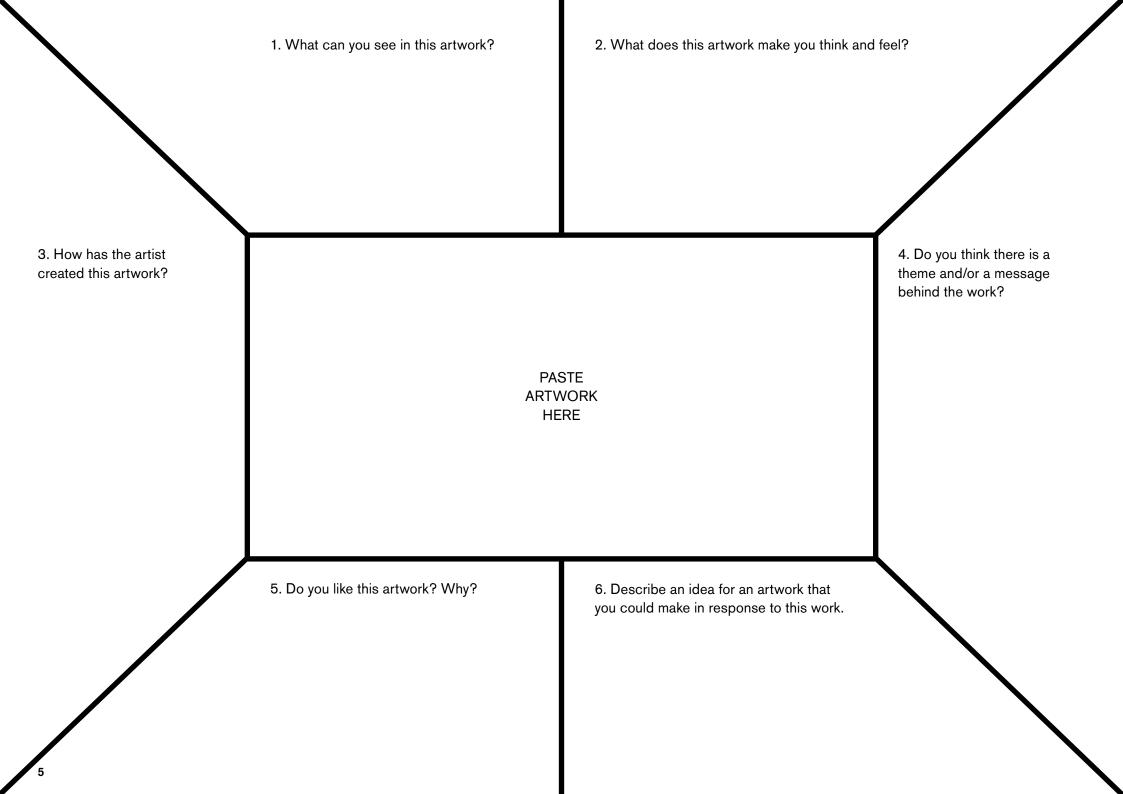
3. How has the artist created this artwork?



5. Do you like this artwork? Why?

6. Describe an idea for an artwork that you could make in response to this work.

4. Do you think there is a theme and/or a message behind the work?



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This session is about using language creatively when responding to an artwork.

The main principles behind this session are:

- 1. Giving the artwork a voice as a way of developing our understanding of it.
- 2. Learning to use language in a way where we don't expect it to come out fully formed from the outset. Any good piece of writing is made by responding in a raw way and then considering how it can be formed into something of meaning.
- 3. Understanding the importance of, and experimenting with, play in the creative process.

PREPARATION

- Printed images: Prepare printed versions of the image that you are going to be working with. One for each student. Leave enough space for the students to write around it. Each table will also require a larger version of the artwork (we used A3) so that they can see the detail of the image during the session.
- 2. Small slips of paper: Cut up some plain paper into small pieces, each big enough for a single word to be written onto it. 20-30 for each student.
- 3. Prompts: Print one copy of the list of writing prompts provided with this resource on page 9.
- 4. Materials required: Workbooks and Pritt Sick / sellotape, pens and pencils to write with (colour is nice but not essential).

SUGGESTED ROOM LAYOUT

Tables in small groups of roughly equal size.

