



Opening Ground -The Pushkin Theme for 2017-18

'...Digging.

**The cold smell of potato mould, the squelch and slap
Of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge
Through living roots awaken in my head.
But I've no spade to follow men like them.**

**Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests.
I'll dig with it.'**

From 'Digging' by Seamus Heaney

The Pushkin Theme for this year is **'Opening Ground'** and is derived from the element of Earth. Study of this theme requires the exploration of the physical concept of the ground, of earth and soil and sod. Our participants will certainly 'dig' with their spades, shovels, pencils and pens.

Pushkin himself poses this question for us:

'Who cares if this locked heart holds unforgotten pictures?'

From 'The Little Prince' by Alexander Pushkin

'Opening Ground' can be the exploration of the 'locked heart' and the expression of those 'unforgotten pictures'. Study of this theme should engage our teachers and children in the expression of feelings and emotions, of dreams and of their imagination.

Through the media of the Environment, the Arts and Writing all those participating in the Pushkin programmes this year should have diverse and motivating opportunities to investigate, to explore and to make this theme real.

The suggested activities in these supporting materials are designed to act as starting points or as sparks to inspire the ideas and the imaginations of the teachers and children.

Experiencing the environment through the senses is always an essential aspect of any Pushkin theme and this theme is no different. Children should explore the world of nature, getting outside where possible to experience, and explore the ground beneath them.

This theme focuses on the creative and environmental aspects of learning as this is the Pushkin approach, however, it could easily be extended to incorporate aspects of Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths as well as Geography and History and some related activities and suggestions have been included.

Planning Activity

During this activity the teacher will introduce all the potential aspects of the theme to the class. The suggested planning activity is a Carousel type activity.

For this activity the class should be divided into groups and each group should have time to move around a set of stations which are set up in the classroom.

At each station the teacher should provide a variety of stimuli to introduce the concepts which the theme will cover and to inspire the children's thinking, ideas and questions about the theme.

The teacher could provide poems, books, posters, film clips, images, printed information, websites and real objects, etc as the stimuli. These things focus the children's thinking as well as motivating them.

The teacher can of course choose whatever contexts they feel are appropriate to the age and interests of their pupils, suggestions about content are made below. The stations could include:

Station 1: Opening ground in Geography and Science 1:

- Soil- its layers and structure
- Creatures in the soil- what lives in the soil?

Station 2: Opening Ground in Geography, History and Science:

- Farming and growing
- Plants, trees and roots

Station 3: Opening Ground; ourselves and others 1:

- Thoughts deep down and on the surface
- Emotions/ Feelings- where they come from and how we deal with them
- How we cope with all of our emotions and feelings
- **Inspiration- work of artists and poets suggested in content of theme**
- **Imagination- how others use their imagination and how we can use our imagination**

Optional Station 4: Opening Ground in History:

- Archaeology- digs and findings
- The site and find at Mountsandel, Coleraine
- Additional Activity The Trenches of the Somme/ Appendix

Note: Artists include Martin Driscoll, Michael Morgan, Becky Kisabeth Gibbs

Poets include: Pushkin, Seamus Heaney, James Reeves, Joseph T Renaldi, Johnny Ray Ryder Jr, Frere Jaques, Carre Noir

Once the children have had time to think about and discuss the materials at each station and to record their ideas or questions then the teacher should lead the class in a feedback and sharing session during which all the children's work can be collated.

Out of this work the teacher could guide the children to create key questions which will underpin the learning during the course of the theme. The children's thinking and some of the images they used could all be displayed as the Planning Board.

Section 1 Opening the Ground in Geography and Science

Activity 1 - The Layers of Soil

As an introductory activity, the teacher could give the children the graphic of soil cut up into sections. Each child could have one or two of the sections. The children should then go around the room and find a group of other children who can match up with them to complete the diagram of the layers of soil.

So the children have to look at what each other has and try to find the right partners to make the correct graphic.

An example of the required image has been given below.

Once the children have created this image together, they could take some time to find definitions for the names of the various layers of soil. They could use this information and the following facts to create a short e-book or presentation about soil.

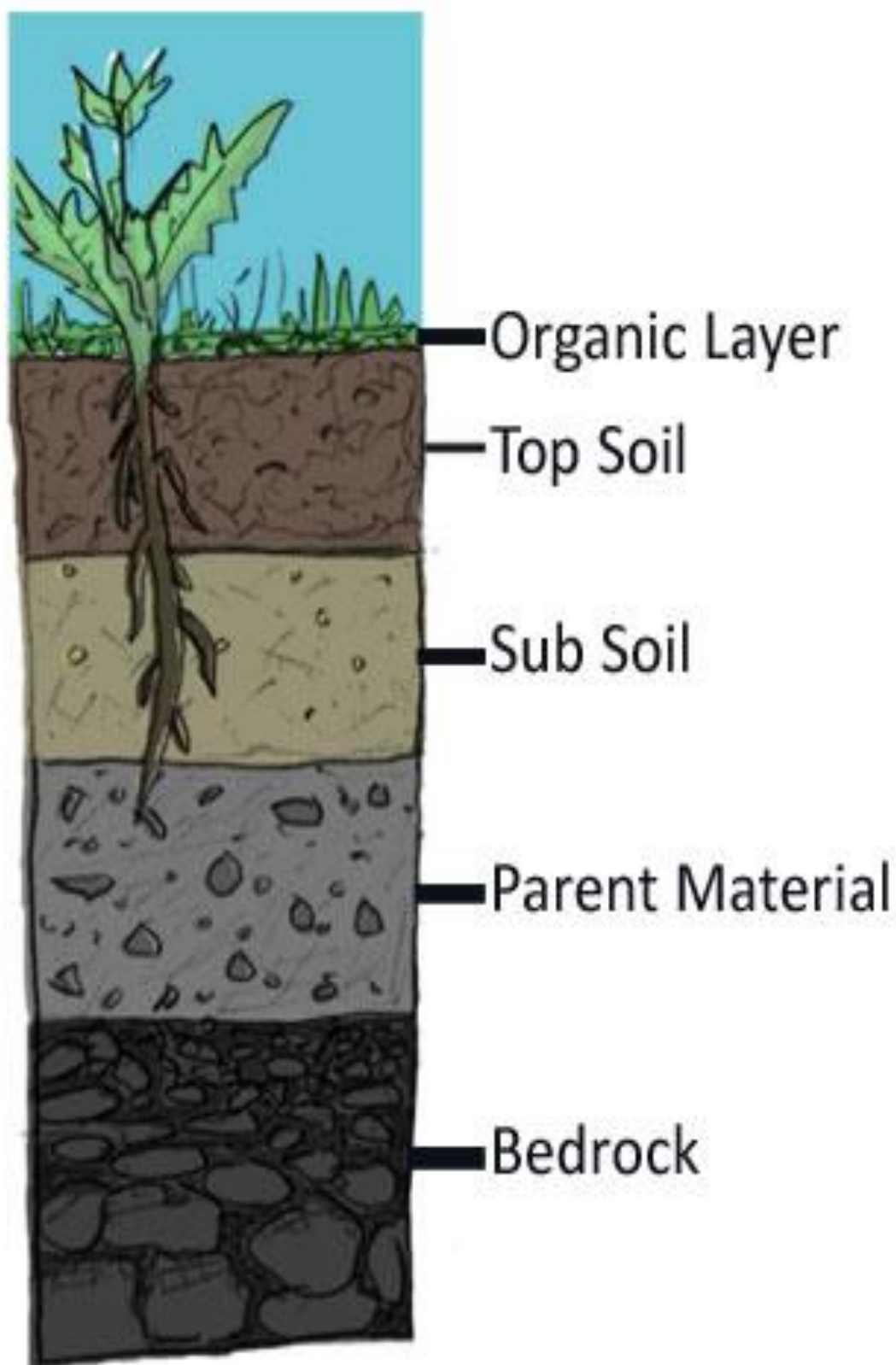
Some soil facts:

