

Talking Pictures

Creating
poems that
bring paintings
alive

"I saw clouds
in the pictures"

"I heard lots of
people chatting
loudly."

Introduction: Talking Pictures



This resource has been produced as part of the MaxLiteracy Awards 2018/19. MaxLiteracy is a programme developed by Engage, the National Association for Gallery Education, and the National Association of Writers in Education (NAWE) to enable galleries, art museums and visual arts venues to support a dedicated programme of creative writing and literacy work with schools. The Awards were initiated and funded by the Max Reinhardt Charitable Trust.

These *Talking Pictures* activities were created by poet, Caleb Parkin, in conjunction with the Learning Team at Bristol Museum & Art Gallery; with children and staff from Compass Point Primary School, Bristol.



1. Choose your expert name



You'll need an expert name. When you're this expert, you can feel very clever and give your opinions about the art you're looking at and writing about.

Ingredients: Words from food packaging; paint charts.

- My Museum expert name is... Dr or Professor
Pick one then use one food packaging word and one paint chart word to create your name.
- I work in the museum of...
Your favourite thing ever? An idea? An animal?

Examples:



Professor Unicorn-Horn Bojangles from the Museum of Chips
Dr Antique Cauldron from the Museum of Monsters
Dr Classic Pines from the Museum of Toilets
Dr Chocolate Moser from the Museum of Unicorns

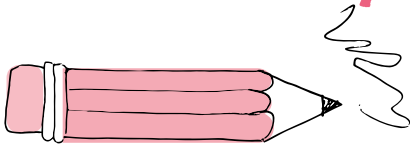
“ To get your expert name you need 2 things – a word (e.g. your favourite chocolate bar) and a colour. Then you decide either Professor or Doctor. Finally, you put them together and BOOM you have an expert name! ”

Casey-Jane

“ My expert name is Dr Galaxy Sky Blue. I thought this activity was good and I had to be really creative. ”

Isra

2. Create your gallery statement



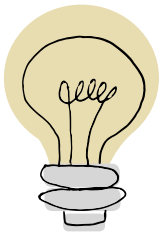
Use your senses and imagination to describe what your gallery would be like. You can also choose words or phrases at random from a book!

Ingredients: Pencils, paper, different textures, examples of different smells, musical instruments, colour wheels or paint charts, books.

- Our museum looks like...
- Our museum sounds like...
- Our museum feels like...
- Our museum smells like...

In our museum, we see...
In our museum, we feel...

Examples:



In our museum, we see

lots of nice paintings
a picture that was very pretty
a lady sleeping on a bed and she was white
paper, pictures of people and plants
clouds in the picture
an umbrella
an aeroplane above me, on the first floor
a lady on a horse
a Chinese dragon and it has patterns
the dinosaur and a dino skeleton.

In our museum, we feel

the shiny, smooth gold hand bar
the ground on the smooth, cold, hard floor
the stone lady on the bed
the ginger penguin
the ant climbing up my hand
the blackhole.

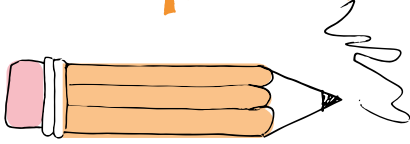
In our museum, we hear

lots of people talking, chatting loudly
people talking upstairs and downstairs
loud people in the museum
people in the gallery walking
children, some noise, loud boys
talking and voices in the gallery
a mouse, barking
Caleb talking
the bus driving.

In our museum, we smell

the air in the museum
fruit, my sweet, squishy orange
my yellow, yummy, smelly, squishy, sweet banana
my crunchy breadsticks, a gingerbread penguin
the block of tea.

3. If pictures could talk



Choose three paintings that you like, they can either be in a gallery, pictures or postcards.

Ingredients: Now choose an object from one; a colour from another; a feeling you get from another.

Then write this little poem to introduce yourself:

I'm *Your Name* and today I'm...

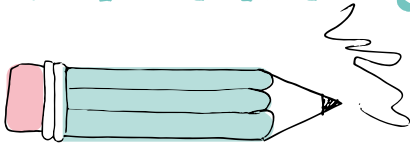
One word for your **OBJECT**

One word for your **COLOUR**

One word for your **FEELING**



4. Ten line growing poem



Write a ten-line poem about the painting you've chosen, in which the first line is one word and the last line is ten words.

Ingredients: Choose a painting to work with, pencils, paper, poem scaffold.

It should go like this:

The most important word from the title (1 word)

An important texture in the painting (2 words)

The most striking colour from the painting (3 words)

Some sounds the poem is making (4 words)

One thing we love about this painting (5 words)

What we'd change about the painting (6 words)

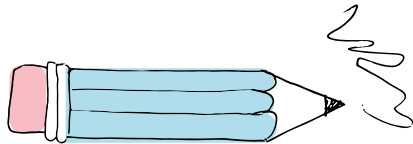
A question we'd ask the artist about the painting (7 words)

A question we'd ask someone in the painting (8 words)

A question we'd ask something in the painting (9 words)

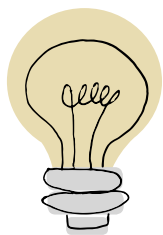
Write a new information sign for this painting (10 words)

5. Paint chart poem



Taking inspiration from a painting, create your own range of brand new paint colour names from colours you can see in the painting.

