



English / Drama –Pupil's notes

Theme - The changing landscape

Introduction

In 1800, 90 % of the population worked in the countryside and 10 % in the towns. By the end of the century, only 25% lived in the countryside with 75% living in towns and cities.

During this period, most towns and cities had witnessed great change. More homes were built to house the great numbers moving from the countryside to the town. However, the appearance of rural areas remained unchanged. Rural labourers lived mostly in cottages of mud, plaster and thatch with one room downstairs and one up, sometimes housing families of 10 or 12 children. These buildings might have looked picturesque, but they were damp and draughty to live in.

Life was often hard and work was monotonous for the men, women and children who laboured in the fields, particularly during harvest time.

Towards the end of the century, wages had risen and life was more comfortable for farm workers. Agricultural labourers however remained amongst the poorest paid of all workers.

Although people continued to move to the cities as the changing work patterns of industry over agriculture drove them to search for a better life, many continued to prefer life on the land.

Artists tried to capture this rural way of life, which they could see was fast disappearing as more and more people moved away from the land. Some of these artists romanticised the passing way of life as a rural idyll.

Lesson activities - Words and sound

Key question - How can art and words combine to create an effective presentation?
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Podcast

There is a podcast of someone reading the Edward Thomas poem, 'The Manor Farm' -go to [The Manor Farm Podcast](#)

Resources

- Pod cast/reading of Edward Thomas poem The Manor Farm - see link above
- Artwork 'The Farm at Warham' - found at the end of this document
- A selection of percussion instruments
- A selection of safe recycled materials for creating sound.

Useful web links

<http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/collections/thomas#poem>

Pictures and information about Edward Thomas

<http://www.edward-thomas-fellowship.org.uk/>

More information about Edward Thomas

Background on the poet Edward Thomas

Edward Thomas was born in London in 1878. After leaving Oxford University his father expected him to become a civil servant but Edward was determined to become a writer. He was particularly interested in the countryside and his first book, 'The Woodland Life', was published in 1897. He wrote many other books for publishers who paid him by the number of words that he wrote. In 1913 Edward Thomas met the American poet Robert Frost in a bookshop in London. They became firm friends and Robert persuaded Edward to start writing poetry. Thomas began writing his poetry at the age of 36, in December 1914 and his last poem was written in December 1916. Thomas wrote 144 poems mainly about the English countryside, weather, and the seasons. He enlisted in 1915 with the Artists' Rifles and later volunteered for the Front. He went to France with the Royal Garrison Artillery in January 1917. On the 9th April Thomas was killed by a shell blast in the first hour of the Battle of Arras at an observation post whilst directing fire. With the exception of six poems published under the pseudonym Edward Eastaway, none of his poetry was published before his death.

Activity 1 - 'The Farm at Warham'

(Working in groups of 4-6)

Create a mind map or write 10 words that would describe the Brian Hatton painting 'The Farm at Warham'.

Activity 2 - The Manor Farm

Listen to the podcast/reading of the poem The Manor Farm. While you are listening select five interesting words and be ready to explain why you have chosen them. Think about the impression of nature the poet is trying to give the reader.

The Manor Farm

The rock-like mud unfroze a little, and rills
Ran and sparkled down each side of the road
Under the catkins wagging in the hedge.
But earth would have her sleep out, spite of the sun;
Nor did I value that thin gliding beam
More than a pretty February thing
Till I came down to the old manor farm,
And church and yew-tree opposite, in age
Its equals and in size. The church and yew
And farmhouse slept in a Sunday silentness.
The air raised not a straw. The steep farm roof,
With tiles duskily glowing, entertained
The mid-day sun; and up and down the roof
White pigeons nestled. There was no sound but one.
Three cart horses were looking over a gate
Drowsily through their forelocks, swishing their tails
Against a fly, a solitary fly.
The winter's cheek flushed as if he had drained
Spring, summer, and autumn at a draught
And smiled quietly. But 'twas not winter--
Rather a season of bliss unchangeable,
Awakened from farm and church where it had lain
Safe under tile and latch for ages since
This England, old already, was called Merry.

Activity 3 - Freeze frames (optional)

Choosing either the painting or the poem as your starting point, create five freeze frames that depict life on the farm.

Activity 4 - On the radio

You are radio producers and your job is to present the Brian Hatton painting, The Farm at Warham through the medium of word/soundscape. You have two minutes for your presentation. Look at the painting carefully before you begin. In your finished piece include extracts from the poem and words that describe the atmosphere in the painting.

Think about

- Things in the paintings that will create sound
- The time of year
- The weather
- The colours
- The building
- How the painting makes you feel
- How you will use the percussion instruments; recycled materials and your voices to create appropriate sounds

Activity 5 - The presentation

When you have rehearsed your piece with the group, digitally record it and using IT combine the image and sound in a finished presentation.

Extension activity

Discuss the following with the class.

Do the painting and the poem give us a true record or a rural idyll?



The Farm at Warham