Soil is the loose upper layer of the Earth's surface where plants grow. **Soil** consists of a mix of organic material (decayed plants and animals) and broken bits of rocks and minerals

Soil is like a cake **made** from lots of different things. **Soil** consists of crumbling rock or sand, clay, dead plant and animal remains, fungi and even manure. It also contains many tiny creatures, such as earthworms. Earthworms turn the plant and animal material into nutrients.

Soil is a mixture of broken rocks and minerals, living organisms, and decaying organic matter called humus. Humus is dark, soft and rich in nutrients. **Soil** also includes air and water. Organisms in the **soil** need air and water to survive.

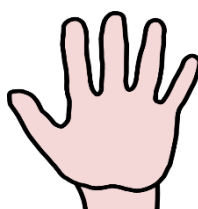
The children could also research some details such as what colour does the soil tend to be in the different layers. They could find out about holes/pores in soil and they could learn about how soil is drained. They could explore the role of the earthworm in the soil. There are many ways of taking the learning.



Opportunity for Writing 1

The children could dig in soil and they could have the opportunity to feel soil, wet and dry samples. Then they could work in groups to brainstorm all the words for describing soil that this experience inspires. They could focus on their senses for this work. They could try to find as many adjectives as they can to describe what the soil:

- Looks like
- Feels like
- Smells like
- Sounds like A visual like this could be provided for the children to collect their ideas on. The teacher can copy and enlarge this sheet.



Steal word:

Steal word:



Steal word:

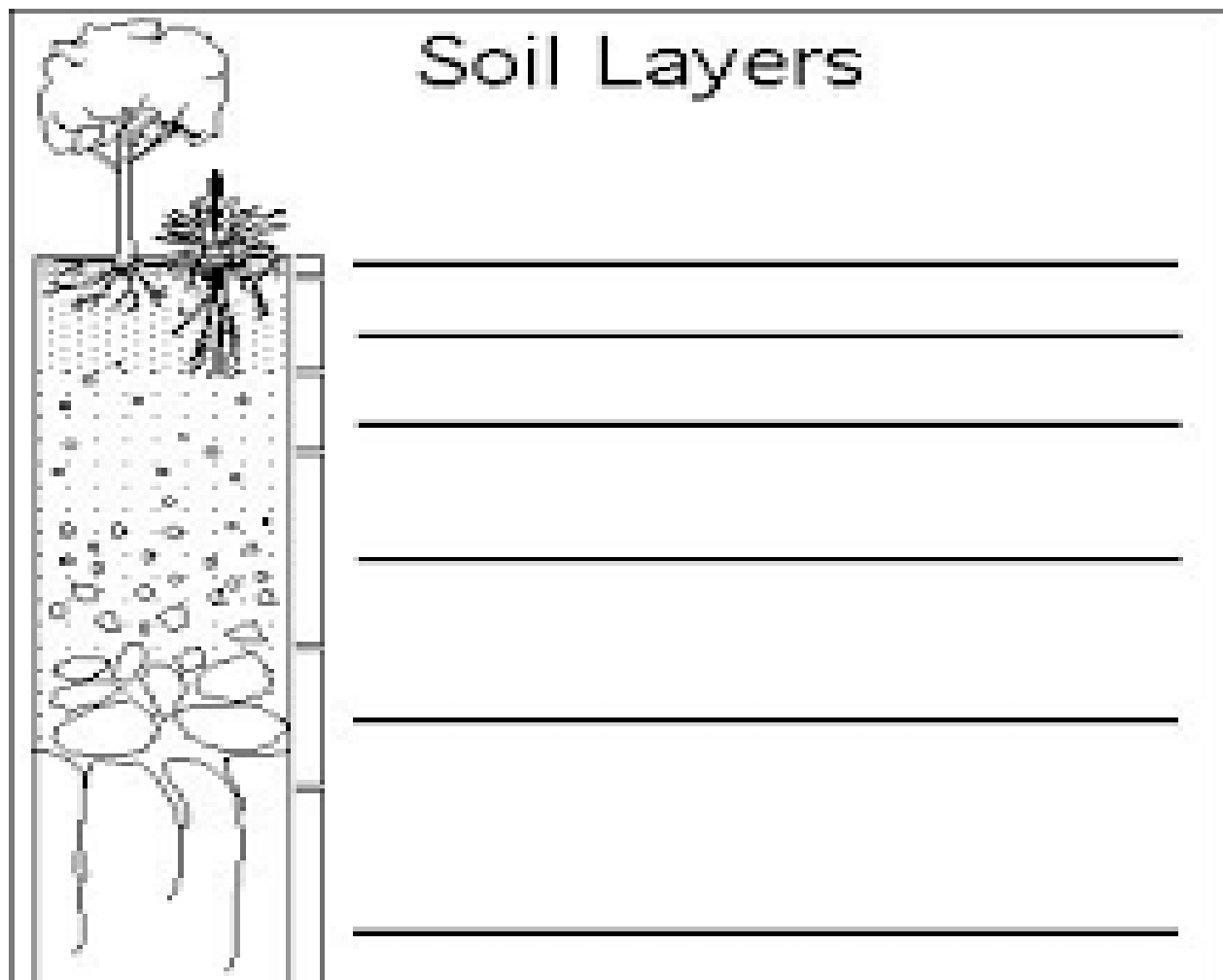
Steal word:

