

Local Art & Artists: Classroom activities

[TeesValleyMuseums.org](https://www.TeesValleyMuseums.org)

Local Art and Artists features artists and artworks connected to the Tees Valley. A wide range has been chosen to help students understand the broadest possible definition of art and the role it can play in our lives. By relating them to their local area, these artworks can help students, explore, express and celebrate:

- Local stories
- Local places, people and identity
- Local lives and personal experiences.

Artworks are a great resource for learning across the curriculum. As well as helping students to develop knowledge, skills and understanding in Art & Design, they can be used as:

- Springboards for developing language, vocabulary and writing through describing, imagining and questioning
- Primary sources for history topics
- Inspiration for music and drama
- A focus for exploring and expressing feelings, emotions and identity.

The images of local artworks can be projected onto a whiteboard, printed out, or viewed on tablets.

The activities below can be undertaken using a wide variety of creative media, materials and techniques such as sketching, painting, video, clay, junk modelling, mosaic, fabrics, comic strips, photos or printing.

Links:

[Local Art and Artists](#)

Local stories

The Tees Valley has an amazing history. It saw the birth of the railways, produced thousands of tons of iron and steel to build structures around the globe – including the Sydney Harbour Bridge, and was the site of the only World War I battlefield in the UK, and much more. These important stories have inspired artists to record and interpret them through their work.

Artworks are a great way to introduce local stories and bring them to life. The following artworks are particularly useful as a focus or stimulus:

- *Ironstone Miner and Horse* by Derek Gaunt and Helen Mosey
- *Rescue* by Frank Henry Mason
- *The Saxon Princess comic strip* by Nigel Dobbyn
- *The Bombardment of the Hartlepoons* (16 December 1914) by James Clark (from our [Tees Valley in World War I](#) theme)
- *The Opening of the Stockton and Darlington Railway, 1825* by John Dobbin (from our [Stockton & Darlington Railway](#) theme).

Creative ideas - students could:

- i. Imagine they have stepped inside the picture. What might they see, hear, smell, taste? What can they feel – physically? How do they feel - emotionally? Ask students to draw an outline of their face and draw around one of their hands. Label the eyes, ears, nose etc with their responses. Use their ideas for creative writing.
- ii. Create a tableau representing a key scene from the theme or story associated with the artwork
- iii. Retell a local story from the past through a simple comic strip – how could they use dialogue to describe and create a sense of place..?
- iv. Write reports or use a simple app like ‘GreenScreen’ to literally step into the artwork and report live from the scene. Students film themselves standing in front of a green screen (a piece of plain fabric works well for this) giving their report – the reporter could be interviewing an ironstone miner or witnessing a daring sea rescue by the local lifeboat volunteers. Combine this with an image of the artwork to make it look as though they are really there.

Links:

[Tees Valley in World War I](#)

[Stockton & Darlington Railway](#)

Local places and identity

The Tees Valley is perhaps best known for its industrial heritage, which has been reflected by many artists in their work. Others have been inspired by both the area's built and natural features - from the Transporter Bridge to the miles of spectacular coastline.

Useful works:

- *Seaton Carew Beach* by Margaret Green
- *Shapeform of Redcar* by David Watson
- *South Gare* by Kev Howard
- *Red Bus* by Margaret Shields
- *Shoreline* by Anna Nappa (Tees Valley Arts)
- *He Who Holds The Reins* by Annie O'Donnell
- *Saltburn by Sea railway poster* by Frank Henry Mason (from our **Beside our seaside** theme)
- *Coke Ovens, Cargo Fleet* by Kenneth Cozens (from our **Made in the Tees Valley** theme)
- *Train* by David Mach
- *Ironstone Miner and Horse* by Helen Gaunt and Derek Mosey

Creative ideas - students could:

- i. Compare Margaret Green's *Seaton Carew Beach* and **Bus Trip from the Pits** paintings.
 - What are the three main colours?
 - What do they make *you* think of?
 - What do you think Margaret was trying to say with these colours?