Ingredients: A painting to work with.
A paint colour catalogue.



Here is a paint chart poem by Swallows Class at Compass Point Primary School inspired by *The Turkeys* by Lucien Pissarro.



The Turkeys (or Esther in the Garden, Engraving) by Lucien Pissarro © Bristol Museum and Art Gallery

6. Peculiar perspective poem



Choose a picture, look closely and find something which wouldn't speak, such as an object or animal. You're going to become that object or animal.

Ingredients: Pencil, paper, image to work with.

Now that you've become that object or animal, use these sentence stems:

- I can see...
- I can hear...
- I can feel...
- I can taste...
- I can smell...
- I like...
- I don't like...

“ We found pictures that don't normally speak and we brought them to life in our writing 'The flower goes grow me, grow me!' ”

Archie

Now imagine what words, sounds or made-up/onomatopoeic words each thing might be making. For example:

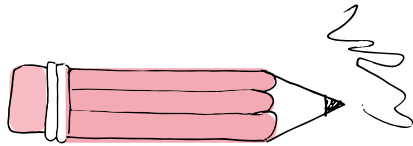


A **FLOWER** goes 'Smell me! Smell me!'

A **PEN** goes 'Blob blob blob'

A **SOFA** goes 'Mmmffrrmmbbbmf'