The children could use dictionaries and a thesaurus or online search engines to build and extend their vocabulary or to improve the adjectives they are collecting. The groups should have time to work together gathering their ideas. Then they should have a chance to listen to each other's ideas. At the end of listening to each other, the children should negotiate in their groups and decide upon a 'steal word for each category. That is a word, which they heard from another group, that they do not have already but which they would like to use. They should share their choices with the class.

Then they could use the words to create list or shape poems based on the layers of the soil.

A planning graphic could be given to the children to help the children record ideas and structure their work.

Enlarge and print.



Opportunity for Writing 2

This activity is inspired by this quote:

“A rainbow of soil is under our feet; red as a barn and black as a peat. It’s yellow as lemon and white as the snow; bluish grey. So many colours below. Hidden in darkness as thick as the night; The only rainbow that can form without light. Dig you a pit, or bore you a hole, you’ll find enough colours to well rest your soil.” - A Rainbow of Soil Words (by F.D. Hole, 1985)

As an activity, the children could begin by searching for all the comparisons in this quote. For example, the similes could be listed and discussed:

- Red as a barn
- Black as peat
- Yellow as lemon and others

The metaphor could be discussed, depending on the age of the children, the teacher may need to explain:

- A rainbow of soil

Other descriptive phrases such as, 'bluish grey' could also be discussed.

The children could then think about and write their own alternative similes for the 'Rainbow of Soil'. These can then be arranged into new poems with the title, '***Rainbow of Soil***'. This could be a paired or group writing activity.

Extension Activity- Art

The children could create a colour chart or palette of colours for the concept of a 'Rainbow of Soil'. This could be done as a Paint Card for a new range of paint for a DIY store. Children could mix colours and name them for their paint range.

Extension Activity- Music

The children could create a piece of creative music, which reflects the layers of soil and which explores how the sounds change the deeper the soil goes. They could decide on which instruments to use to reflect the layers.

Opportunity for Writing 3

For this activity, the children could 'zoom in' and take an up close look at the soil using microscopes. This website provides child friendly explanation of what will/ can be seen at the different magnifications.

http://www.soil-net.com/primary/ks2/topic5/topic5_factsheet.pdf

Children should also carry out their own 'up-close exploration' of the soil. They could go outside to dig and to look with microscopes at soil. They could list all the creatures that they see and find and they could record by taking photos of their findings.

Then the children could write as one of the creatures and describe what it is like to live in the soil of the children's playground. They could describe their

immediate surroundings and they could go on to describe what they see and hear as part of the playground environment too. The children could discuss what they might look like to these creatures and include this thinking in their writing.

They could take a 'Bug's Eye View' of the soil around them. They could write describing this.

Opportunity for Writing 4

The world at your feet

Sometimes I take my shoes off and feel the earth beneath my feet,

I try to feel the planet beneath me turning,

I never feel it.

Only the passing rumble of cars on the road.

The tiny tremors of people walking by.

I close my eyes and try again forcing my toes against the ground till they hurt.

I get frustrated when I still feel nothing!

Standing stationery yet still hurtling through the universe!

The summer winds blow my hair round my face and I brush it behind my ears.

Azure skies above move lazily peppered with clouds,

I close my eyes and hold my breath,

Focus.

Still nothing.

I put my shoes back on defeated.

I'll try again tomorrow! ***By Carre Noir, August 2014***

Opportunity for Writing 5

The teacher could let the poem be used as a stimulus for a similar activity. The children have to try to 'feel' the ground with their feet. The children could go out and stand on the earth/ground and the teacher could read the poem and ask them to record all the things they can sense with their feet. The teacher could ask the children do they get a sense of the world moving or spinning and if so what does it feel like. The teacher could lead the class as they explore how the ground beneath them holds them and what goes on around them. The children could record their experiences, feelings, thought and emotions to use as the basis of their follow up writing. The children could use the poem as a scaffold to write a poem or a piece of prose based on what they experience 'feeling' the ground. They could amend and adapt the poet's experience to their own. So they could decide:

- Do they feel the planet turning?
- What do they feel?
- What other senses are awakened and how?
- What is above them?
- Around them as well as below them?

The children could consider these and write their responses in poem or prose.

Opportunity for Writing 6 - Wriggling Poems

Five Fact Fun Files

1. Earthworms breathe through their skin
2. Worms that come out at night are called night crawlers
3. There are over 6,000 different types of earthworms
4. Earthworms have no bones or skeletons
5. The largest worm ever found was over 22ft long



The children could create similar short **Five Fact Fun Files** for other creatures found in the soil. Then these could be used as the basis of simple poems by adding in or cutting out words and seeing what is left behind.

Eg: **Earthworms**

Breathe through skin,
Come out at night, crawlers,
No bones or skeletons,
Largest worm was 22ft long

The children can be encouraged to edit and add words or take them out for effect. So the verse could become:

Earthworms

Breathe through **slippy** skin,
Come out **silently** at night,
Skinny crawlers,
With no bones or skeletons,
Long, large **and lengthy giants**

This activity could be repeated for other creatures found in the soil.

A poem could be created by putting the verses about each creature together.

Artwork for Section 1

The children could use a range of materials and fabrics to create a visual representation of the layers of the earth or soil. This work is based more on texture and colour than on the scientific accuracy of the facts about the soil, which the children have been learning about. They can certainly use the diagrams as stimuli for their ideas but imagination comes into play in this activity too. A sample idea has been provided below.