SESSION OUTLINE

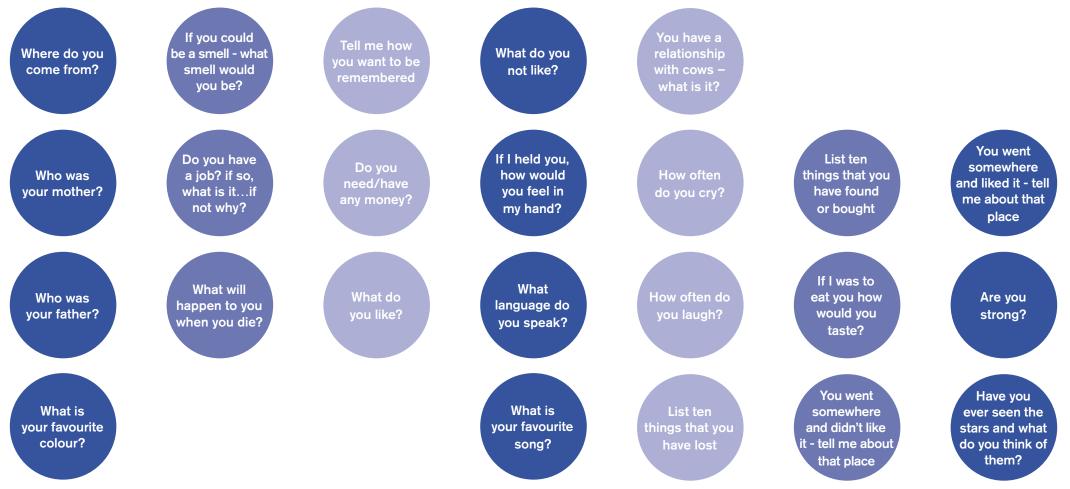
- 1. Introduction: Introduce the artwork and explain what you will be doing.
- 2. Initial writing: Each student picks coloured pen to work with. Then read out the prompts, asking the students to respond using words / lists, writing in the voice of a character or some other aspect of the artwork you are using. They should write on the page around the image.
- 3. Separating out words: Ask the students to write out each of the words on their page onto separate pieces of paper. Each student will end up with a handful of words on paper slips.
- 4. It's raining words: The students can then throw their words into the air and play with them to form lines of poetry that can be stuck into their workbooks.
- 5. Performance / reflection: Form an audience and invite each table up to the front one at a time to share the lines they come up with so that each person's lines run together into a group poem.

NOTES

When selecting an artwork for this exercise it can be helpful if there is a human being in the image so the students can latch onto something for their imagined persona. Having said that, it is equally possible to answer the prompts from the point of view of an inanimate object, an animal, or any other aspect of the image, concrete or otherwise. When delivering the prompts to the group during the initial writing phase then it is important to move at a pace that keeps people writing steadily. When someone starts to look up from the page then you can start to think about throwing the next prompt into the room. Writing creatively usually works best when we get into a flow and we are not too conscious or critical of what we are writing. This exercise is designed to encourage that state of mind within the students as they write so it is important to stress that they should write however they like and not worry about spelling, grammar or forming proper sentences. Discouraging them from crossing things out can also be helpful as this interrupts the flow and puts them into critical mode, which is useful in the later stages of writing but less so when we are trying to generate raw material.

By performing their words back to the group the students are gaining confidence and using language to communicate their ideas to a group of people, much in the same way as would happen when we write something down. An understanding of power of words and how to use them is at the heart of literacy. Art and writing are about play so when they come together they create a space where students can experiment with and practice these ideas in a way that nudges them outside their comfort zone. And when they discover that this is safe then it can build their confidence to take things further.

The session could easily be adapted for more capable students by adding an additional step where they develop their own individual poems in the voice of the artwork, incorporating the phrase that they have constructed into the poem. They could then perform their poems in smaller groups.



THE WHEEL OF WONDER





THE WHEEL OF WONDER

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This session is about:

- 1. Play in the creative process
- 2. Taking creative risks
- 3. Encouraging formal experimentation to experience how the naivety of working in a new form can be fun and stimulating

PREPARATION



- 1. Prepare a wheel of wonder: Using wood or card create a wheel that has an arrow fixed at the centre in such a way that it can be spun and settle on individual colours that are marked off in sections around the wheel as shown in the image.
- 2. Assign a creative activity for each of the colours: Think about things that the group may never have tried before. Some of the activities that we decided to try were:

ILLUSTRATOR

Make a continuous line drawing of something from your pocket

SONGWRITER

Listen to somebody speaking and write the lyrics for a song that includes their words

ABSTRACT PAINTER Imagine an everyday object as no more than three shapes. Paint those shapes.

COLLAGE ARTIST Make a collage that represents vo

Make a collage that represents your mood.

INSTALLATION ARTIST

Imagine the entire art floor is empty. Sketch out an idea for an installation that fills the space.

PERFORMANCE ARTIST

Imagine you are a performance artist on the surface of the moon. Describe an action that you would repeatedly perform there as an artwork.

PUBLIC ARTIST

Sketch out an idea for a sculpture that could be placed in Ashington Town Centre.

3. Materials required: – Sketchbooks to work in and suitable materials for each of the creative activities that might come up.

SUGGESTED ROOM LAYOUT

Tables in small groups of roughly equal size.

THE WHEEL OF WONDER

SESSION OUTLINE

- 1. Introduction: Introduce the wheel.
- 2. Play the Wheel of Wonder: Invite a student up to spin the wheel and then give students a fixed time in order to make a piece of work while playing the role of that type of artist. What that type of artist would actually do is not important, it is all about what the students imagine they might do.
- 3. Reflection: Share and reflect on the process. What was it like to try something new and play at being different types of artist?

