**Poetry: RS Thomas**

**This unit will develop children’s understanding of a single poet through the exploration of language and organisation in order to analyse and explore effect. Initially ‘The Flower’ will be considered, after which ‘White Tiger’ and ‘The Bright Field’ will be considered.**

**Key words: enjambment, point, evidence, effect**

**Outcomes to be sent to next setting:**

**1.To respond to a poem using point, evidence and analysis.**

**2.To create a poem using strategies from the original text based on a treasured moment / aspect of nature that could symbolise life.**

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The Flower:

I asked for riches.
You gave me the earth, the sea,
the immensity
of the broad sky. I looked at them
and learned I must withdraw
to possess them. I gave my eyes
and my ears, and dwelt
in a soundless darkness
in the shadow of your regard.
The soul grew in me, filling me
with its fragrance.

Lesson 1: Ways of Reading a Poem

Starter: What are you thankful for? Who or what made it possible?

Discuss this in pairs/ small groups and feed back to class.

Ways of Reading: Look at the title of the poem – without reading the text. Discuss.

RS Thomas is thankful for The Flower – who then is his thanks directed at? (The Creator).

Read the poem as a class, at this point don’t dwell on meaning, but allow the language to become familiar.

Read it in different ways – for example, a child takes a line, a child takes part of a sentence to the next punctuation, a child takes an individual word, half the class say one word/line followed by the other half saying the next. In a large space each child has a copy of the poem and takes a step for each word – everyone reciting at their own pace.

Read the poem with emphasis on different words, shouting and whispering. How does this change the effect of the words?

Having become comfortable/ familiar with the language return now to the vocabulary. Highlight words that are interesting. Use thesaurus and dictionaries to produce a glossary of terms and alternatives.

Plenary – make the poem less effective. Based on dictionary / thesaurus work invite children to change the poems language to make it less powerful. For example,

You gave me the earth, the sea,

the size,

of the big sky, I looked at them
and learned I must go away
to have them. I gave my eyes
and my ears, and lived
in a quiet darkness
in the shadow of your look.
The soul grew in me, filling me
with its smell.

Lesson 2: the power of words on a page

Starter: In a circle a child says one thing they are thankful for in their lives. The next child says their thought, plus the one before. The next says their thought, plus the previous two and so forth. Build this up until the whole group has contributed. This could be extended by adding adjectives, using similes, personification or other strategy to illicit mood, feeling, emotion etc.

Main: Look at the pattern of words on the page. What do you notice? Is the poem organised differently to other poems you are familiar with? Draw children’s attention to the fact RS Thomas uses enjambment (the meaning of the line runs over the next without punctuation). This is done in order to draw the eye down – is it comfortable? Why has the poet chosen to use this technique?

Using a copy of the poem in a Word Doc, invite children to use the Synonym function to find alternative words for the poem. Can they make it more powerful with the choice of word? Does it affect the overall meaning.

Share poems and discuss.

Next step: introduce how to use the animation / movie making programme of your choice if children are not already familiar with it. This will be used in the next session to put poetry with moving images.

Lesson 3: the power of words with images

Having innovated poems in the previous session this session looks to put these words to moving images.

Using the IPad App ‘I Can Animate’ , Movie Maker, or other similar App, support children in creating a Poem in Motion. This could be a recitation with images, an animation with voice over, photo files with background music / voice over etc.

Provide a success criteria, (this could refer to the work in Lesson 1 when the original poem was spoken in lots of different ways – which was the most effective?)

You may wish to consider;

To use a close up and a wide angle camera position.

Expressive voices / hand gesture

To use silence for effect

To use a limited colour pallet

To use limited props.

Review work and, using speaking frames provide peer and self-assessment opportunities.

Lesson 4 : Tiger’s selected lines

The White Tiger

It was beautiful as God
must be beautiful; glacial
eyes that had looked on
violence and come to terms

with it; a body too huge
and majestic for the cage in which
it had been put; up
and down in the shadow

of its own bulk it went,
lifting, as it turned,
the crumpled flower of its face
to look into my own

face without seeing me. It
was the colour of the moonlight
on snow and as quiet
as moonlight, but breathing

as you can imagine that
God breathes within the confines
of our definition of him, agonising
over immensities that will not return.What immortal hand or eye,

Starter: Read the text about White Tigers – children offer facts they have gleamed from the text / images.