The teacher could provide the fabric, paper, materials to create these representations of the earth below our feet or the children could have time to collect and collate them. Then they could discuss how this image represents the layered earth. They could use this piece to inspire their own work.

Section 2 Opening Ground in Geography and History

“We might say that the earth has the spirit of growth; that its flesh is the soil.” - ***Leonardo da Vinci***

Section 2- Activity 1

The teacher could lead the children as they discuss this idea of the soil as the flesh of the Earth. This discussion could lead into the exploration of growing and farming. They should think about and discuss how the ground has to be **opened up** for this process of growth to begin. The teacher could ask a farmer or an environmentalist to come in to speak to the class to explain the cycle of growth to them. They could grow some beans or cress in their classroom and record the process of growth.

They could relate this work back to their study of the work of Michael Morgan and look at how he and other artists depict the land being ploughed. Another artist who has captured this beautifully is Martin Driscoll. Here is his painting:



'Ploughing the Field'

This shows how ploughing was done in the recent past in our countryside.

The children could then look at this image or source images of what ploughing looks like today and they could discuss the similarities and the differences using the two images as stimuli for their discussion.



The children could think about what the two different days ploughing would look, smell and sound like...one long ago and one today.

The class could think about discuss and record ideas based on this question:

What things would be the same and what would be different about ploughing in the two pictures?

For example, the sound of the horse has changed to the sound of the tractor. The sound of the voices leading the horses, which can no longer be heard. The roar of the tractor is new too. However, the sound of the earth opening and rolling over will still be the same. The smell of the opened ground will not have changed either. Nor will the reasons of the farmer for doing this work.

Opportunity for Writing 7

Don't forget to use all the 'brainstormings' you have made to date too!

The children could also read Seamus Heaney's poem Follower (provided below) as a source to help them. They could find out from any children in their class who live on a farm about ploughing or interview a farmer. They could write two separate recounts or diary entries based on ploughing at the different times in History using the images and the poem to help them get

ideas. In the accounts they could try to make them as realistic and as descriptive as possible. The children could take on the persona of the plougher

Alternatively, the children could write similes to describe the ploughing and the opening of the ground. They could then order these to create poems.

They could consider:

- the plough
- the ground before
- the ground after
- the horse
- the farmer

They could brainstorm words as a class to describe each of these nouns and then work to create similes from the describing words they pick. They could use some of the words and ideas from 'Follower' to help them. The children

Ground before	Opened Ground	Plough	Farmer	Horse
Flat	Brown	Sharp	Hardworking	Strong
Level	Humped	Steely	Skilled	Obedient
Green	Ridged	Shiny	Tired	Hardworking
Closed	Overtured	Glinting	Weary	Tall
Firm	Open	Cutting	Old	Sweating
Complete	Broken	Reflective	Sweating	Industrious
Dry	Knitted	Pointy	Stumbling	Quiet
	Moist			Snorting

could record their ideas on tables like this:

Next, the children think of all the things that each of the nouns remind them of... these will be used to create the other half of the similes.

Ground before ploughing Reminds of:	Ground after Ploughing Reminds of:	Plough Reminds of:	Farmer Reminds of:	Horse Reminds of:
Rug	Duvet	Knives	Warrior	Walker
Blanket	Jumper	Knife	Expert	Marcher
Velvet cloth	Cables	Spoon	Map maker	Soldier
Made up bed	Knitting	Blade	Dancer	Machine
Sheet	Wool	Sword	Walker	Tractor
Flesh	Muscles	Scalpel	Surgeon	Ox

Tip: the words on the tables can be used but children would need to discuss them first and then use them to stimulate their own thinking. Further ideas could then be added to each table.

The children could suggest and collect as many words as possible. Then they could work in groups to start to create similes, using like or as, to form lines for their poem. They could try to think of appropriate connections from table 1 to table 2... connecting categories, such as:

Ground before as level as a green rug

Plough as sharp as a sword

Ground after as ridged as a jumper

Farmer as weary as a dancer

Horse as strong as a marcher

They can use these statements to make poems based on 'Ploughing'. These could be extended into longer sentences if the teacher wishes.

Follower

My father worked with a horse-plough,
His shoulders globed like a full sail strung
Between the shafts and the furrow.
The horse strained at his clicking tongue.

An expert. He would set the wing
And fit the bright steel-pointed sock.
The sod rolled over without breaking.
At the headrig, with a single pluck

Of reins, the sweating team turned round
And back into the land. His eye
Narrowed and angled at the ground,
Mapping the furrow exactly.

I stumbled in his hob-nailed wake,
Fell sometimes on the polished sod;
Sometimes he rode me on his back
Dipping and rising to his plod.

I wanted to grow up and plough,
To close one eye, stiffen my arm.
All I ever did was follow
In his broad shadow round the farm.

I was a nuisance, tripping, falling,
Yapping always. But today
It is my father who keeps stumbling
Behind me, and will not go away.

Seamus Heaney

Activity 2 -Underground by James Reeves

In this activity the children are going to become 'rhyme stealers'. They will use the poem Underground by James Reeves to 'steal' some rhyming pairs. The children can read the poem and identify all the rhyming pairs and write them down. Then they can 'explore and explode' these rhyming words. To do this they have to think of other words which would rhyme with the rhyming words in the poem. The children could work in groups and be timed as they try to find as many other words as possible.

For example, they could have a large sheet with the rhyming pairs written on them and they must add as many other words as they can in a minute or two minutes. Each group should have the chance to read their lists out to the others. The words could be recorded.

