

Wayland. The Tale of the Smith from the Far North by Tony Mitton, Illustrated by John Lawrence

Advisory: This text explores adult themes including lust, sex and violence which you would need to mediate with some classes. We recommend that teachers read the text through carefully before teaching from this sequence and decide if this is appropriate for the pupils you teach.

This verse retelling of the legend of a master blacksmith who fashions such ‘wonderful ware’ that he is captured by a king is a tour de force. Readers are quickly drawn in to this tale set in a landscape of forests and mountains depicted in John Lawrence’s extraordinary engravings. The whole story is stunningly sustained in rhyming four line stanzas. There is lust and violence at the centre of this saga and neither poet nor illustrator shirk from portraying these – so this is definitely a publication for older children. There is the love of Wayland for his Swan-Maiden and beauty in the way words and pictures reunite them.

This poem was shortlisted for the 2014 CLPE Poetry Award.

Wayland was chosen by the judges for the mastery of the form, its epic nature and the beauty of it as a complete piece of art, poetry and legend.

Overall aims of this teaching sequence.

- To explore, interpret and respond to an epic, narrative poem
- To make inferences and refer to evidence in a poem
- To apply a growing knowledge of vocabulary, grammar and text structure to pupils’ writing
- To write poetry and other imaginative writing

This teaching sequence is designed for a KS3 class.

Overview of this teaching sequence.

This teaching sequence is approximately three weeks long if spread out over 15 sessions.

The poem raises many questions about characters’ actions and motivations, relationships and causality. It offers good opportunities for discussing interpretations of legends and a solid model upon which pupils can write their own narrative poems, and explore other types of writing in response.

National Curriculum 2014

Reading: (Word reading / Comprehension)

- To make inference and refer to evidence in the text
- To develop an appreciation and love of reading
- To understand increasingly challenging texts through making inferences and referring to evidence in the text
- To read critically through knowing how language, including figurative language, vocabulary choice, grammar, text structure and organisational features, presents meaning
- To recognise a range of poetic conventions and understanding how these have been used
- To study setting, plot, and characterisation, and the effects of these

Writing: (Transcription / Composition)

- To write poetry and other imaginative writing
- To summarise and organise material, and supporting ideas and arguments with any necessary factual detail
- To consider how their writing reflects the audiences and purposes for which it was intended
- To amend the vocabulary, grammar and structure of their writing to improve its coherence and overall effectiveness

Speaking and Listening: (Spoken English)

- To use Standard English confidently in a range of formal and informal contexts, including classroom discussion.
- To give short speeches and presentations, expressing own ideas and keeping to the point.
- To improvise, rehearse and perform poetry in order to generate language and discuss language use and meaning, using role, intonation, tone, volume, mood, silence, stillness and action to add impact.
- To participate in informal group or paired discussions.

Exploring vocabulary and language structure:

Sessions 1, 2-5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12 and 13

Cross Curricular Links:

Art:

- Key Stage 3 subject content link: to use a range of techniques and media, including painting. Pupils could study from a wide range of visual interpretations of Wayland the Smith in art and illustration, deciding on an alternative artistic style in which to depict a scene from the poem. This could link to any artistic style or movement being studied and allows for the development of a wide range of artistic techniques while maintaining a focus for comparison. Alternatively, you might explore the engraved illustration style of the text and the pupils could research similar methods such as woodblocks and experiment with printing techniques such as poly blocks and

linocuts.

Music:

- Key Stage 3 subject content link: to play and perform confidently in a range of solo and ensemble contexts using their voice, playing instruments musically, fluently and with accuracy and expression As the poem is one which conveys a strong mood, pupils could compose their own score to accompany a reading of the poem,
- improvise and compose; and extend and develop musical ideas by drawing on a range of musical structures, styles, genres and traditions.

Teaching Approaches

- Visual approaches
- Reading aloud and rereading
- ‘Tell me’
- Retelling
- Drawing, annotating and mapping
- Role-play and drama
- Shared writing
- Writing in role
- Readers theatre
- Performance

Writing Outcomes

- Drawing and annotating
- Note writing and writing in role as character
- Story-mapping
- Character description
- Notes for oral presentation
- Diary writing
- Writing a narrative poem
- Instructional texts

Teaching Sessions:

