

## Extend the Project locally - 'The Lowry'

Whilst it has been important to highlight the National Galleries of the four countries involved it is also important to use the opportunities and facilities closer to where schools are working. This might also have the added advantage of being able to facilitate visits now that pandemic restrictions have been lifted without the excessive costs for most schools of travelling to the capital.

One of the foci for a project meeting in February 2023 was to visit such a gallery – we had chosen the L.S. Lowry Collection displayed at 'The Lowry' in Salford.



Our remit for the day was to consider the collection individually and as well as learning about the artist find, if possible, examples of work which might match with our eight themes.

Our themes being – 'Love and Family', 'Strength and Power', 'Nature', 'Work and Industry', 'Our World', 'Science and Technology', 'Freedom' and 'Migrants and Refugees'.

Six adults undertook this exercise, four from England, only one of whom had visited previously and two from Sweden – all experienced educationalists and able to view the images with an eye to future discussion possibilities for pupils.



To start with we watched a very informative video about Lowry's life and this proved helpful in providing a context. If working in a school it would be worth going to the excellent website for pre-visit information [www.the-lowry.com](http://www.the-lowry.com). This includes information about his life, his work, some then and now scenes linked to his paintings and an excellent short video entitled '5 things everyone should know about L S Lowry'.

Having all taken a look around the gallery the even more interesting part of the exercise followed. Some themes were obviously easier to match, some controversial and some with several options. The eight that we decided upon may not be everybody's choice but received the greatest consensus. Where difficult choices had to be made or as also happened an image could be considered in more than one category the following sets out to represent the results from our discussions. Whilst it is not possible to replicate the discussions the following should indicate the rich resource that the visit provided quite apart from the end collection of works of art.

## Love and Family



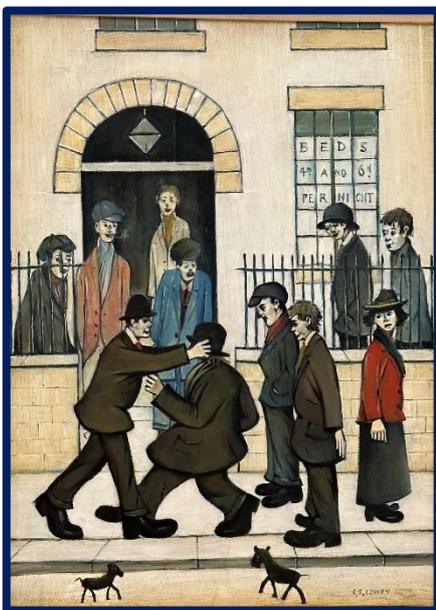
This was chosen as a mixed age group gathering which could easily represent a family. 'Who might they be, and what is the occasion?' Are they showing any attachment to each other? It is perhaps surprising that there are no really small children.

There were two other paintings that were considered for this category – one which depicts a funeral group but which might evoke discussion around the support that families can give to each other. The other a small group of teenagers – painted when mini skirts were in fashion but could possibly be depicted as the kinship and love gained from peers, whilst not disregarding the love and loyalty that pets can provide.



Could this be a family group?

## Strength and Power



Although this was a popular choice with the group it was not without reservation.

On discussion it was felt it could be a useful portrayal of a situation where one person tries to exert strength over another, perhaps in the form of bullying. If this was the case what would be the role of the onlookers? Are they taking sides, pretending it's not happening? What should they do?

An alternative discussed depicted a completely different type of strength and power.



## Nature

The image chosen to represent nature also provides an alternative style to Lowry's work and depicts a gentle avenue using pencil as the medium. Again, discussion ensued. One picture considered had a pot plant in the window of a house – were the occupants trying to bring nature inside?



Many pupils will know of an area like this where they have driven or walked. What could be round the bend? Where might they be going?

Is it possible to tell the time of year from this sketch?

Perhaps it is for the viewers imagination to recreate the journey taking place.

A very different painting was also considered, possibly because it was in strong contrast to the industrial images hanging in the gallery.

A river estuary, depicting people enjoying this natural environment and boats sailing in the prevailing wind.



## Work and Industry



We felt that this picture really portrayed a scene which would have been very familiar at one time but has since changed.