Rhyming pair	Rhyming explosion:
Ground/sound	Found, pound, round, mound, wound, crowned, abound, surround,
Floor, explore	Snore, door, pour, core, sore, spore

The children can now use some of the rhyming words they have stolen or explored to create another verse for the poem 'Underground' or to create a new version of the original poem. They could brainstorm all the things that

Living things	Non living things
Roots	Rocks
Seeds	Stones
Bulbs	Buried rubbish
Animals	Buried treasure
Insects	

they would expect to see if they opened up the ground. The list could include:

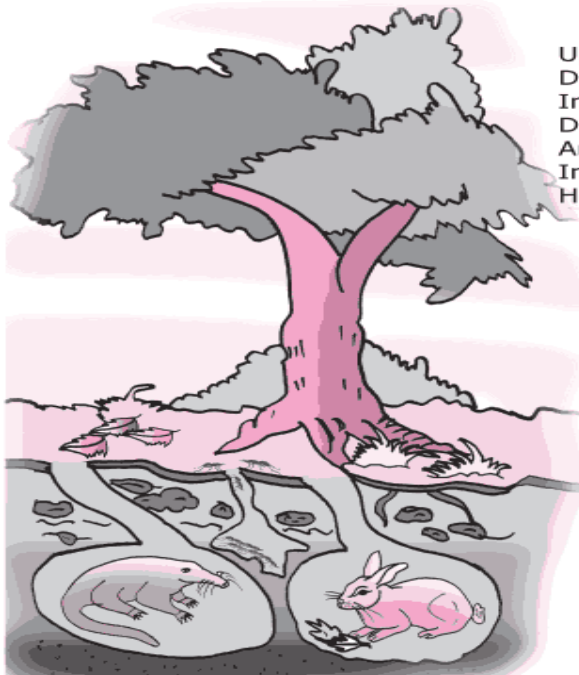
The children could describe each object they find and also say what it is doing under the ground. The poem can be used as the stimulus and scaffold.

Underground

In the deep kingdom under ground
There is no light and little sound
Down below the earth's green floor.

The rabbit and the mole explore.
The quarrying ants run to and fro
To make their populous empires grow.
Do they, as I pass overhead,
Stop in their works to hear my tread?
Some creatures asleep and do not toil,
Secure and warm beneath the soil.
Sometimes a fork or spade intrudes

Upon their earthly solitudes
Downward the branching tree-roots spread
Into the country of the dead
Deep down, the buried rocks and stones
Are like the earth's gigantic bones.
In the dark kingdom under ground
How many marvelous things are found!

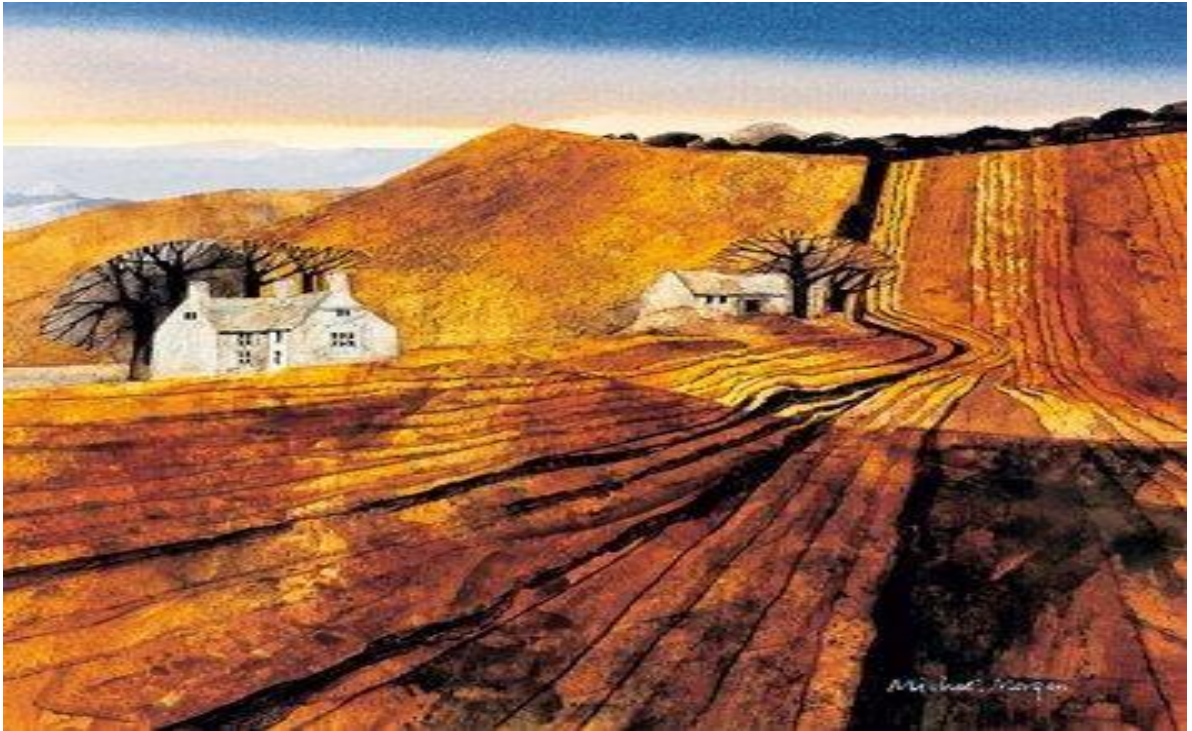


Artwork Activity for Section 2 -The art of Michael Morgan.



The children could look at and discuss these paintings by Michael Morgan. They could then discuss all the ways that Michael Morgan has captured the depth of open ground by painting so much foreground. Then they could discuss the colours he has used and how he has painted the ground and what it looks like, opened up by the plough. They could think about, discuss and record all the things that the ploughed field reminds them of in the paintings. For example, knitting or rolls of chocolate.

Then they could recreate the earth as it has been depicted in these paintings. They could explore as many ways of doing this as possible. Perhaps they could look at knitting or plaiting as potential forms for the ground. They could cut up old clothes to create foregrounds and paint buildings in the style of Michael Morgan. They could plait wool or twist pipe cleaners to make the texture of the ploughed field. They could use magazines to find pieces of paper for collages to create the earth or ground. Alternatively, they could use a variety of materials including corrugated cardboard and create foregrounds and backgrounds in the style of Morgan. They could test a variety of resources and materials and decide which best replicates the painters work.



Opportunity for Writing 8

From this artwork they could go on to write poems as metaphors or similes. The work can easily become a poem by simply writing what the children have used as art materials. So they can say:

The ploughed field is corrugated cardboard

The furrows are twisted pipe cleaners

The ridges are plaited wool

The earth is rolls of dark chocolate

There will be a need to brainstorm all the words related to ploughing. The poem 'Follower' can be used as a starting point for that.