NOTES

During this session we were taking our inspiration directly from Rodney Graham's *The Gifted Amateur*, a photographic work in which he plays the role of a gifted amateur painter. The wheel of wonder activities cold be anything but they should be selected so that they are relevant to the artist that is being studied and new to the group that you are working with. In the context of developing literacy then any activities that involve writing or text are particularly beneficial (for example, the songwriting activity we used on our wheel).



CREATIVE READING AND ACETATE PRINTS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The general learning aims for the session are:

- 1. Reading creatively to introduce the idea of reading as a creative act through the production of visual works directly drawn from the process of reading.
- 2. Developing a deeper understanding of an artwork through critical reading, language and words.
- 3. Extending their knowledge of the importance of play and experimentation in the creative process.

PREPARATION

- 1. Printed images: Select an artwork to focus on. Each table will also require a large version of the artwork (we used A3) so that they can see the detail of the image during the session.
- 2. Small slips of paper: Cut up some plain paper into small pieces, each big enough for a single word to be written onto it. 20-30 for each student.
- 3. Extracts from critical texts: We used short (approximately two paragraph long) extracts from critical texts on Rodney Graham's work that we found online. There were four texts in total and we prepared enough so that each student could have one of those four texts to work from.

4. Materials required: – Workbooks, one acetate sheet per pupil, coloured whiteboard pens, small inkpads, bingo dabbers, Pritt Stick / selloptape, standard writing pencils for step 6, pens and pencils to write with (colour is nice but not essential).

SUGGESTED ROOM LAYOUT

Tables in small groups of roughly equal size. Materials for printmaking and one critical text per pupil set out on each table.

CREATIVE READING AND ACETATE PRINTS

SESSION OUTLINE

- 1. Introduction: Introduce the artwork and explain that you will be using reading as a stimulus to produce visual art.
- 2. Creatively reading critical texts: Ask the students to read extracts from the critical texts. Without worrying about the meaning of the words, ask them to write out every second word onto slips of paper. Pile them up in the middle of the table. They'll mix with other people's words.
- 3. Writing from the pile: We focused on Rodney Graham's *Sunday Sun, 1937* and asked the students to imagine what the characters behind the newspaper might be reading in the pages we can't see. They then used the words from the pile in the middle to generate ideas, phrases and lines describing the content of the newspaper's inner unseen pages. Think of a way in which you can use the artwork you are focusing on to generate these phrases. The exactness and correctness of the phrases in relation to the artwork is not important, but rather the engagement with the words from the critical texts again and the creation of new ideas from that process. Once they have generated the phrases, physically paste them into their sketchbooks, discussing them in groups as they work.
- 4. Acetate prints: Ask the students to use the pens and acetate sheets to create inked plates that incorporate the texts they have drawn from the pile. Encourage them to experiment with the materials and the words, making several pieces. They can try writing backwards to print text or work in a more abstract way.
- 5. Layering the work: When the prints are dry, use the writing pencils to write the

original phrase they had generated in step 3 repeatedly over the top of their printed work. The resulting artwork will be a physical record of the creative reading process. It will not necessarily be readable in itself but it will still have the aesthetic and visual qualities of written language.

6. Reflection: Ask the students to reflect on the session verbally, encouraging them to think about how language can be used as material to feed directly into making visual art. They can also share their phrases and talk about the nature of the critical jargon we use when we are describing art. They can also record their reflection in writing.

NOTES

When selecting critical texts to be used it's helpful if they contain lots of language and terms that the students are not familiar with. The nature of critical art texts is jargonistic, so this shouldn't be too difficult. It is useful because it is helping them to forget about comprehending the words and to be more playful with them as material. In the longer term it is exposing the students to vocabulary that will be useful as they develop more advanced ways of critiquing art and literature.

By taking out the need to comprehend the language, but rather just to represent it in some other form, it will make it easier to engage the students in the act of reading itself. When learning to write at a young age, great delight is taken while playing with the physical mark making aspect of writing. As we grow older, the shaping of letters is something we start to take for granted. Working in this way can not only re-ignite that positive relationship with writing as a physical act but it will also develop visual literacy and broader creative thinking.

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CONTROL AND CONCERTINA BOOKS

CONTROL AND CONCERTINA BOOKS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The general learning aims for the session are:

- 1. To respond to the artwork using language in a way that describes and directly addresses the work.
- 2. To develop a creative visual and physical response to the work that incorporates text and literary devices.
- 3. To introduce the idea of artistic control (or lack of) and its importance in the creative process.

PREPARATION

- 1. Prepare book kits: Use the template on pages 19 and 20 to prepare two concertina book kits for each student. One should contain the pre-printed text and the other should be blank. To complete the kit they will need card or grey board covers that are slightly larger than the size of the book's pages when it is folded.
- 2. Printed images: Select an artwork to focus on. Each student will require a small version of the artwork to stick into their workbook and each table will require a large version of the artwork (we used A3) so that they can see the detail of the image during the session.
- 3. Materials required: Pens and pencils (variety of colours), stencils, alphabet rubber stamps, inkpads (various colours), double sided tape, and Pritt Stick or glue.