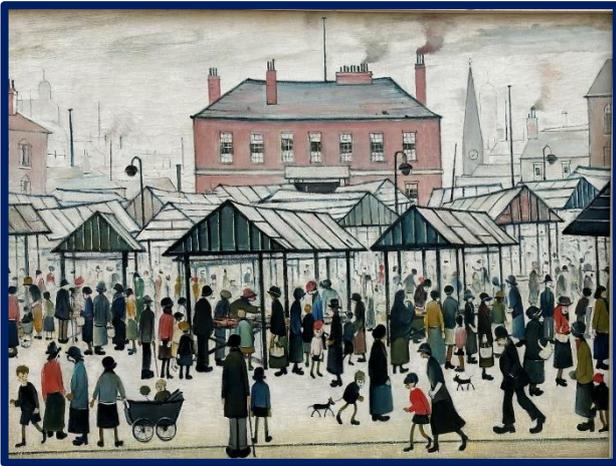
Opportunity to discuss the quality of air with all the chimneys smoking. Questions about what would have been produced/ manufactured. How does that differ now.

Why were the areas of water needed? What did the ships bring or take?

How are goods that are made transported now?

We did also consider the painting of the large boats shown under 'Power and Strength'.

## Our World



A busy market place something that still exists in many places today.

Was this a permanent feature a place where everything could be bought, a bit like a supermarket now?

There look to be street lights. Were these just for the winter or was the market there when people came out of work in the evenings?

Look at the way people are dressed – can you see one article of clothing that you wouldn't see so often now?

Markets are important all over the world. They are meeting places as well as somewhere to buy and sell.

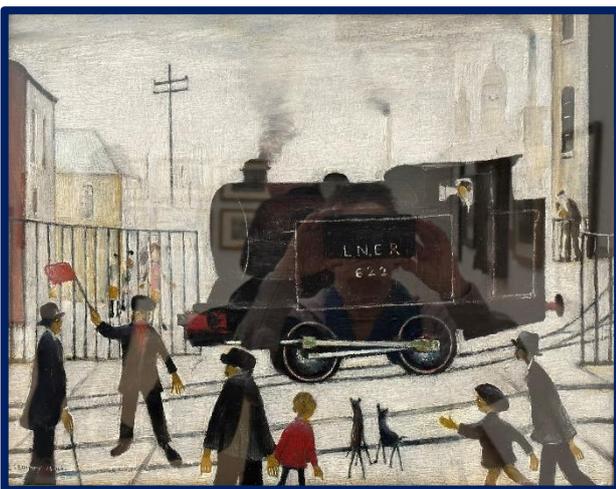
An alternative that was considered was this drawing of the bandstand with people gathering around, an alternative meeting place.

Some towns still have bandstands in parks.

Where else do people gather to meet?



## Science and Technology



This was one of the few unanimous decisions.

Not the height of Science and Technology as we perceive it today but very much a starting point.

The technology of steam driven vehicles to diesel to battery powered – some potential discussions.

How many children have been on trains, trams, the underground, trolley buses.

Are there other forms of transport that use rails?

Our next two areas of 'Freedom' and 'Migrants and Refugees' evoked a deal of discussion amongst the group. We hadn't quite anticipated how much people would really feel about their choice of pictures. It would be very worthwhile to replicate this exercise with a group of staff or pupils.

## Freedom



This was not the only contender for this theme. The freedom in this painting really does have to be seen in the context of the time of the painting and the life being led by the people involved.

Factories shut early on a Saturday in time for the start of football matches. This could very much be seen as a freedom from the restraints of working in oppressive factories.

The other painting that was considered was the estuary picture featured under nature.

Similarly to the football this as perceived as the freedom to be on the beach, possibly just

for the day or maybe on holiday.

Pupils could consider where they would choose to go if they had a free afternoon or day.

The Lowry Gallery is very close to 'Old Trafford', the home of Manchester United football club.

## Migrants and Refugees



This theme proved quite difficult. We did however finally agree on this image.

When painting this scene of the sea we can almost be certain that that would not have been the subject on Lowry's mind.

However it does portray an uncertainty of what is beyond, a never ending vision and we considered that this might be a similar view if you are crossing an ocean in a small boat.

The only other image that was considered depicts a house in the Blitz.

This could also be relevant as a visualisation of losing one's home and certainty of the life once know.



Finally, what we did decide was that the process of choosing and deliberating was really important and had been both enjoyable and challenging. We concluded that we cannot underestimate the life experiences that we bring when we are considering each of these themes. Along with these experiences we might express unconscious bias around certain viewpoints.



Remember it is the 'I' in the eye that does the seeing.

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