Make a separate list of answers to the questions for each painting. How does Margaret use colour to make the same view of the seafront at Seaton Carew look so different in each painting?

- ii. Use colour to communicate their own message, ideas or feelings about the locality:
 - Make a class colour wheel from photos taken around the school grounds or from a local walk. Label the colours using names linked to the local area and/or where they were found e.g. Middlesbrough red, lemon-top yellow, school-gate blue.
 - Layer sheets of coloured acetate over a sketch or photograph of a local building or place - how does this change existing colours? How does it change the mood or message of the image?
 - Take a photo of their chosen place and manipulate the colours or apply colour filters using a simple app like Photoshop or PopArtCamera.
-

- 
- iii. Use David Watson's *Shapeform of Redcar* painting, David Mach's *Train* sculpture and Gaunt & Mosey's *Ironstone Miner and Horse* mosaic to inspire their own creative responses to the locality using 2D and/or 3D shapes. Try using a limited number of shapes to recreate buildings, structures, places or people, e.g. can they make curves using shapes with only straight lines..? What happens if you use only triangles..? Combine these to make a class display or map.
 - iv. Use instruments and their voices to create a soundscape inspired by an artwork or by a special place in their local area. They could use an app such as Garageband, FL Studio or Walk Band to record their voices, sound effects and music. There are also lots of free sound effects available to download online.

Links:

[Beside our seaside](#)

[Made in the Tees Valley](#)

[Bus Trip from the Pits by Margaret Green](#)

Local people

The Tees Valley has been home to people from all walks of life. From pioneers like explorer Captain Cook, NASA astronaut Dr Nicholas Patrick and archaeologist Gertrude Bell, to the thousands of miners, shipbuilders, steelworkers and their families who transformed it into an industrial powerhouse. It was even a settlement for a Saxon Princess!

Useful works:

- *Seaton Carew Beach* by Margaret Green
- *Travelling Companions* by Glynn Porteous
- *The Saxon Princess comic strip* by Nigel Dobbyn
- *Miner* by Tom McGuinness

Find more people in our [Teessiders](#), [Ironstone Miners](#), [Tees Valley in World War I](#), and [The Stockton & Darlington Railway](#) themes.

Creative ideas - students could:

- Create speech or thought bubbles for the different people in an artwork
- Research and develop character profiles for people in an artwork – are they rich or poor? Young or old? Where do they live or work? What do they like doing in their spare time? Why are they part of that particular local place or scene?
- Use Glynn Porteous' work *Travelling Companions* to inspire a piece of drama and/or dialogue between two people travelling to a place in local area. Where are they going? Why? What might they do when they get there? Try talking about the place without mentioning its name – can classmates guess where they're travelling to?
- Porteous was inspired by a painting from 1862, also called *The Travelling Companions*. What if the two travellers were from different times? Try researching people from different **themes** in this resource and role-play a conversation between them e.g. Nicholas Patrick and Captain Cook, the Saxon Princess and Gertrude Bell, a student and a historical figure. Where might they be going..?
- Invite local people to sit for older students to sketch or draw. Sitters could bring something with them that reflects their lives.

Links:

[Teessiders](#)

[Ironstone Miners](#)

[Tees Valley in World War I](#)

[Stockton & Darlington Railway](#)

[The Travelling Companions by Leopold Egg](#)

Celebrating the locality

Artworks are a great way to capture and express what is special about a place. Internationally renowned artists have celebrated the Tees Valley's extraordinary heritage, identity and people through a series of prominent public artworks. These include:

- *Temonos* by Anish Kapoor and Cecil Balmond
- *Bottle of Notes* by Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen
- *Train* by David Mach

Local museums and galleries celebrate the Tees Valley through exhibitions of objects, artworks and people's memories about the local area.

