



Lesson Activities

William Conor



Discovering William Conor

Display some of William Conor's paintings of everyday life, such as 'The Swings', 'The Happy Mother', or 'People in a Cinema Queue' on an interactive whiteboard (you should choose paintings to show that will be familiar scenes to the children in your class). Tell the pupils the names that Conor has given to the paintings and ask them to comment on the titles. Lead them to discussing how Conor always gave his paintings very simple, factual titles. Next, ask the pupils to discuss what the paintings have in common, or what subject or theme Conor liked to paint. Lead the discussion to the fact that Conor always painted scenes of everyday life in Ulster and particularly in his hometown of Belfast.

William Conor's paintings of scenes of life in Ulster are said to be "warm and sympathetic". Ask the children to discuss in groups what they think this means. Prompt them to understanding that Conor was very proud of his background and where he came from and that his paintings clearly show this fondness. Introduce the idea of nostalgia and ask the children to discuss what this means. Can they think of anything in their own life that they might be nostalgic about?

Everyday Life where we Live

Look at Resource 1 which lists names of some of Conor's paintings, that show scenes from everyday life. Working in pairs, allocate a painting to each pair or alternatively, allow them to draw a name of a painting from a tub. Allow each pupil/pair to look up an image of their selected painting online and to print a copy off. Ask each pair to work together to discuss the arrangement of the figures on the painting and what the scene is about.

Next, ask the pupils to think of a modern-day equivalent to the painting and to think about how they could recreate the painting, using photography. For example, the painting 'The Mill Girls' could be a photo of people coming out of an office, people working in a department store or people coming out of a local business; the painting 'Youth and Age' could be recreated with a photo of one of the children with a grandparent, with the difference seen in the type of clothing worn for example.



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The important point here is that their creation does not have to be identical to Conor's scene, but a similar scene inspired by the original, which shows modern everyday life where the children live.

There are several ways to complete this project and you should choose the one that is most appropriate for your pupils and your local area. Suggestions include:

In School:

- Ask the pupils to recreate their painting scene by acting it out and using a school camera to photograph the recreation;
- Ask school staff to take part in recreating a painting scene;
- Use magazines to cut out images and use these in a collage that recreates the scene in their painting.

At Home: (seek the permission/help of parents to complete this):

- Use a home camera to take a photo of scenes that recreate Conor's paintings.
 - Ask parent to send/email the image to you when complete or to print out.
- Remember to tell the pupils that if they are photographing other people in the street it is good to ask permission first of all.

When the pupils have completed their image, display their modern everyday life image alongside the William Conor painting that inspired it.

What would it Sound Like?

Please note: This activity may take several sessions to complete.

In this activity, the pupils will focus on what they think the scenes portrayed in some of Conor's paintings would have sounded like. Tell the children that they will be creating a soundscape. A soundscape is a combination of sounds that work together to create an impression of an environment.

For this activity it would be ideal if children have had experience with a sound-editing software or App such as GarageBand or Audacity. It would be ideal if the pupils have had prior experience of the following:



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- listening to and recording audio;
- transferring files from a recording device to an editing device;
- using software to edit sound files; and
- exporting audio files.

Split the children into small groups and give each group one of Conor's paintings to work with. Ask them to discuss in their group the location and the mood of the scene. They should create a mind map of the sounds that they think would be heard in that scene. For example, the scene in the painting of 'The Shipyard Workers' might have sounds of men talking and laughing; hammering on metal; drilling; ship horns; water.

Next, they should begin to think about and record how that might recreate those sounds so that they could record them. Do they need to get others in the class to make a sounds for them such as clapping, talking loudly or singing? Do they need to use materials such as wood, metal or fabrics to create a particular sound? Allow them to have some time to experiment with creating sound effects using their voice; body parts; everyday objects; the environment; or instruments of different kinds.

Get the children to choose a maximum of six sounds (more or less dependent on the time you have available) and to record these on a Copy of Resource 2. They should then record how they will make the sound and list the materials or props that they will need. This list will help them when they start to get their materials. On occasion where the pupils will be unable to recreate a sound, such as a ship's horn, they can use pre-recorded digital sounds available online.

The next step will be the creation and recording of their six sounds. Depending on the ICT resources you have available, the pupils could record these directly into an App, if using a tablet for example – using GarageBand on an iPad is one example of this. Alternatively, the pupils should record the sounds on a portable microphone and then import the audio into the software afterwards. It is worth noting that this can be more time consuming and therefore limiting the numbers of sounds that each group will record will be an advantage.



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Once the sounds have been recorded and imported into the software (if they used an external microphone), the pupils should work together in their groups to edit the clips. They will want to:

- Crop each clip if needed so they have the best section of each clip;
- Sequence their clips in a way they feels suits the scene in the painting;
- Multi-layer the clips if that is appropriate;
- Fade in or out each clip if appropriate;
- Listen to and save their soundscape as they work.
- Export their file when complete as a .mp3 file or a .wav file.

Displaying and Sharing

As a finale to their soundscape work based on William Conor's paintings, the pupils could share their soundscape with parents and others. Create a wall display (in a corridor or area that parents have easy access to) with a print of each group's Conor painting and perhaps other pieces of art that the pupils have created based on Conor's paintings.

One way of sharing their digital soundscapes with parents is to create a QR code. These are like barcodes that, when scanned, link to a file or a website for example, and in this case will link to their soundscape file.

Firstly, download a QR Code creator. There are many QR code creators available, and most are free. Choose one that allows you to share audio.

Most QR code creators are wizard-driven and easy to use. Usually you will be prompted to:

- Upload your audio file
- Customise your QR code (colour etc)
- Save your QR code
- Print your QR code



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You should then stick a copy of each group's QR code beside their image of one of Conor's scenes. Parents should be asked to download a QR Reader onto their smartphone or tablet device. Alternatively, a school tablet for example could be made available for parents to use in order to scan the barcode. When parents come into the school they can simply open their QR code reader app and scan the barcode. They will then be able to hear the soundscape that the pupils have created for each of Conor's paintings.