

'I Am I' Exploring Literacy

The 'I Am I' workshop offers primary schools a programme of activities and resources that draw on the literature, artwork, interior design, history and ideas of the Bloomsbury Group at Charleston.

Inspired by a quote from Virginia Woolf, the project has a literacy focus and ties in with the national Key Stage 2 topic of 'Identity'.

Children will leave the opportunity to create

- An 'I Am I' poem
- Two pieces of writing on 'Home'
- An animal alter-ego
- A personalised sketchbook with notes and drawings
- A broader understanding of what IDENTITY means.

These activities are designed to support an independent visit to Charleston with a booked House tour. A resource box to support the session can be pre-booked (free) when booking a House tour. You will need to download and copy your own worksheets.

Schools can also book a member of staff to lead an 'I Am I' day workshop at Charleston at an additional cost.

Additional resources are available for use in the classroom both before and after the trip, as well as extension activities for KS3 pupils.

Session Aims and Objectives

- Pupils and teachers will feel welcome at Charleston as a creative, inclusive and inspiring educational environment
- Pupils will gain an introduction to the Bloomsbury Group and the important ways they changed art, writing, design, politics, relationships and the idea of 'being ourselves'
- Pupils will be immersed in a vibrant and inspiring space to explore what IDENTITY means across a range of stimuli, prompts, activities and themes
- The programme of activities will meet literacy criteria and pupils will create poems and stories that can be part of their assessed learning portfolio
- Pupils will see the link between what we see, think, feel and experience and what we write – turning life into literature
- The themes and activities of the day can be extended back in the classroom with extension suggestions and resources

Suggested Age

KS2

Duration

On site at Charleston 10 – 2.30pm

In the classroom 1-4 hours depending on the activities selected.

National Curriculum Links

- IDENTITY is a KS2 topic
- PSHE curriculum goals of increasing pupil self-awareness and self-esteem
- Exploring identity also ties in with new government wellbeing requirements
- Literacy reading and writing criteria
- Art and creativity

Resources

You can download the following resources from the learning pages of the Charleston website to support this activity:

- ***'I Am 'I Exploring Literacy at Charleston PowerPoint***
- ***Charleston Image Resource – Interiors***
- ***Charleston Image Resource – The Garden***
- ***Charleston Image Resource – Shape and Colour***
- ***How to make a folded sketch book***

Materials

- Activity Worksheets
- Example Sketchbook
- Paper, pens, pencils
- Images of animals / a selection of plastic animals

Key Words

Artist, writer, sketchbook, design, story, imagination, adjective, colour, pattern, shape, unique, characteristics, statue, furniture, painting, poem, personal, personality

Session Plan

Introduction: 'I Am I' Exploring Literacy at Charleston Power Point

- In the Classroom show the PowerPoint.
- There are notes to accompany each slide.

Activity 1: Personalised Sketchbooks

- Onsite at Charleston, or previsit in the classroom.
- You will need to provide your own materials (A3 or A2 paper, scissors).

Show example sketchbook

Ask - *What this is? Who might use it and why?*

We are going to make our own sketchbooks to record our thoughts and ideas.

Hand out materials to each table

Explain how to make the sketch book using the instructions found in ***How to make a folded sketch book.***

On the front of the Sketchbook, draw your initial in big bubble writing and inside it write words that describe you – might be adjectives that describe your personality, might be things you like doing, might be things or people or places that are special to you.

Show Charleston example of a large letter 'C' with Charleston-related words written inside it.

Go around your table and share one word with each other from your letter.

Activity 2: House Explorers

- Onsite booked tour led by Charleston staff (additional cost)
- In the classroom show the ***Charleston Image Resources – Interiors*** and use the ***House Explorers worksheet*** for suggested discussion questions.

Activity 3: Adjective Explorer in the Garden

- Use the ***Adjective Explorers in the Garden worksheet*** independently onsite in the Charleston Garden or in the class room with the ***Charleston Image Resources – The Garden and Statues in the Garden.***

Activity 4: The Place We Call Home

Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant thought about the kind of home they wanted to live in. They wanted it to be creative, colourful, unusual and expressive. They wanted it show who they were. They wanted the house to be part of their identity.

Think about the things you saw in the house and in the garden.

Ask - What kind of house would you like to live in? How would you decorate it? How would it show your identity?

Use lots of descriptive words to write about the kind of house you would like to live in.

Use **The Place We Call Home worksheets** to think about this idea of home, design and our identity and create a piece of descriptive writing about the home they would like to create and live in.

Activity 5: Animal Names

The Bloomsbury Group called each other animal nicknames.

Ask - Who knows what a nickname is?

Nicknames can be a way of showing your friendship with someone. The main thing about the Bloomsbury Group above all else is that they were amazing friends. They lived together, worked together, went on holiday together, went out for walks, had dinners and parties, helped each other and had lots of fun together. Part of that was giving each other animal nicknames. Everybody had one.