ROOM LAYOUT

Tables in small groups of roughly equal size. Materials for bookmaking, one small printed image per pupil and one book kit per pupil (the one with the pre-printed text on it) set out in middle of tables. One large image for each table so that they can see the detail of the artwork they will be looking at.

CONTROL AND CONCERTINA BOOKS

SESSION OUTLINE

- 1. Introduction: Introduce the artwork and explain that you will be thinking about responding to it using words and responding to control in the creative process.
- 2. Initial response: Ask the students to stick a small copy of the artwork into their books. Write a list of nouns drawn directly from the artwork onto the page around it. Repeat this with adjectives, aiming for each student to write at least ten words.
- 3. Forming a phrase: Use the words to form a phrase that addresses the artwork directly, taking the form: 'You are a/an <adjective><noun>'.
- 4. Transferring text to concertina: Write out the phrase onto the pre-prepared template for the concertina book. Ask students to restrict themselves to one coloured pencil and to write out the last three words of their phrase in this colour onto pages 4, 5 and 6 of the concertina book template. Encourage the students to consider which colour they use and its relationship to the text they have created.
- 5. Folding: Fold up the book template concertina style, following the pre-scored fold lines (including direction).
- Add covers: Add two covers to the end pages (sections 1 and 6) of the concertina book. When adding the back cover, the last word of the phrase (the noun) will be lost, becoming altered to read 'You are a/an <adjective>'.

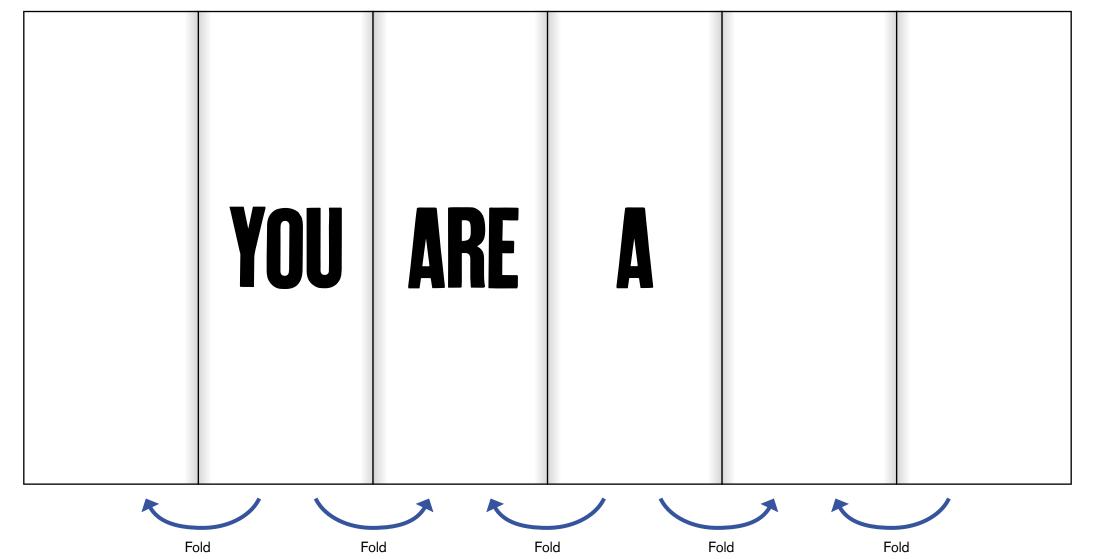
- 7. Free play: Hand out the blank kits and give them creative freedom to make a second concertina book. Make a second book using the same method as before but this time students choose what to put into the pages. Encourage them to incorporate text again if possible.
- 8. Reflection: Reflect on the session, focusing on the incorporation of text / the transformation of the phrase and the pros and cons of working in a restricted or free manner.

NOTES

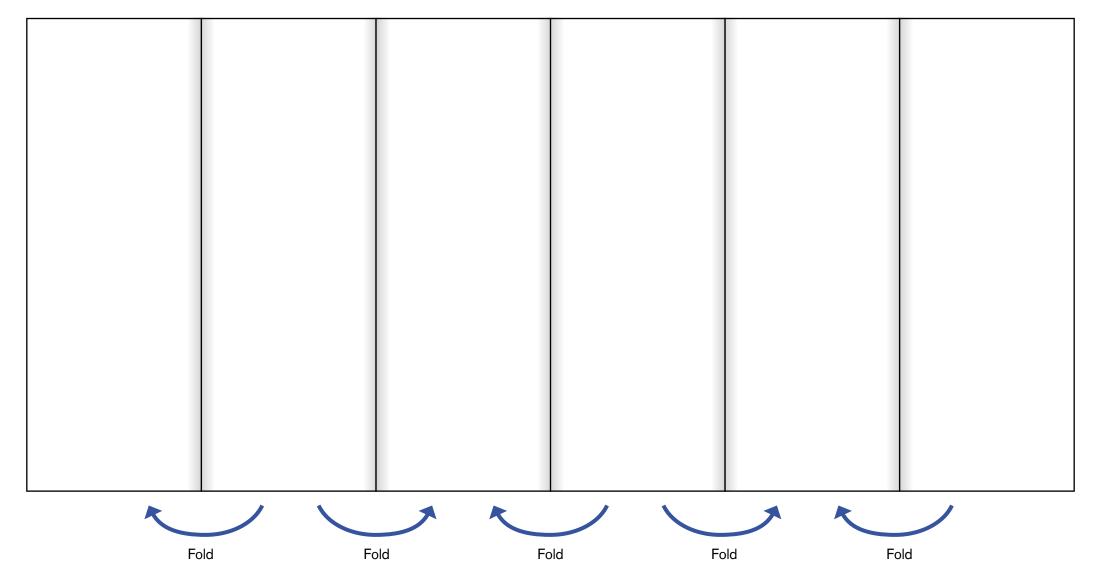
Lists can be a particularly useful way of responding quickly to an artwork using words. It is easier to fill a page with list elements than it is to construct full sentences and this can help with making the writing part of the session less daunting for some pupils. It is about creating a writing flow while the students are working with words and generating raw material to be used later in the session. Encouraging the physical act of writing as much as possible helps with this.