Once the children have the basic poem they can experiment by adding adjectives or verbs and adverbs. The work can be extended in whatever way the teacher wishes.

Section 3 - Opening Ground' Ourselves and Others

'Who cares if this locked heart holds unforgotten pictures?' - Pushkin

Opening Ground within ourselves is not always easy. It can be difficult to open up to emotions and to things which have hurt us or which scare us. In today's world, our children often have lots of information to deal with which they don't really have the coping skills or strategies to deal with.

As adults, we too often hold secret fears or hurt in our hearts and find them hard to let out...to open up, to deal with. Writing can be a therapeutic way of dealing with these 'locked' feelings, emotions and fears.

The possibility to open the ground of this inner landscape is a vital aspect of the work of The Pushkin Trust. We hope to bring the darkness into the light through the exploration of our creative spirit.

Activity 1- Opening ground can be difficult!

The teacher could divide the class into 4 groups. Each group will be provided with an image of a small plant/flower pushing up through concrete or the roadway. The teacher should lead discussion with the class and ask what they think when they see this image. Which is the strongest...the concrete or the plant? How do we know? Are we surprised?

The teacher should then brainstorm adjectives with the class to describe the small plant. These words could include words like:

Brave, strong, resilient, persistent, daring, bold, heroic, hardworking...etc.

If the teacher thinks the class will struggle to suggest words then they can use dictionaries and thesauri to help them.

Then the children could consider how the plant might have felt pushing its way through the hard ground. They could think about what it was hoping to find on the other side. They could consider why it was necessary for the plant to grow into the light.

They could then consider times that, we have to be like the plant and take on almost impossible tasks! Keep going, when times are tough or hard! The children could discuss some examples when life can be like this.

Opportunity for Writing 9

The class could use this thinking and discussion work to write about difficult things that we have to deal with. They could consider how we could use the example of the little flower to keep going, to be brave and to be strong.

They could create short pieces of dialogue and act out scenarios where the advice of acting like the little plant could be of use. The children could take on roles of people faced with difficult situations who are then supported to keep going or to 'open up' once they have been shown the example of the little plant opening the hard ground.

Sample pictures to use in this activity.



The children could also write based on the little flower. They could pretend to be the flower and think of all the verbs that the flower which would explain the movements of the flower as it tries to push its way through the darkness and underground. Then the children could think of the difference the plant would feel and how easy it would be for it to move, once it has 'opened up' and is now in the light and in the air. To extend this the children could also think of suitable adverbs to match the verbs which they have brainstormed.

These verbs and adverbs could be paired up to create poems describing the plant and also people and their experiences and how they cope with adversity.

To extend this the children could make a short list of problems they encounter in life, or emotions they sometimes feel and add relevant pairings of verbs and adverbs as solutions:

When I can't understand	Persevere bravely
When I feel afraid	Push on boldly
When I'm feeling unhappy	Forge ahead courageously
When I am hurt	Advance carefully

Extension Activity – On the Other Side

During this extension activity the children further explore how we feel when we 'open ground', to share or to cope with our emotions, feelings, anxieties and fears which can be difficult to overcome. The teacher could share this piece with the class, it is called, On The Other Side.

On the other side of hurt is healing
 On the other side of darkness is discovery
 On the other side of trial is triumph
 On the other side grief is growth
 On the other side of pain is possibility
 On the other side of loss are lessons
 On the other side of wounds is wisdom
 On the other side of failure is fortitude
 On the other side of crying is courage
 On the other side of mistakes is maturity

Never give up, and you will never be denied
 No matter what the challenge, forge ahead -
 to the other side.

The children could create their own versions of this verse by considering their own experiences. They could write the opposing pairs and set them out as in this verse.

Activity 2 Thinking like Einstein

The teacher could think about and discuss this quote with the class to consider the message behind it and to think about ways that we can 'open ground' with our thinking. How we can think of new ways to approach problems or even to solve problems and issues that arrive.



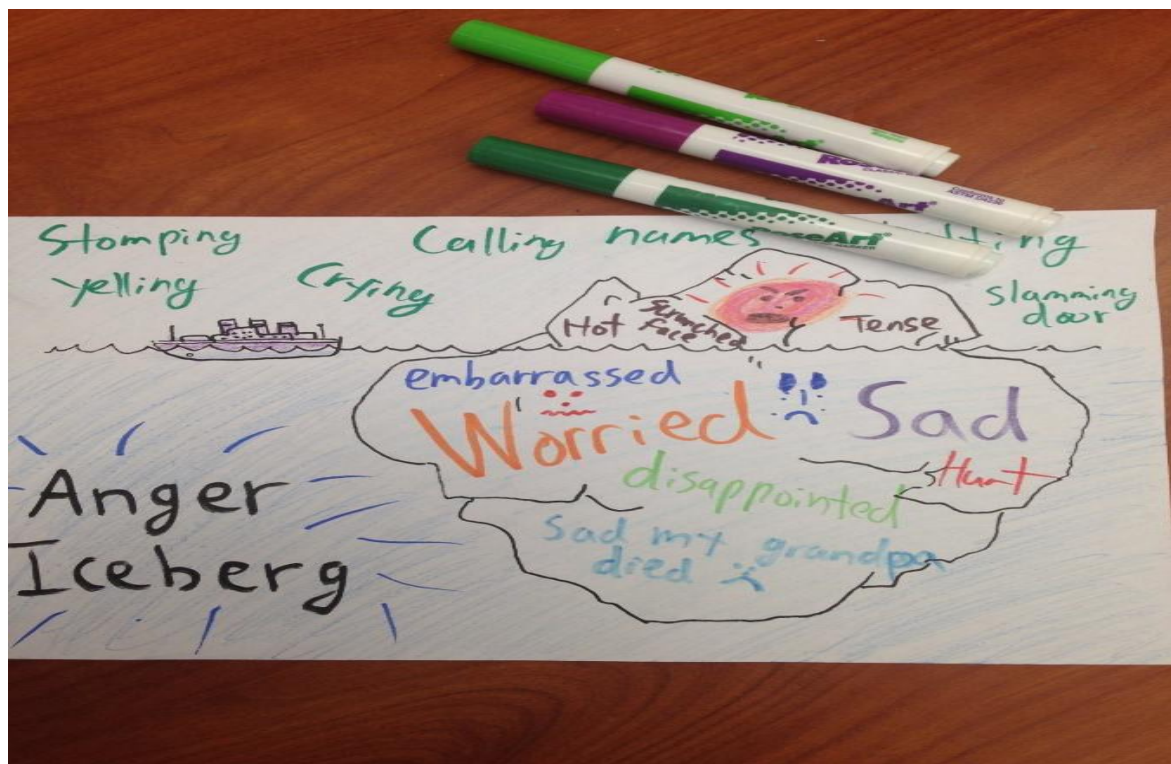
The teacher could present the children with some of the typical issues and problems they encounter and ask them to think of creative ways to solve them.

