


THEME:
MODULE No: 2 of 8

STRENGTH AND POWER

- Lesson Background for Teachers -



LESSON AIMS & OBJECTIVES

- To think about what makes someone or something 'strong'
- To consider if strength and power are the same thing and if one is necessary for the other
- To look at different ways that Art can be powerful or portray strength

FOCUS

Art, Drama, Language (SMSC) Spiritual, moral, social, cultural understanding

AGE RANGE

Ages 9 – 11 (Adaptable for younger or older pupils)

SKILLS

Analytical Thinking/ Perception/ Self Awareness/ Creativity

- **THEME: 'STRENGTH AND POWER'**

What do we think of when we think of it?

There are many different things we might think of when we think of strength and power. Physical strength is the most obvious. Great physical strength can give us great advantages. For example, if we need to move a large object.

But strength alone does not necessarily mean we are powerful. Sometimes those with the least strength are the most admired or powerfulbecause of their talent, achievements, experience or brain power... or because they are respected more or elected to important positions.

In architecture, we know that the biggest bridges or buildings can look the most imposing, but without the flexibility to move and bend in the wind, they actually can be weak. Size isn't everything.

We value 'strength of character' and qualities like resilience and effort more often than pure physical strength, and teach our children how David used the power of his mind to defeat the giant Goliath. We also recognize the power of words and of advertising....and political power. 162/150

Why is it important?

Strength and power allow us to achieve things.

Physical strength allowed us to survive and flourish before we harnessed the power of our minds to invent tools and build machines to help us. Political power and strong leadership helped us to develop and maintain order in society.

These days, we recognize the importance to train our bodies and our minds to be strong so we have resilience, stay healthy and function at our best. We celebrate the achievements of athletes who compete to run and swim and hurdle the furthest and farthest...especially every 4 years at the Olympics.

At the same time, we recognize the importance of hard and soft political power.....and that the power to bring people together is the most important if we are to overcome the biggest problems we face, like Global warming. And we value and admire those with strong convictions and beliefs like Ghandi and Martin Luther King. 153/ 150

How does it affect our lives/ our world?

These days, many people play sport and eat well and train to achieve a strong body and to have a long and healthy life.

We also try to develop our brains-- by studying or going to university and developing our knowledge and beliefs and convictions. We want to maximize our potential, both physically and mentally.

Schools focus on the development of strong character as much as on sharing knowledge. They know that advertising or political propaganda or coercion can negatively impact life chances and outcomes and want their pupils to have the best chance to be strong to resist and to have good and successful lives.

World leaders who seek power for power's sake threaten the world we know and can affect our lives and those of future generations. So being a powerful voice for fairness and equality and good is our best way of ensuring a better world now and in the future. 154/ 150

Did you know ...

- Lithuanian Zydrunas Savickas is thought to be the strongest man ever, winning the Arnold Strongman Classic a record seven times and in 2014, lifting 410 kg. Becca Swanson, nicknamed the strongest woman in the world, started competing in strongwomen competitions in 2002 and in 2006, squatted 364 kg, four times her body weight.
- Before cars were invented, horses were an important method of transport and their strength and power was much valued. James Watt, who invented steam engines, figured a mathematical way to equate horses to engine power. Thus the term 'horsepower' was invented. Watt measured the capability of a big horse to pull a load and found it could pull a weight of 68 kg while walking at 4 km per hour. The higher the horsepower, the more powerful a car's acceleration.
- 'Resilience' is the term used to describe how people and systems bounce back from negative experiences and disturbances. It's essential for winning athletes.....but also day to day to cope with the pressures of ordinary life and to stay strong emotionally. 173/150

HOW MIGHT AN ARTIST PORTRAY 'STRENGTH AND POWER'?

An artist might portray strength and power through either the subject chosen to be celebrated or the physical mass of their finished work or by the techniques used to produce the art.

Many powerful classical sculptures impress with their vast size.

In painted art, the choice of colour or line can establish a force which communicates the power or strength the artist wants to show. Famous artist Mondrian used hard lines and blocks of bold, immovable colour to create a powerful, structured impression.

Capturing movement, either portraying the forceful motion of the subject or by powerful e brushwork or line work, can illustrate

the power of the subject or of what they are doing. There are many examples in art of horses rearing, weapons firing, waves crashing or characters fighting, throwing or recoiling, which give us the impression of their powerful movements or their strong and dominant characteristics. 147/ 250

OUR MAIN ARTWORK



- Title **WHISTLEJACKET**
- Artist **GEORGE STUBBS** 1724 – 1806, English
- Medium **Oil on Canvass**
- Dimensions **296 X 248 cm**
- Date Completed **1762**
- Location Displayed **THE NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON, UK.**
- Web link www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/george-stubbs-whistlejacket
- How / When was it acquired by the gallery? **Bought 1997 with the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund**
- Relevance/ How does it communicate **'STRENGTH AND POWER'?**

--When we think about strong animals, the horse is probably the first animal that comes to mind. Horses were one of the first subjects of fine art, depicted in cave paintings and used in numerous sculptures. We are still fascinated by their power and intelligence. Stubbs massive painting of the horse, 'Whistle jacket', is one of the most popular artworks in London's National Gallery. Because of how horse bodies are built and shaped, they are more powerful than human bodies, which is why horses are able to perform much heavier tasks than humans. Like Leonardo da Vinci before him, Stubbs was fascinated with biology. He dissected and investigated many horse bodies to understand the structures which allow horses to gallop and jump, which is why his painting is so realistic. Whistlejacket is rearing to portray his physical strength, but also his powerful nature. He was painted with no rider or bridle which could be interpreted that he was too strong to tame. Whistlejacket was a strong and famous racehorse with a powerful owner (who became Prime Minister twice) with a home big enough to house this totally enormous image. He was physically strong, but also a symbol of wealth and power. 202

IN CONTEXT

Are there other works by the same artist (or others) that help us understand it more?