Main: Without reading the full poem offer the children the underlined quotes. Discuss their meaning, the strategies that have been used and why.

Taking one of the quotes the teacher models writing a response to the question: **How does the poet create a powerful effect through the specific use of language.**

When modelling ensure that through discussion you show how to write a point, evidence analysis refer to the poem!

**(Outcome 1)**, children take a further quote / quotes to express their opinion.

Review and peer assess.

Lesson 5: The White Tiger

Starter: Read the whole poem – this could be done in a similar way to how ‘The Flower’ was read initially.

Main: Discuss thoughts of what it is about – children could use the ’Approaching a poem in 30 questions’ to help.

Watch the video clip – Gowan Calder reciting ‘The White Tiger’ – how do the images that were chosen help to understand the poem – does it help? Would other images have been more successful?

The poem compares God and the Tiger.

Create a table to compare these two beings using quotes from the poem.

Lesson 6: Moving on

The Bright Field:

*I have seen the sun break through
to illuminate a small field
for a while, and gone my way
and forgotten it. But that was the
pearl of great price, the one field that had
treasure in it. I realise now
that I must give all that I have
to possess it. Life is not hurrying*

*on to a receding future, nor hankering after
an imagined past. It is the turning
aside like Moses to the miracle
of the lit bush, to a brightness
that seemed as transitory as your youth
once, but is the eternity that awaits you.*

Starter: read the poem as a class. Invite the children to reread it, only joining in with words that they feel are important.

Sitting in a circle can the poem be recited with on child speaking one word at a time without previous agreement of who is to say what. If more than one child joins in return to the start of the poem – how far can you get through?!

This exercise will tune children in to the language and each other.

Main: go through the 30 questions, or specific ones you feel relevant. Invite children to summarise the poem in a super sentence. Encourage children to consider similarities and differences between this and the other poems by RS Thomas.

This poem returns to themes of The Flower – a recognition of the beauty of life and need for celebration / recognition. Discuss what the ‘small field’ symbolises. Consider why it is the ‘field’ has been chosen rather than another part of nature.

Read the poem and create a recount plan of the poets walk and how it affects him (this could be compared to Wordsworth’s ‘Daffodils’).

Prepare for next session when the group will be taking their own ‘walk’

Lesson 7: inspirational walks

Starter:

“It is our habit to think outdoors – walking, leaping, climbing, dancing, preferably on a lonely mountain or near the sea where even the trails become thoughtful” (Friedrich Nietzsche)

Discuss the quote.

Main:

Reread The Bright Field and review the recount.

Take children on a walk – this may be onto the playground, but preferably where nature can be seen / heard. If appropriate the idea of ‘pilgrimage’ could be discussed. Whilst this lesson is not a pilgrimage the objective is to find something of great wonder, that might usually be overlooked.

Chose one aspect from your walk that could have ‘great treasure in it’. What could this symbolise? How could it symbolise life?

Children should be encouraged to sketch, photograph or record their walk in an appropriate way. Journey sticks could be used. Mapping of the route could be undertaken.

Return to the classroom and discuss your symbolic treasure chest and why it should be nurtured.

Lesson 8: writing a rich description.

Review the previous sessions walk and symbolic treasure chests. Children plan their own recount.

Teacher models writing a recount.

This should be short, but rich with description. Children should use the skills and vocabulary acquired through the unit to assist with this.

Children write their own description.

Peer review

Lesson 9: Description to Poem.

Starter: adjectives – start with ‘field’, each child adds a more interesting adjective to outdo the previous one, who will be the winner?

Main

Review last sessions description. Teacher models ‘chunking’ this. Organising the words, and editing to create a poem.

Agree a success criteria

Eg, it should use enjambment, 8 / 6 line stanzas / recount an experience

**Outcome 2**: children write their own poems.

Review and celebrate.