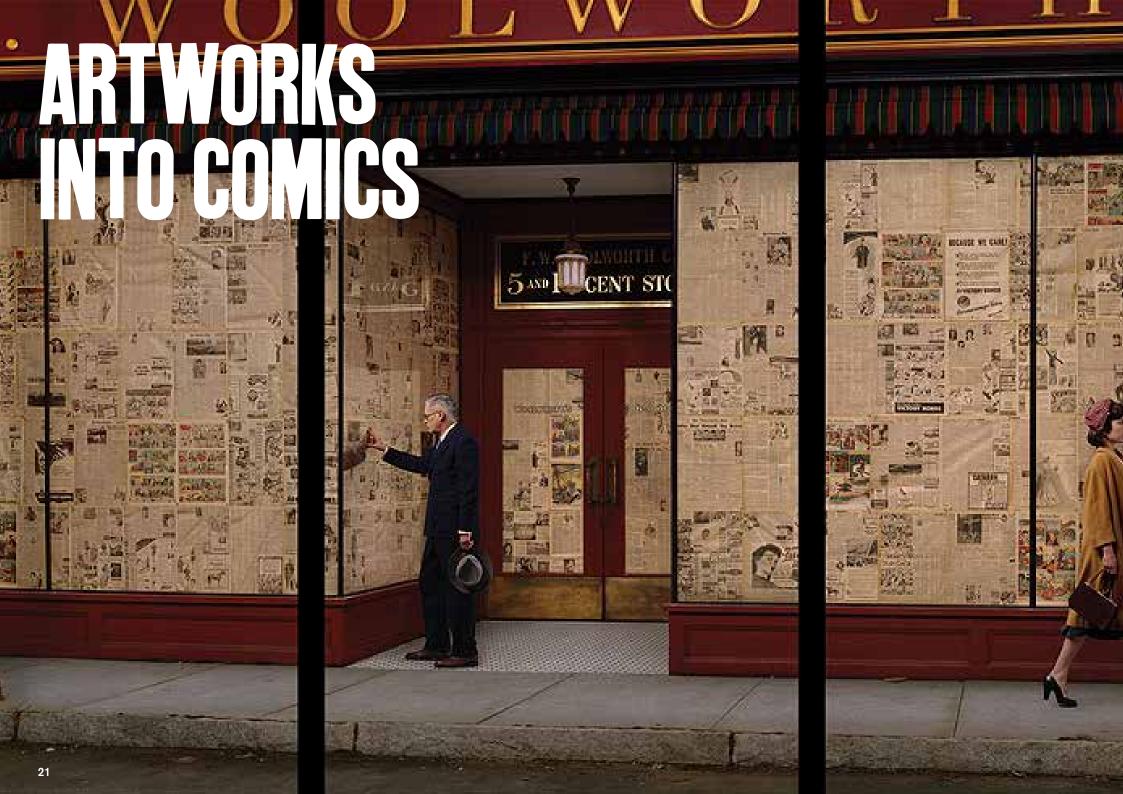
The changing of the phrase when the covers are added in step six was a simple but transformative change to the final book. The important thing here is was that this change is happening outside of their control. The intention was also draw their attention to the power of the removal of one word, in this case the noun, to the meaning of a phrase, drawing attention to how an adjective can become a noun and the effect that this has.

CONCERTINA BOOK TEMPLATE 1



CONCERTINA BOOK TEMPLATE 2





ARTWORKS INTO COMICS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The general aims for this session are:

- 1. To explore narrative and the principles behind 'story' in writing and art.
- 2. To work with words and images in the making of a single piece.
- 3. To encourage working with words, images and stories in a fun and playful way.

PREPARATION

- 1. Printed images: Select an artwork to focus on. Each table will also require a large version of the artwork (we used A3) so that they can see the detail of the image during the session.
- 2. Printed comic templates: print copies of the blank comic templates supplied with this resource.
- 3. Materials required: Stencils, stickers, letraset, printing blocks and ink pads, pens and pencils (various colours) and / or any other ways of putting text onto paper, workbooks.