Show slides from the 'I am I' PowerPoint or printed out images which match the person with the animal

Slide one: *So Duncan was a... [children shout out] BEAR*

Slide two: *Vanessa was a... [children shout out] DOLPHIN*

Slide three: *Vanessa's sister Virginia was a... [children shout out] GOAT*

Slide four: *Virginia's husband Leonard was a... [children shout out] MONGOOSE*

Slide five: *Their friend (and Duncan's boyfriend) David was called... [children shout out] BUNNY*

Invite a response and write it on flipchart/whiteboard

Animals have their own identities just like humans – the things that make them unique – what they look like, sound like, how they move, their characteristics, how they make us feel. Let's use some really imaginative and descriptive words to bring this animal identity to life.

Work through an example animal together.

Explain that the students are going to make their own piece of writing using 'The First Person'.

Writing in the first person means using 'I'. Any writing that says 'I do this, I go here, I felt this, I saw that' is written in the first person. We are going to write about our animal in the first person, as if we were the animal itself. We can see what it sees, hear what it hears, feel what it feels.

Ask - What animal do you think you would be and why? What kind of animal do you look like, act like or feel like?

Use the Animals Names worksheet.

Start with writing: 'I am a _____' and then adding your animal name.

Carry on with your piece using 'I' sentences.

Activity 6: 'I Am I' Poem

It was really important to the Charleston artists, Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, and the rest of The Bloomsbury Group that everyone could be free to be who they wanted to be.

They knew that inside each of us was lots of different feelings, different ideas, different moods and interests and likes and dislikes. They knew that who we thought we were would change over time.

Ask the students to think about the things they liked when they were much younger, what they like now and whether they think this might change as they grow up.

Your identity isn't stuck in a box. It changes all the time and that's normal and ok. The Bloomsbury Group celebrated that.

They believed that everyone – boy or girl, rich or poor, educated or uneducated, arty or scientific, married or unmarried – should be able to be themselves and make their own choices to be happy.

Virginia (Woolf) the famous writer and sister of Vanessa, had a lovely thing she liked to do. She would go for a walk in the fields around Lewes where she lived and sometimes, especially if she felt a bit upset, or a bit confused, or a bit out of sorts, she would just walk slowly, look at all the beautiful nature around her, and in her head she would say 'I am I'. What do we think that means?

Invite responses

For our final activity we're going to write a poem all about who we are. This poem will be called 'I am I', and in fact that is going to be the last line in our poem. Each line will start with 'I am...' and then I'd like you to write something that you think makes you, you.

Read the example poem.

Suggest students look back at their writing about your dream home and about your animal alter-ego and maybe pick some of your best lines from that and bring them into your 'I Am I' poem.

Think about choosing really interesting, descriptive words, choosing details that make you you.

Poem writing – Use 'I am I' Poem template

Alternative activities:

- If it feels tricky to come up with new ideas for your poem, students can go back to their writing about their dream house or animal and use these sentences and details in the poem!
- If it feels tricky to write about themselves students could write about someone else they know?
Start each line with 'You are _____' instead.
The final line could tell us who that person is, for example 'You are my mum' or 'You are my best friend'.
- Students could even write an 'I am' poem about Charleston and the Bloomsbury Group using everything you have discovered.

Invite pupils to share their poems, may be read out loud to each other or in an assembly, or illustrate and display.

Evaluation

What do the students think was successful about their own piece of work and what would they do differently next time?

'I am I' Extension Activities

Write A Letter to Your Future Self

For children who finish their other work, who need something more advanced, or to use as an in-class activity after the visit.

The Bloomsbury Group were amazing letter-writers. They wrote to each other all the time. There was no email, no mobile phones, no messages, no computers. Their letters were so brilliant that they have been published in books and people still read them.

Try writing a letter to your future self. Pick an age – maybe 11, or 20, or 30, or 50, or 100! Tell them about your life right now – what you do, who you see, what you like and dislike, what you believe and feel. What makes you happy. What your dreams are. Try to guess what job your older self has. Where they live. If they are married or have a family. What hobbies they have. What they like eating. If they have a car or any pets. Try and imagine what your older self is like. Are they happy? What would make them happier? What advice would they give you? What advice would you give them?

Resources: You could use traditional ink pens, scrolls, parchment etc

Keep a diary for a week

Homework task

The Bloomsbury Group were great at keeping diaries, especially Virginia. Her diary was so interesting that it is still published today and people love reading it. She tells us all about life at that time, about the books she was writing, about her thoughts and worries and ideas. She records everything the Bloomsbury Group did, the conversations, and walks, and parties and events. That is one way we know so much about the Bloomsbury Group.

Keeping a diary is also a good way of learning about ourselves. When we read our diary back in 5 or 10 or even 50 years' time, we will remember what we were doing and thinking and feeling when we were younger.

Try keeping a diary for a week. Write every day. You might write a lot, or you might just make a list of what you did, where you went, what you ate and who you saw. You might want to stick down anything important from that day – a pretty leaf or flower, a cinema ticket, a photo. You might want to draw something you saw.

There is no right or wrong way to keep a diary. Try it for a week. How did it feel? What did you discover?

Make a class newspaper

In class or homework activity

When Vanessa and Virginia and their brothers were little, they made a little newspaper called 'The Hyde Park Gate News'. Later at Charleston, when Vanessa had her own children Julian and Quentin, they also created a newspaper called 'The Charleston Bulletin'. They put little stories, cartoons, family news and interviews in it. Try creating a newspaper of your own with your class. Perhaps you could do this on the computer to try out your ICT skills?