Activity 3

Sometimes we find it hard to express how we feel and sometimes things are locked in our hearts or minds. This leads us to behave in ways that we can't explain or that are outward manifestations of how we are feeling inside. This 'Anger' Iceberg shows what people see on the outside which is just what is visible...what is causing the anger is actually all of the things that can't be seen...the things below the surface. For the purposes of this activity we are going to use the same idea but we are going to express the ideas on an image of below the ground and above the ground.

The things causing the outward behaviour are buried...they are in the dark, pushed down below the surface.

The Iceberg example:



We can see that the child is recording what people see them do on the outside and what is actually the cause of the behaviour is below...invisible and unseen.

Children could consider things that we keep 'hidden' and 'unseen' below the surface or under the ground, within ourselves. They could also consider how we act or behave outwardly because of these unseen causes. Using the same concept as the iceberg the children can encouraged to record these ideas on the image of above and below the ground, provided below.

The plants can be the outward displays of anger, bad behaviour, disruption, sulking, arguing, fighting, etc. which others see us show.

The children can decide which they sometimes do themselves or experience others do.

Then in the layers below the surface, they can record the things that are causing the behaviour. These can include issues such as; fear, worry, hurt,

sadness, grief, name calling, bullying etc.

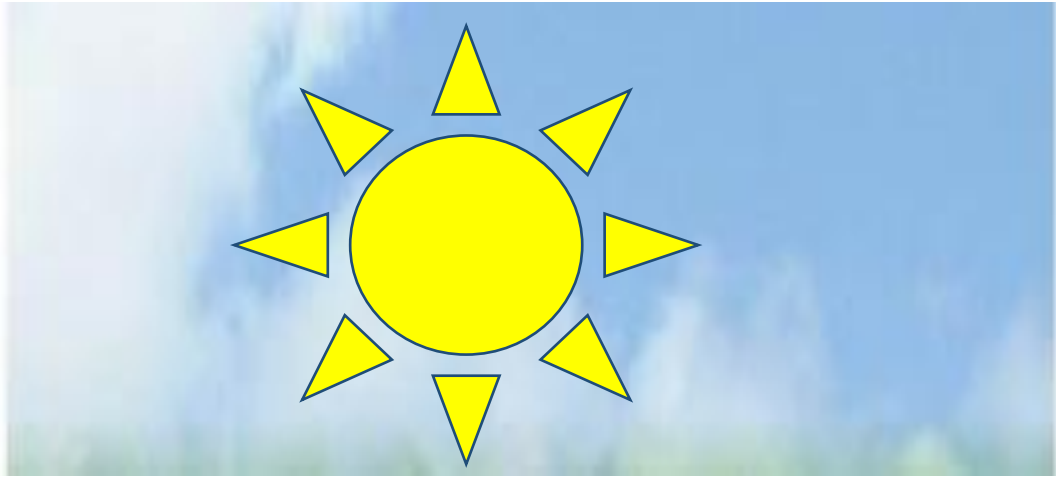


Next the children could consider ways that we can bring the worries and issues we have 'into the light' or the ways we can open up and share and express what are the real causes of our anxieties, hurts or bad behaviour.

They could take a couple of these examples and write them on the following template. To complete this template they need to think about, discuss and write ways the problems they have recognised can be dealt with. These solutions should be recorded on the top part of the following image:

Now, the top section, 'the sky', is where we bring light and open up the ground and consider solutions, such as:

- talk to parents
- Talk to teacher
- Talk to friends
- Apologise to others
- Think before we act
- Try to explain how we are feeling
- Make good choices



Activity 4 – On the Other Side

During this activity the children further explore how we feel when we ‘open ground’, to share or to cope with our emotions, feelings, anxieties and fears.

The teacher could share this piece with the class:

On The Other Side

On the other side of hurt is healing
On the other side of darkness is discovery
On the other side of trial is triumph
On the other side grief is growth
On the other side of pain is possibility
On the other side of loss are lessons
On the other side of wounds is wisdom
On the other side of failure is fortitude
On the other side of crying is courage
On the other side of mistakes is maturity

Never give up, and you will never be denied
No matter what the challenge, forge ahead -
to the other side.

Activity 4- The Coping Wheel

This is a simple coping strategy for children to use. The activity involves considering all the ways they can cope with situations which they find challenging or difficult.

To begin with the teacher could discuss these types of situations with the class or draw on previous activities. Then the children can think of ways that they could cope. These should be drawn onto a paper plate as shown below. Then a second plate should be added on top as in the image. The idea is that the children learn to consider and put into practice, ways of coping instead of burying sentiments, feelings and emotions. The graphics below help explain the process.



These wheels can be used in class or in other environments. They can form the basis of discussion and circle time activities.

Artwork Activity for Section 3 -The weaving art of Becky Kisabeth Gibbs.

Here' s what the artist has to say:

This work is from my watercolour weaving series. Most are individual watercolour paintings that I rip apart and weave into a new order. After I'm satisfied with the results, I often draw on the finished weaving, using various media – pen, india ink, pencil. The weavings represent a specific aspect of nature, sometimes my experience or my memory; other times the natural world and its hidden creatures.

This makes her a great artist for the Pushkin theme this year! Here is some of her weaving paintings:



Look her up for more examples!

The children could have time to explore the colours of the earth and of the opened ground. They could then create weaving pictures in the style of the artist, Becky Kisabeth Gibbs, using here painting, ripping and weaving idea.