ROOM LAYOUT

Tables laid out in small groups with materials easy to hand in the middle of the tables.

ARTWORKS INTO COMICS

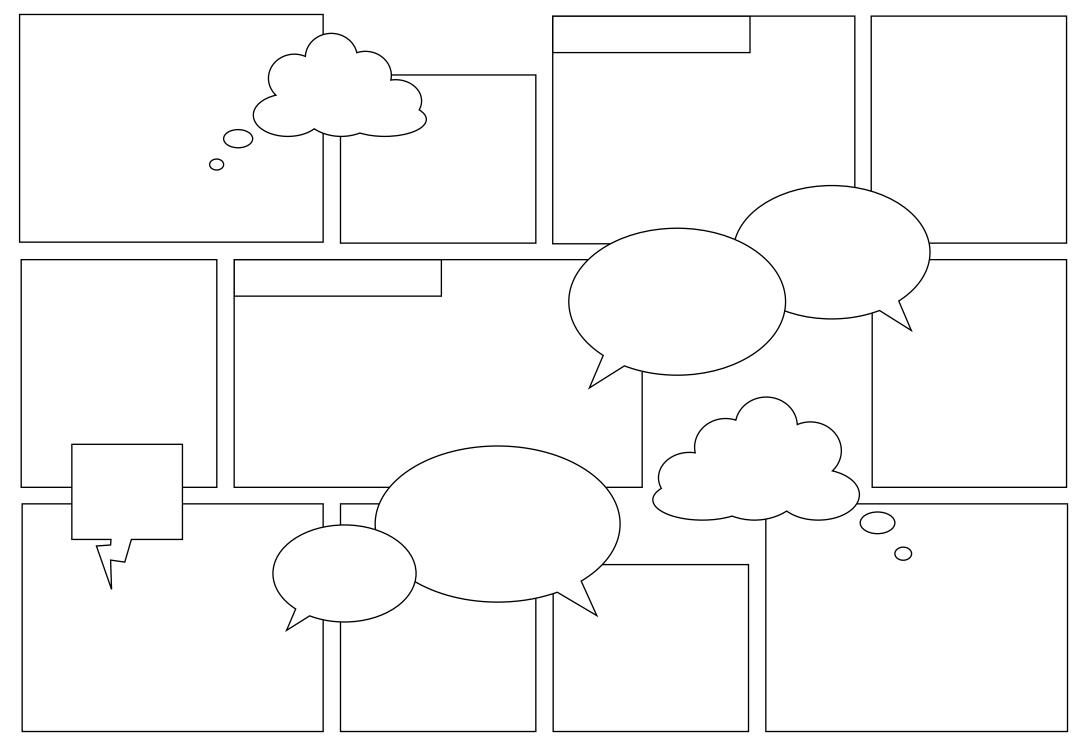
SESSION OUTLINE

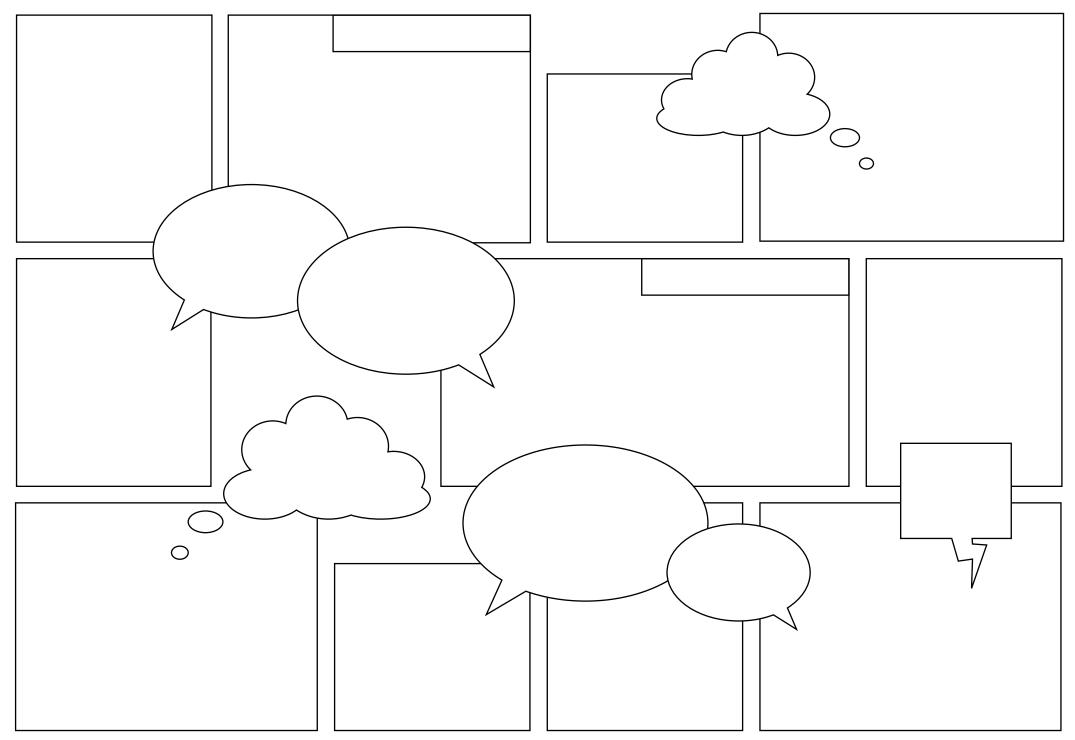
- 1. Introduction: Introduce the artwork and talk through the plan for the session.
- 2. What is narrative?: Introduce narrative as a word that is often used in visual art as another term for story. Introduce the definition of a story as a series of connected events (This happened, then this happened, then this happened... and so on).
- 3. Generating story outlines: In small groups discuss potential stories behind / inspired by the artwork. Ask students to thenwrite a simple story outline into their workbooks. For example, they might like to describe what was happening before, during and after the scene depicted in the artwork.
- 4. Creating comic strips: Hand out the templates and ask the students to create a comic that tells the story they have generated. Please see pages 24 and 25 for comic strip templates.
- 5. Sharing / reflection: Share the comic strips in small groups, reading the stories out and talking about the decisions they had made and why.