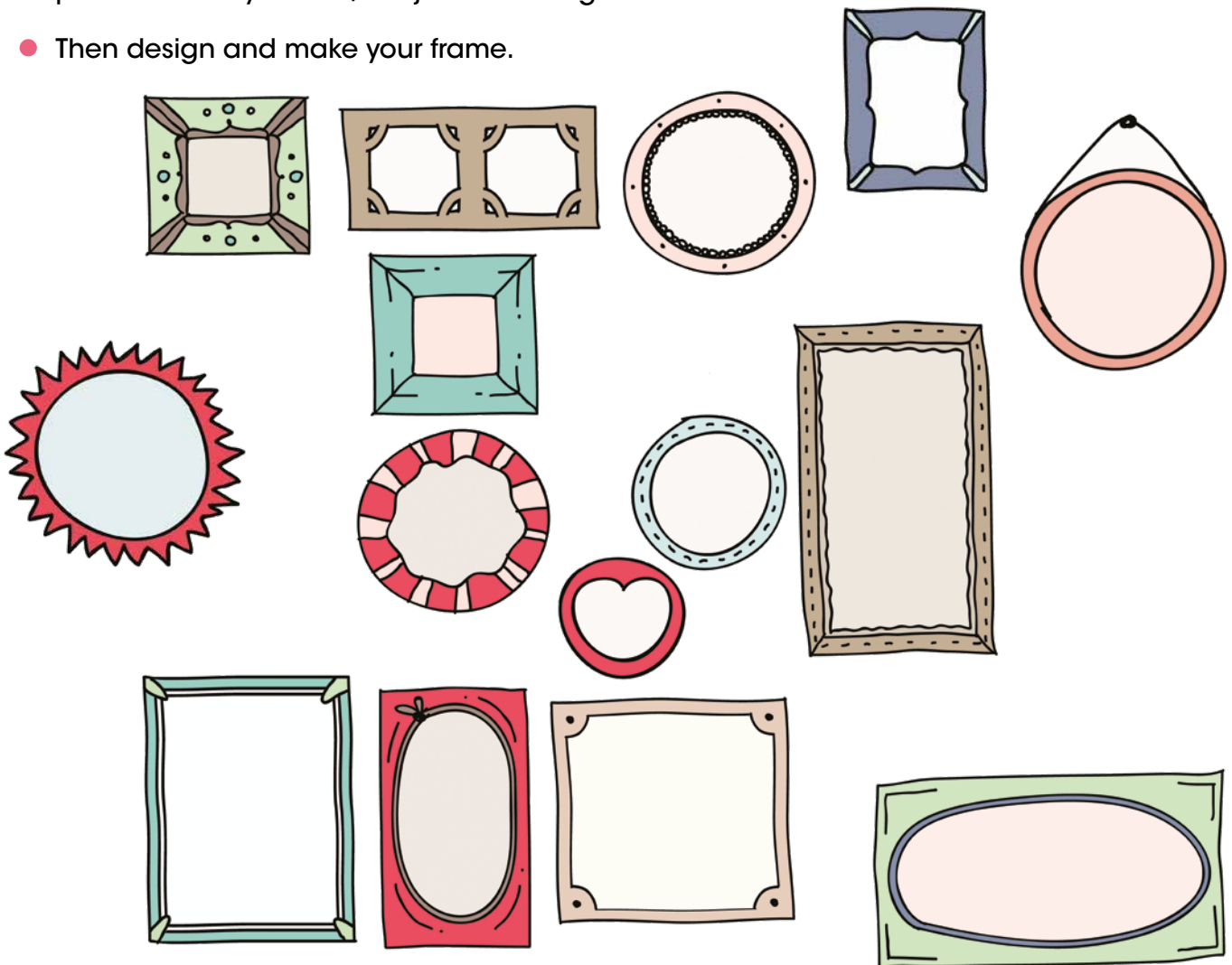
7. You've been



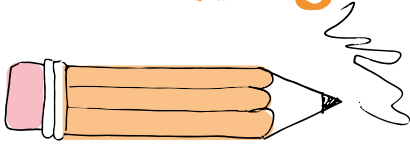
Imagine you are an artwork and then create a frame that represents you.

Ingredients: Paint colour cards, fabric scraps, coloured card, pencil, paper.

- Use paint colour cards, everyone picks one and writes:
If my life was a colour, it would be...
- Use fabric offcuts, everyone picks one and writes:
If my life was a texture, it would be...
- List all the possible materials that a frame could be made from, not just wood, metal, plastic but clouds, Skittles sweets or bone! Everone picks three and writes:
If my life were materials, they'd be...
- Collectively list all possible shapes the frame could be and imagine all the peculiar ones you can, not just a rectangle.
- Then design and make your frame.



8. Talking Pictures: Our Living Gallery



Now it's time to share your work in front of an audience!

Ingredients: Yourself, your 'bizarre' frames, your poems, a hall or larger cleared classroom space, an audience.

- Choose one, two or three of your pieces of writing to share.
- Practice performing them *and learn them if you can!*
- Here are some top tips for performing your pieces:

1 SLOOOOOOW DOOOOOOWN Speak at half the speed you feel like you want to, because nerves make you speed up!

2 STAND UP Make sure you're standing well, breathing well, paper held down *not in front of your face*. Imagine there's a thread coming from the top of your head, pulling you up. Imagine you've got roots like a tree connecting you to the ground.

3 ADD MUSIC See what happens if you change the ways you speak your poem – as a secret, as gossip, as a speech – what works? Make sure it's not all on one level – add music!

To create your gallery, mark off an area in your school hall or classroom with masking tape – in a square shape or a round shape (or something else, if you're feeling daring) like a gallery. You might want to print out your gallery statement for someone to hold up.



Rehearse: Bring your own frames and poems, and line the 'walls' with your talking pictures. Get a teacher or half the group to come around and listen. Can they hear you? Are you standing well? Are you adding music to your words?

Invite an audience from inside school or your families, to come and visit your Living Gallery.

In our *Living Gallery* all the artworks speak! Visitors come up and ask the *Talking Pictures* to perform for them.

Get some feedback from your visitors in writing, or audio, or video if you can – this will be useful if you are doing an Arts Award artsaward.org.uk

“ At the end, you interview each other about what you thought but you are not interviewing you but interviewing your expert self. ”

Mira

Curriculum links

Activity 2

Create your Gallery Statement

Key Stage 1 & 2 Speaking and listening:

- use relevant strategies to build their vocabulary.
- Give well-structured descriptions and explanations for different purposes, including expressing feelings.

Activity 3

If pictures could talk

Year 1 & 2 Write for different purposes:

- writing down ideas and/or keywords, including new vocabulary.

Year 3 & 4 Compose and rehearse sentences orally:

- progressively building a varied and rich vocabulary and an increasing range of sentence structures.

Year 5 & 6 Select appropriate grammar and vocabulary:

- understanding how such choices can change and enhance meaning.

Activity 4

Ten Line Growing Poem

Year 1 & 2 Develop positive attitudes to writing by writing poetry.

Year 3 & 4 Recognise some different forms of poetry.

Year 5 & 6 Preparing poems and plays to read aloud and to perform.

Activity 5

Paint Chart Poem

Year 1 & 2 Use expanded noun phrases to describe and specify detail.

Year 3 & 4 Draft and write by composing and rehearsing sentences orally.

Year 5 & 6 Plan their writing by selecting the appropriate grammar and vocabulary.

Activity 6

Peculiar Perspective Poem

Year 1 & 2 Use sentences with different forms: statement, question, exclamation command.

Year 3 & 4 Organise paragraphs around a theme.

Year 5 & 6 Propose changes to vocabulary, grammar and punctuation to enhance effects and clarify meaning.

Activity 7

You've Been Framed

Year 1 & 2 Discuss their favourite words and phrases.

Year 3 & 4 Discuss words and phrases that capture the reader's interest and imagination.

Year 5 & 6 Identify how language, structure and presentation contribute to meaning.

Activity 8

Talking Pictures: Our Living Gallery

Key Stage 1 & 2 Speaking and listening:

- Speak audibly and fluently with an increasing command of Standard English.
- Participate in presentations and performances.
- Select and use appropriate registers for effective communication.