1.



2.



3.



1. Through the ages, artists have tried to capture the strength and power of men and machines and even wild weather. With the invention of powerful steam trains in the 1800's one of the most famous artists of his age, Joseph Mallord William Turner, painted one of his most striking works, 'Rain, Steam and Speed – The Great Western Railway', which tried to capture the blurred power of the newly invented transport machine speeding through turbulent weather.
2. Before trains and cars, transport was often by ship, exposed to powerful seas and storms. Artists like German born Dutch painter, Ludolf Bakhuizen, captured the danger of the journeys and the tilting ships at the mercy of the powerful waves in many of his pictures, such as 'An English Vessel and a Man-of-War in a Rough Sea', completed in the 1680's.
3. The destructive power of war has provided another explosive subject for artists. Belgian painter, Charles-Philogene Tschaggeny's work, 'An Episode on a Field of Battle' captured the uncontrolled destruction of the English civil war on man and beast in 1848.

**All of these artworks can be seen in The National Gallery, London. UK*

OTHER ARTWORKS THAT SAY SOMETHING ABOUT 'STRENGTH AND POWER'



(example from Sweden)

- Title **THOR'S FIGHT WITH THE GIANTS**
- Artist **MÅRTEN ESKIL WINGE** 1825 – 1896, Swedish
- Date Completed **1872**
- Location Displayed **THE NATIONAL GALLERY, STOCKHOLM, SE**
- What it says about '**Strength and Power**'

Thor, the mythological God of War and Fertility was said to ride through the clouds creating thunder and lightning. Wings's painting shows him powerfully swinging his hammer and is thought to be a metaphor for good defeating evil.



(example from Greece)

- Title **FORCE**
- Artist **KONTOPOULOS ALEKOS** 1904 – 1975, Greek
- Date Completed **1959**
- Location Displayed **THE NATIONAL GALLERY, ATHENS, GR**
- What it says about **'Strength and Power'**

'Force' captures the power of industrial machinery and mechanical tools of production under the blazing sun. Rearing horses again appear.



(example from Italy)

- Title **GREAT COMPOSITION A**
- Artist **Piet Mondrian** 1872 – 1944, Dutch
- Date Completed **1920**
- Location Displayed **NATIONAL GALLERY OF MODERN ART, ROME, IT**
- What it says about **'Strength and Power'**

Piet **Mondrian** believed that by paring down his abstract visual language to the simplest manifestations of line and colour he could arrive at a most pure expression of the truth. His lines and colour blocks are strong and rigid and immovable. There is power in the simplicity and in the straight lines and edges.

PUPIL ACTIVITIES:**(POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES TO USE AS APPROPRIATE WITH YOUR PUPILS)**

Teachers can choose from each category below or devise their own – or different activities, like creating computer generated images, a piece of music/ song/ rap inspired by art or researching other galleries or pieces of art they feel illustrate this theme.

ART ACTIVITY

1. Stubbs captured the power of the rearing horse, Whistlejacket, which is still celebrated today. Think of the most powerful animal you can, then choose an appropriate media/ style to best show its strength and size and power.
2. In groups, research all different types of bridges. How are they built strong enough to carry people and cars? Together, design a new bridge for the place you live. Draw the plans and then construct a model of it, using coloured card and tape and paints.
3. Can you think of anyone historically or currently around the world who is trying to change things and has built great power.... E.g. Nelson Mandela, Black Lives Matters campaigners, climate change protesters like Greta Thunberg and Sunita Narain, environmentalists like David Attenborough, Ghandi. How have they used their strength for good or to mobilize great numbers for change? Make a painting which shows them using their 'soft power'.

LANGUAGE ACTIVITY

1. Words have the power to change minds. Look at advertising in the media and define what makes ads powerful. Come up with your own advertising slogans with the power to change minds. Share them on an iPad / speak them camera/ find the music to run behind them which gives the slogans more power.
 2. Hard power is the use of military and economic means to influence the behaviour or interests of other political bodies. Hard power contrasts with soft power, which comes from diplomacy. Soft power is the ability to attract/co-opt rather than coerce. Even children who can't set laws (that would be more like hard power) can have soft power (- think of Greta Thunberg) e.g. To convince parents to recycle, save energy etc. Think about soft power. Write a speech which you could give to shape the preferences of others through appeal and attraction.
 3. How can you be strong enough to stand up to coercion?
- Resilience activity: make a 'Conscience Ally' by standing in 2 lines. Come up with lots of slogans and reasons which might attract the student in the centre of the ally to your side and shout them out. If you're the student walking down the centre, come up with lots of reasons not to do the wrong things, no matter how convincing the others are trying to be.

DRAMA ACTIVITY / Circle Time

To be suggested by GR

USEFUL RESOURCES:**How Strong is a Horse (4 Facts)**

<https://www.deephollowranch.com/how-strong-is-a-horse/>

'Horses in Art' – Wikipedia entry

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horses_in_art

When Strong Bridges fail. Video footage:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=qbOjxPCfaFk