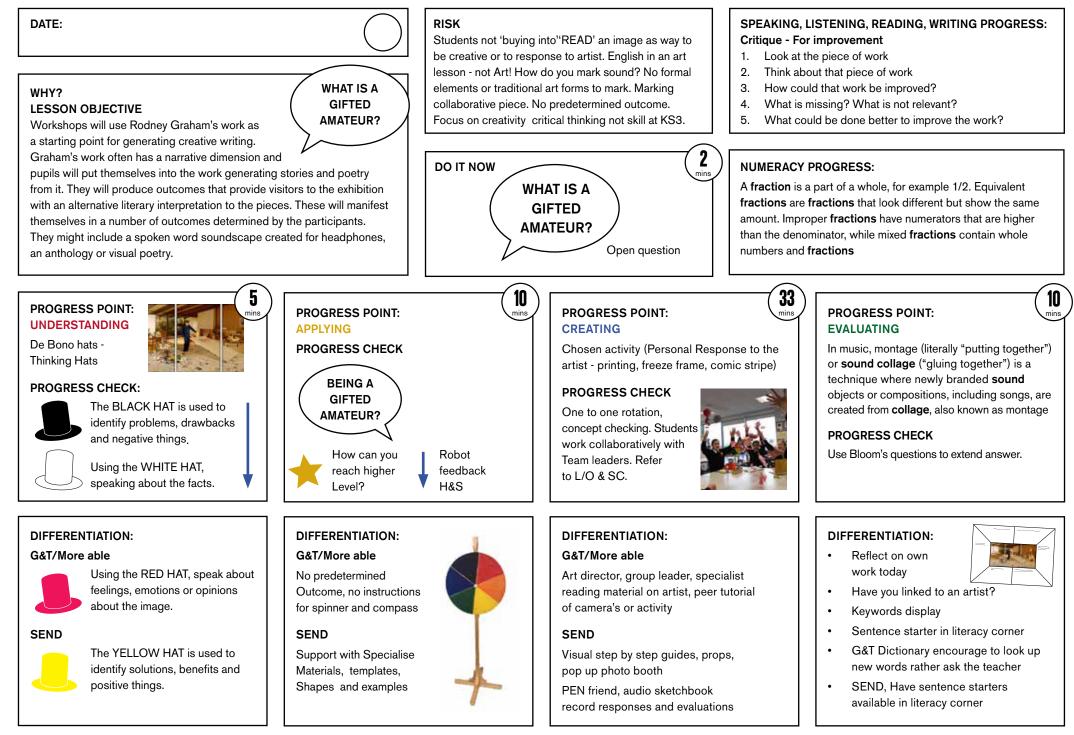
NOTES

Try to select an artwork with a narrative feel. We used a tryptic which was helpful in terms of drawing the connection to comic strips, which are in turn a powerful and accessible way of engaging young people in writing and story.

Comic strips are a useful tool for developing storytelling skills in a way that is not just reliant on words. This is useful for those students who feel more comfortable drawing than they do writing and helps students who prefer writing to develop their drawing and design skills too. It is a brilliant way of working with both words and pictures to develop a core literacy skill, that of telling and reading stories.



