



## English - Pupil's notes

### Theme - Gypsies and Travellers

#### Introduction

#### **Brian Hatton and Gypsies and Travellers**

Many people have looked at Brian Hatton's paintings and seen an empathy with Gypsies and Travellers. He himself had a secure middle-class life and probably saw their life as romantic and colourful and maybe they represented the freedom of the open road. Whilst Brian may have seen them as romantic subjects, he drew them honestly. He drew broken boots and tattered shawls and showed the harshness of their lives and the poverty that was common amongst many people who worked the land. See the link below to a drawing held in the British Museum that shows the exhaustion on the faces of the itinerant workers.

Brian clearly found Gypsies and Travellers interesting models for his work as he chose to draw them so often. It may also have been a shared love of horses that inspired Brian to work with the travelling community.

#### Useful web links

["Turnip Hoeing" at the British Museum](#)

#### **Gypsy and Traveller history**

Romany Gypsies are thought to have originated in India and it is believed that they left there between 1000-1200 AD. Gypsies travelled from India through the Middle East to Egypt. The term Gypsy is believed to be a corruption of the word Egyptian. Gypsy culture evolved during their migration from Asia and across Europe. The arrival of Gypsies in Britain was first recorded in 1505 in Scotland and 1514 in England. The Romany language is of Indo-Iranian origin.

In 1530, the Egyptians Act was passed in England; this aimed to rid the country of all Gypsies by banning immigration and requiring Gypsies who were already in England to leave the country within sixteen days. In 1554, this Act was amended and imposed the death penalty for Gypsies already in England if they did not leave within a month. In 1783, a second Egyptians Act repealed these previous acts against Gypsies. However, throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries other acts continued to impact upon Gypsy culture and lifestyle. Even today, legislation is generated that targets Gypsies and Travellers and impacts upon their lives.

There are many types of Gypsies and Travellers: Irish Travellers, Scots Travellers (Nachins), Welsh Gypsies and Travellers (Kale) and English Gypsies and Travellers (Romanichals).

Other types of Gypsy and Travellers include Travelling Showpeople (Fairground Travellers), Boat Dwellers (Bargees) and Circus Travellers. In addition, there are New Travellers or New Age Travellers, often defined as people who have made a conscious decision to adopt an alternative lifestyle.

Planning law defines Gypsies and Irish Travellers as people with a nomadic way of life. 90% of Gypsy and Traveller planning permission applications are initially rejected compared to 20% overall (1997 research).

Gypsies and Irish Travellers living on local authority or privately-owned sites pay rates, rent, gas, electricity and all other associated charges, measured and charged in the same way as neighbouring houses.

Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers are now all recognised as having protection under the Race Relations Act as they have been finally recognised as minority ethnic communities in law. Many Gypsies and Travellers are subject to racist attacks and name-calling, the withdrawal of services and refusal of admission to shops and pubs and so on. This is despite the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000, which has made all these things illegal.

### Useful web links

<http://www.hants.gov.uk/rh/gypsy/resources/history.html>

Hampshire County Council

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/insideout/southeast/series8/week\\_three.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/insideout/southeast/series8/week_three.shtml)

BBC Inside out

<http://www.grtleeds.co.uk/information/raceIssues.html>

Gypsy Roma Traveller

<http://www.grthm.co.uk/>

Gypsy Roma Traveller History month

## Lesson activities - Gypsy traditions

**Key question - What can we understand about Gypsy and Traveller communities from word and picture?**

### Resources

- 'Gypsies on the Road' from the Brian Hatton collection- found at the end of this document.

- Extract from '*The Folklore of Herefordshire*' by Ella Mary Leather- see below.
- Paper, sized to fit cube face

## Useful web links

<http://www.passingplaces.org.uk/panels/Traditions%20and%20Customs.pdf>

<http://www.mustrad.org.uk/articles/luck.htm#ack>

## Activity 1, face 6 - Gypsies on the Road

Look at the Brian Hatton drawing 'Gypsies on the road'.

Think about the questions:

- Where have they been?
- Where are they going?
- What has just happened to them?
- What is the expression on the man's face saying?
- What else would you like to know about these people and their story?
- Discuss this with a partner.

## Activity 2, face 6 - Tradition

Read though the extract below. (This is not directly connected to the drawing)

### Extract taken from the *The Hereford Journal* September 20<sup>th</sup> 1911

Printed in '*The Folklore of Herefordshire*' by Ella Mary Leather

"When a person dies, their wagon and all their possessions are burnt except for the china and gold, which has been left to the children."

In September 1911, the child of some Gypsies named Price, picking hops at Dormington, was accidentally burnt and died in hospital in Hereford. A touching rite was performed after the parents heard of the death of the child, for in accordance with superstition prevalent among the Gypsies and van dwellers, the members of the family took their living van, which cost £80 to build, into the centre of the field, and there, amid much grief, they broke it to pieces with axes, and making a funeral pyre with parts of the vehicle, set it alight and burned it to ashes. A representative of the *Hereford Journal* asked the father at the inquest why he took such action; he replied that if the family had not done so the spirit of the boy would return in a short time and haunt the van. It was customary, he continued, to do this, and it was done by all Gypsies and van dwellers.

## Activity 3, face 6 - The onlooker 1

Using the extract above, imagine you are an onlooker at the burning of the van and write a short descriptive account of the event, in no more than 100 words.

### **Activity 4, face 6 - The onlooker 2**

Imagine you are the spirit of the child watching the event describe your feelings as you watch your family.

### **Activity 5, face 6 - The onlooker 3**

Choose 4 sentences from either account to complete Face 6 of your cube. You must make sure that the text is legible in relation to the size of the cube.



Gypsies on the Road

### Cube template

