



GET CREATIVE
WITH ART ONLINE

MODULE No: 2 of 8

Strength and Power

- Lesson Background for Teachers -



LESSON AIMS and 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/ Creativity/ Perception/ Self Awareness

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 powerful - because 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 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, as well as political power.

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 Gandhi and Martin Luther King.

How does it affect our lives/ our world?

These days, many people play sport and eat well. They train to achieve strong bodies and long and healthy lives.

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.

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 were 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 from day to day to cope with the pressures of ordinary life and to stay strong emotionally.

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 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.

OUR MAIN ARTWORK



- Title: Jean de Dinteville and George de Selve 'The Ambassadors'
- Artist: Hans Holbein the Younger 1497/8 - 1543
- Medium: Oil on Oak
- Dimensions: 207 X 209.5 cm
- Date Completed: 1533
- Location Displayed: THE NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON, UK.
- Web link: <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/hans-holbein-the-younger-the-ambassadors>
- How / When was it acquired by the gallery?: Bought 1890

How does it communicate 'STRENGTH and POWER'?

Holbein was an important person in the court of King Henry VIII and whilst this is a painting of two French Ambassadors it reflects the richness and opulence of powerful people at the time. Notice the rich clothing and the detail in the material of the plainer gentleman. You can almost feel the weight of the background fabric and care has been taken to show powerfulness in the detail of the flooring.

There was much upheaval in the court at the time of this painting due to Henry VIII divorcing his first wife and splitting from the Roman Catholic Church. This discord is powerfully portrayed through items such as the broken string on the lute and the mathematics book open on the 'division' page.

The objects show the importance of the two men and their skills, as well as showing their position within the world. Holbein has placed an important object in the foreground, viewed from the side it becomes evident that this is a skull. Does this portray differing viewpoints? Can you spot the crucifix hidden up at the top corner of the painting?

It is interesting that this picture is painted on oak panelling rather than canvas. Some of the colours are very vibrant, possibly cochineal from beetles was used for the red

colour. Holbein sadly died at quite a young age whilst residing in England where he caught the plague.

You might be interested to watch these YouTube videos. Both very good and informative.

https://youtu.be/paA8hqqQ-_w

<https://youtu.be/alWbBuPahN0>

IN CONTEXT

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

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



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'. In this picture, he tried to capture the blurred power of the newly invented transport machine speeding through turbulent weather.



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.



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.



Artist: GEORGE STUBBS 1724 – 1806, English
Medium: Oil on Canvass
Dimensions: 296 X 248 cm
Date Completed 1762
Bought 1997 with the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund
Web link www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/george-stubbs-whistlejacket

Stubbs massive painting of the horse, 'Whistlejacket', is one of the most popular artworks in London's National Gallery. Horses are more powerful than humans because of the shape and structure of their bodies, which is why they can perform much heavier tasks. 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. This 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. He was a physically strong racehorse. But he was also a symbol of wealth and power, with a powerful owner (the 2nd Marquess of Rockingham who became Prime Minister twice) who had a home big enough to house this totally enormous picture.

OTHER ARTWORKS THAT SAY SOMETHING ABOUT 'STRENGTH and POWER'



From Sweden

- Title: Queen Kristina of Sweden
- Artist: **David Beck** Dutch born 1621 died 1656
- Date Completed: **1650**
- Media: Oil on Canvas 110cm x 92 cm
- Location Displayed: **THE NATIONAL GALLERY, STOCKHOLM, SE**

What it says about 'Strength and Power'

Queen Kristina of Sweden was born in 1626 and dies in 1689, she was about 25 when this portrait was painted.

There are several symbols in the picture: the globe (earth), the wind in her veil (air), the fountain to the left (water) and the queen herself is the fourth element (fire). All of these elements have great power and strength

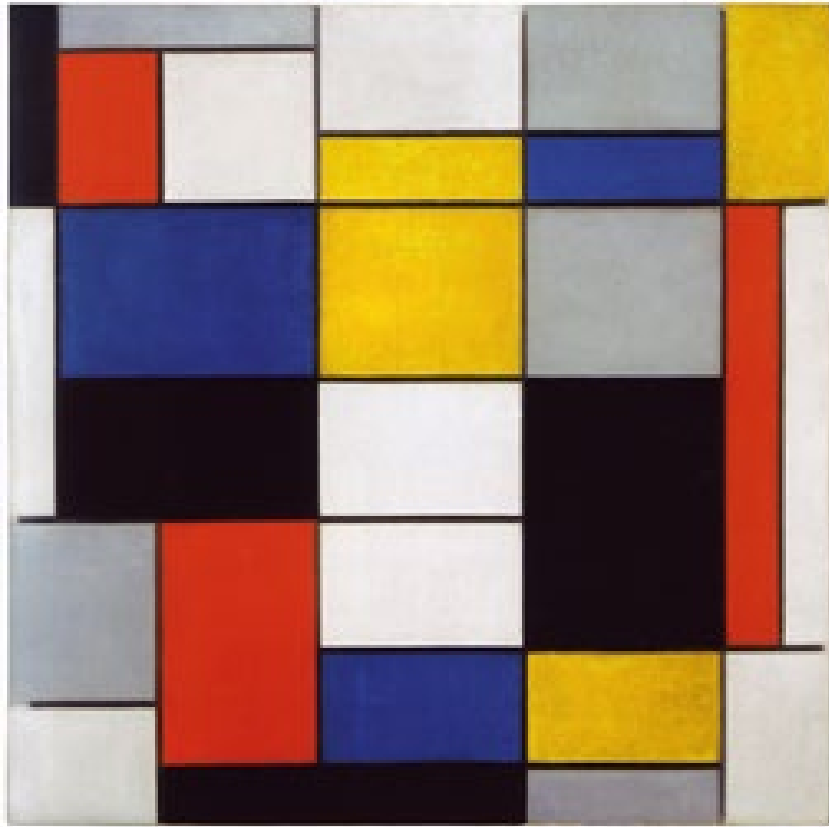


From Greece

- 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.



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 ACTIVITIES

In the Ambassadors painting there are several important objects that depict their power and importance. 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, Gandhi. How have they used their strength for good or to mobilize great numbers for change? What important symbols would they display? How could you show their 'soft power' in an image?

Consider the way that Mondrian portrays power with lines and colour. How could you represent your powers? Would the lines be vertical, horizontal, diagonal or perhaps curved and what colours would you use? Would somebody else recognise this representation of you?

Stubbs captured the power of the rearing horse, 'Whistlejacket', other artists have included horses in battle or as a worker. All portray force and power and show their strength. Think of the most powerful animal you can, then choose an appropriate media/ style to best show its strength and size and power. It could even be a mythical animal.

Look at the design of bridges and the way that they are built to carry people and vehicles as well as withstanding the forces of nature. What shapes create power and strength. Can you design a bridge? Work in a group to produce a strong stable structure you might use rolled paper, or card as well as tape.

LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES

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.

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.

How can you be strong enough to stand up to coercion?

Resilience activity: make a 'Conscience Alley' 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

Following on the art activities above, choose an example of a powerful person or animal that was brought up in the discussion and mime them to the rest of the class. This mime can be demonstrated individually or in small groups. Let's see if the rest of the class can understand which one you do!

Can you imagine powerful person or animal being vulnerable or powerless, in another aspect of their life (in a different setting or in a different period of their life)? Discuss in groups and improvise a scene in front of the class. Do the rest of the students agree with your views? What other cases can there be, where even powerful people find themselves vulnerable?

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