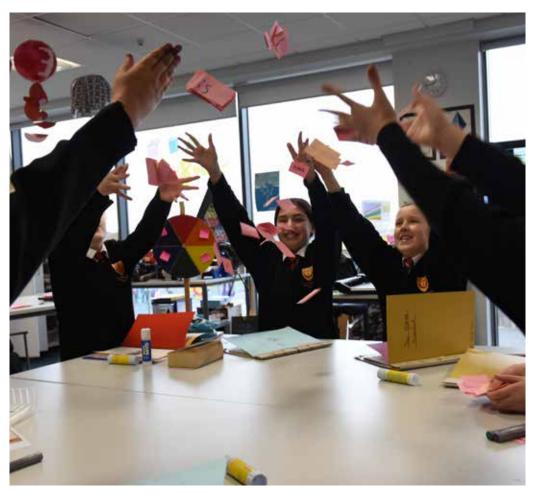




R ETRIEVAL E VALUATE A NALYSE D EDUCE

Using READ to explore contemporary art

RETRIEVAL



Self Portrait as Someone Else after Basement Camera Shop, Circa 1937 around a certain I see you among the Kodachrome A type of old in your bow tie, your collar lips over, camera film in your bow tie, your collar lips over, - the front of thing your buttoned-up cardigat façade.) Scrunched 4 I see you in a crumple or a crease that lives with you, that you live with, in your thin-rimmed gold frames. - glasses soon when Something happened in those dark rooms)film photos developed before there was colour. This is circa and it comes back to us like a daily paper newspaper or how the camera comes to rest on you and your ways to be seen like I see you in the Baby Brownie's eye. A type from 1980'S O, lord of all America's Verichrome pa type of film 1930's how I know that you are / were wonderful.





EVALUATE

CRITIQUE - FOR IMPROVEMENT

- 1. Look at the piece of work
- 2. Think about that piece of work
- 3. How could that work be improved?
- 4. What is missing? What is not relevant?
- 5. What could be done better to improve the work?

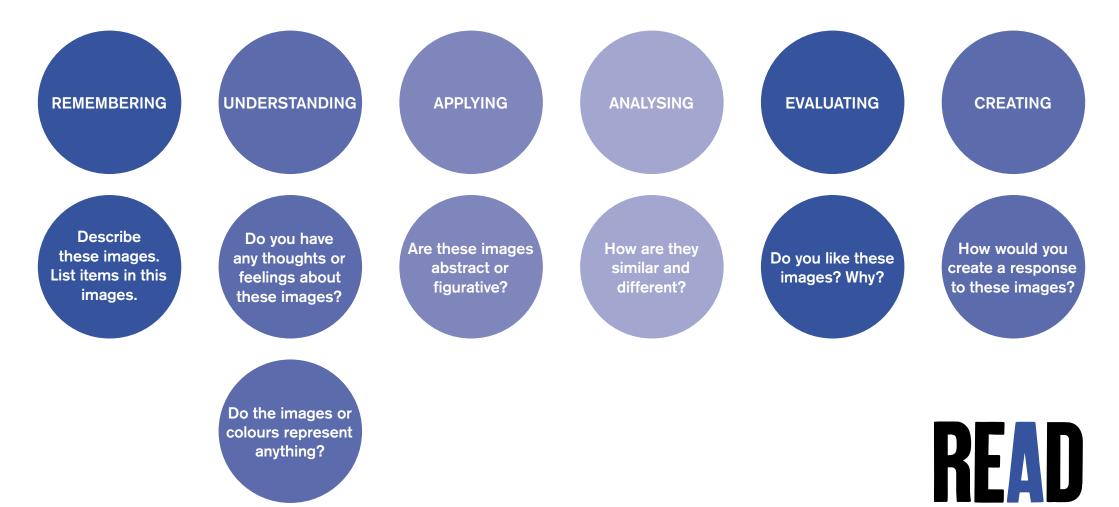
GIVING FEEDBACK

- 1. Share the important points, the person needs to know to improve their work.
- 2. Be kind Comments must be about the content of the work. Not personal.
- 3. Be **specific** Tell the person exactly what they can do and how they can do it to improve.
- 4. Be **helpful** Your feedback must help the person improve their work.





ANALYSE



DEDUCE

Imagine yourself as various types of artist. Remember - what that artist would actually do is not important. This is all about what you think they do. You are the Gifted Amateur.

ILLUSTRATOR

Make a continuous line drawing of something from your pocket.

SONGWRITER

Listen to somebody speaking and write the lyrics for a song that includes their words.

ABSTRACT PAINTER

image an everyday object as no more than three shapes. Paint those shapes.

COLLAGE ARTIST

Make a collage that represents your mood.

INSTALLATION ARTIST

Imagine the entire art floor is empty. Sketch out an idea for an installation that fills the space.

PERFORMACE ARTIST

Imagine you are a performance artist on the surface of the moon. Describe an action that you would repeatedly perform there as an artwork.

PUBLIC ARTIST

Sketch out an idea for a sculpture that could be placed in Ashington Town Centre.



IMAGE CREDITS AND Acknowledgements

Page 6 © Beth Moseley

Page 10 Rodney Graham, *The Gifted Amateur, Nov. 10th, 1962,* 2007. © Rodney Graham. Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

Page 13

Rodney Graham, *Sunday Sun, 1937,* 2012. © Rodney Graham. Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth.

Page 16 Rodney Graham, *Dance!!!!* 2008. © Rodney Graham. Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth.

Page 21 Rodney Graham, *The Avid Reader. 1949,* 2011. © Rodney Graham. Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth.

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engage in the visual arts







NEW WRITING NORTH