They could paint the two sides of opened ground, the light and the dark. They could choose colours to represent both and then they could make two paintings. Then they could rip or cut these into strips and weave them together to show that we are the two of ourselves...the light and the dark. What is above the surface and what is below. The children can also decide if they would like to write on these woven paintings too.

Optional Section 4 - Opening Ground in History

If the teacher needs further contexts to extend the theme across a term, some additional History has been suggested below. In this section, the idea of Opening Ground is explored through archaeology and the trenches at the Somme in WW1.

Who else opens the ground and why? Some ideas for extending the theme into an historical context.

In this activity, the children consider who archaeologists are and what they do. They think about what we learn from archaeological sources.

The children can open the ground themselves by taking part in 'mini archaeological digs'. They can discover how fossils and artefacts that once unearthed are used as evidence to put together a picture of the past.



For teachers:

Archaeology is the study of our human past – but it's so much more than history! And it isn't just digging and finding things underground either. Archaeology uses a huge range of evidence to help us tell stories about our ancestors and find out about their everyday lives. Humankind is almost 4 million years old, but written records have only been made by people for about the last 5,000 years. Archaeology helps to fill in the huge gaps in human history before writing, and it can add more detail to the historical record even after writing was invented. Archaeology is all about evidence...finding proof and solving problems by using clues.

Archaeology is all about questions. Where did people live in the past? What did they wear? What did they eat? How did they die? What were their beliefs? What tools did they use, and how? Plus, many, many more.

The evidence that archaeologists use to answer these questions is often found during excavations, or digs. The evidence can include objects like pottery, jewellery, building materials, coins, weapons and tools. Soil samples from archaeological sites can reveal information about past environments, like what kinds of plants were growing. Features like ditches, pits, post holes and the remains of walls can help archaeologists piece together what buildings looked like and what they were made of. The ways that people were buried tells us about past beliefs, and the skeletons themselves reveal information about people's health in the past and the types of diseases and injuries that killed them.

At this point in the theme the teacher could explore some well-known archaeological finds in Northern Ireland. Alternatively, connect this work to work on early man and the Hunter Gatherers.

The site of Hunter Gatherer homes at Mountsandel outside Coleraine could be explored. The children could find out about how opening the ground at Mountsandel led to an amazing archaeological find. These images are of the post-holes found at Mountsandel that proved how Mesolithic hunters built their homes.



From finds and sites like these historians can put together a picture of the past and draw conclusions about how life looked in early times.



Model hut from Mesolithic era in the Ulster Museum



Sites to use:http://www.mountsandel.com/digging_up_past/index.asp

<http://irisharchaeology.ie/2013/07/mount-sandel-a-mesolithic-campsite/>

The teacher could prepare mini archaeological digs for the children to make by burying things in damp sand in shallow boxes or on trays. Materials such as the 'remains' of a Hunter Gatherers feast could be 'unearthed'. These could include nut shells, egg shells, berries and seeds, bones and leftover fruits such as apples. The materials can be pushed into the damp sand and covered by a dusting of compost which the children must remove. They can use paint brushes and spoons to do this and take photographs or make drawings of their findings.

The Trenches at The Somme

What did fighting look like in World War 1 and at the Somme?

Battle was very different from today. Trench Warfare:

Trench warfare is a type of fighting where both sides dig in and build deep trenches as a defense against their enemy. These trenches can stretch for many miles and make it nearly impossible for one side to advance. It is estimated that if all the trenches built along the western front during WW1 were laid end-to-end they would total over 25,000 miles long.

The western front in France was fought using trench warfare. By the end of 1914, both sides had built a series of trenches that went from the North Sea and through Belgium and France. As a result, neither side gained much ground for three and a half years from October 1914 to March of 1918.

The trenches needed constant repair or they would break down and erode from the weather and from enemy bombs.

The British said it took 450 men 6 hours to build about 250 meters of a trench system. During this work they could be easy targets for the enemy.

Most of the raids took place at night when soldiers could sneak across the "No Man's Land" in the dark. This was the land which was in between the two sets of opposing trenches.

Each morning the soldiers would all "stand to." This meant that they would stand up and prepare for an attack as most attacks took place first thing in the morning.

The typical soldier in the trenches was armed with a rifle, bayonet, and a hand grenade.



How were the trenches built?

Sometimes the soldiers just dug the trenches straight into the ground this way of building them was called entrenching. It was a good way because it was fast. It wasn't good though as it left the soldiers open to enemy fire while they were digging out the trenches. Sometimes they would build the trenches by extending an existing trench on one end. This method was called sapping. It was good because it was safer but it took longer. The most difficult way to build a trench was to make a tunnel and then remove the roof when the tunnel was complete. Although tunneling was the safest method it was also the most difficult.

What were the trenches like?

The typical trench was dug around twelve feet deep into the ground. The trench would usually have an embankment at the top with a barbed wire fence. Some trenches were reinforced with wooden beams or sandbags packed tightly. Usually wooden boards called duckboards were placed in the bottom of the trench. These boards were meant to keep the soldiers' feet above the water that would collect at the bottom of the trench.

Trenches weren't dug in long straight lines, rather they were built as a system of trenches. They were dug in a zigzag pattern and there were many levels of trenches along the lines. Soldiers could travel between the levels along a series of paths.

Life in the Trenches

Soldiers generally rotated through three stages of the front. They would spend some time in the front line trenches. Then they would pass some of their time in the support trenches, and some time resting. They almost always had some sort of job to do whether it was repairing the trenches, guard duty, moving supplies, undergoing inspections, or cleaning their weapons.

No Man's Land

The land between the two enemy trench lines was called "No Man's Land." This land was sometimes covered with barbed wire and often was full of land mines. The enemy trenches were generally between 50 to 250 yards apart.

Suggested Activities

The teacher can provide the children with this information and access some images of the trenches. Using these the children could either draw and label diagrams of the trench or recreate small models of the trench. There are many examples online of images to support this work and diagrams which can be accessed to help them.

They could create a plan or map of part of one of the trench systems typical of those at the Somme.

Opportunity for Writing - Children could write diary accounts for the soldiers who are fighting and living in the trenches at the Western Front. The accounts could detail three different days as they rotate through the trenches from the front trench to the back trench. Alternatively, they could write about life in the trenches in the form of letters home to relatives.