Creative ideas - students could:

- i. Make creative captions for the public artworks by completing the sentences below, and then giving them a new name inspired by their answers:
 - It reminds me of...
 - I wonder...
 - I think it means...
 - I would call it...
- ii. Hold a school exhibition based on a locally-focused theme or topic. Our **Museum in your Classroom** resource is a step-by-step guide, from planning, researching and creating your displays, to hosting an opening event and guiding visitors through your exhibition.
- iii. Anish Kapoor made the **original model** (maquette) for *Temonos* by stretching a pair of tights between two rings. Try making small scale models of ideas which could be giant structures. Where would the giant version be situated? What materials would be used to construct it? Use Lego or Playmobile figures to create a giant piece of public art in a miniature world.

More examples of maquettes and final structures can be found from the **Cass Sculpture Foundation**.

Links:

[Museum in your Classroom](#)

[Anish Kapoor's Temonos maquette](#)

[Cass Sculpture Foundation](#)

Personal lives, experiences and feelings

Many artists draw on their own lives to inspire their artworks, and use their art as an expression of their feelings, ideas or opinions. This can add a richness and offer new perspectives on familiar places or themes. Some, like David Watson and Tom McGuinness show first-hand how it felt to live and work in local industrial and mining communities. Others, like Annie O'Donnell, Deb Covell and Glynn Porteous have reflected their personal lives and ideas through their art, with the process of making it often being as important as the finished piece. The young 'Tees Valley artists' explored identity and belonging, and used film to tell their own personal stories about what living in the Tees Valley means to them.

Useful artworks:

- *Miner* by Tom McGuinness
- *Shapeform of Redcar* by David Watson
- *He Who Holds The Reins* by Annie O'Donnell
- *Blanket* by Deb Covell
- *Football* by Omran Al Koteishe (Tees Valley Arts)
- *Shoreline* by Anna Nappa (Tees Valley Arts)
- *Red Bus* by Margaret Shields
- *South Gare* by Kev Howard
- *Seaton Carew Beach* by Margaret Green
- *Scullery Sink* by Glynn Porteous (from our [Made in the Tees Valley](#) theme)
- *Coke Ovens, Cargo Fleet* by Kenneth Cozens

Creative ideas - students could:

- i. Explore the question 'What does living here mean to me?' through portrait collages. Working in pairs, they draw around each other's profiles on to a large piece of paper (this could be done by standing in front of a light to create a silhouette). Then each student fills their profile with drawings, photos and other images of things from their lives and the locality that are meaningful to them.
- ii. Try using different materials to express different feelings. What might happy, angry, peaceful look like in clay, paint or fabrics?

Links:

[Made in the Tees Valley](#)

Looking closer

Looking closer at artworks is a key skill for students whether you're studying local people, places, stories or lives. Try these questions and ideas to help students look closer, think more deeply and explore further.

2D Artworks

- Look very closely at the whole artwork, including all four corners. Describe what you see.
- What do you think is happening in the picture?
- Are there any people in the picture?
- What are they wearing?
- What do their clothes tell you about them?
- Can you see the expressions on their faces? What does this tell you?
- Are they holding anything?
- Who is the artist?
- How did the artist make this picture?
- Why do you think the artist made this picture?
- What does the artwork say about the local area?

Public art and sculpture

- What does it remind you of?
- What does it make you wonder?
- Which view of it do you like best?
- What is it made from? Why do you think the artist chose these materials?
- How did it get there?
- How does it stand up?
- What's it got to do with the Tees Valley..?
- Why is it located there? What if it was somewhere else..?

Further activities and resources

Find more local artists and artworks in our other locally-related [themes](#)

[Arts Award](#) – through local artists and museums

[Museum in your Classroom](#) – our step-by-step guide to creating a school exhibition

Our [guide](#) to using portraits, paintings and images to find out about the past

[Art UK](#) – the online home for the nation's art