Session 1: Visual approach with an illustration

- Give groups of pupils the image of Wayland the Smith on A3 paper.
- Give them 2mins. Ask the pupils to write words, phrases and sentences to describe what they see in the image.
- Prompt their responses to the image by asking ‘What is he wearing?’, ‘Why?’, ‘Where is he?’ and ‘How do you know?’
- The groups could swap papers with each other then imaging they are there. What would they hear, smell and how it would feel? Give them a further 2mins to respond. You might have pupils swap papers again to allow for further collaboration and finally to end up with their own papers, which will have responses from other groups.
- Pupils would then predict what the poem might be about and record these predictions. Allow 2mins for each of these response times.
- You might like to have the pupils write brief free-verse poems to describe Wayland by selecting 5 or 6 responses and ordering them. Alternatively each group could write a collaborative poem where each member of the group chooses one word, phrase or sentence to describe Wayland and writes this on a strip of paper. The group will then order their strips

and rehearse and perform their poem to the rest of the group.

- Additionally, you might like to provide the image of the 'lands in the chill' also and ask the pupils to carry out a similar task, exploring the setting for the poem. Again, have them predict what the poem might be about, layering their understanding with questions such as; Who lives here? What is their life like?

Session 2-5: Story mapping, 'Tell me' and drama approaches

- Read the poem to the pupils. As it is 116 stanzas it is best serialised over 3 or 4 sessions.
- The pupils can story map the poem after each serialised part. Encourage them to map the main events of the 'story' of the poem and add details by considering the characters' relationships and responses to the events as they unfold. What happened in this section of the poem? Who was involved? How? How are these events linked?
- Use the 'Tell me' approach (see responding to a poem sheet) to discuss the poem as it unfolds. Do you like/dislike the poem? What connections can you make to other poems? What things are puzzling you?
- You might like to re read sections of the poem to enable pupils to hone in on the characters and events in more detail, adding layers of meaning to their story maps. Stanzas 1 – 10 introduce Wayland and his brothers, stanzas 36 – 49 introduce King Nidud and his daughter Gunhild, etc. The pupils could use images from the text to gain additional information. Add words and phrases to layer additional meaning to their story maps.
- Your pupils could present sections of their story maps as freeze frames, short scripted or improvised dialogue or as a radio play or soap opera to explore dialogue and the relationships beyond the boundaries of the poem.

Session 6: Drama techniques – freeze frame and thought tracking

- Read stanzas 12 and 13. Consider the scene. What are the characters thinking?
- In small groups freeze frame the scene and use thought tracking to explore the brothers and the swan-maids' feelings. Why did they come to this place? How did they get here?
- Consider what the swan-maids talk about while they bathe. Consider what the brothers say to each other. Improvise or script a short scene which explores some of this dialogue in more detail.
- Extend the pupils by asking them to include some of this dialogue in stanzas that follow the form of the original poem and might be slotted into it after stanza 13.
- Present these new stanzas to the group and explore their effectiveness both in their own right and in relation to the rest of the poem.

Session 7: Visual approaches, research and instructional texts

- Read stanzas 30 – 35. These explore Wayland’s feelings and introduce him as a master craftsman, producer of ‘amazing wares’.
- Watch <http://youtu.be/MI7xo1mmYIY>
- Discuss the weapons and jewellery you can see in the clip. How were they made? What materials are they made from? What purpose did they serve? What design elements have been included?
- The pupils could design some of their own Viking jewellery and household items. The pupils might like to research from a range of secondary sources or you could use the Viking gold images provided to inspire their designs.

- Ask the pupils to write a set of instructions for designing and making an object or piece of jewellery. Alternatively they might like to research how a forge worked and write instructions for lighting and working the bellows.
- Extend this by making models of their designs using papier-mâché and display them with their writing, or use the models to inspire the level of details within the writing.

You might like to watch <http://youtu.be/aolzs5RgvBg>, which shows how weapons are made and helps set the mood of a Viking forge - the sounds and heat generated. The audio soundtrack could be played while the pupils write.

Session 8: Shared writing

- Read stanzas 39 – 46. These describe Wayland’s capture using simile and metaphor.
- Ask the pupils to explore these stanzas and consider why the similes were chosen by the author, extending the metaphor of the bear. What effect do they create? What impact does it have on the story?
- Consider the characteristics of other animals that might be metaphors for the action. Model the creation of a stanza that uses these animal qualities using shared writing and taking suggestions from the pupils. Pupils might then work collaboratively or individually to create their own stanzas.
- The pupils could play with the stanzas of the poem, creating new or changed stanzas using further simile and metaphor. What other animal qualities might we want to highlight?
- Extend their understanding of metaphor by writing descriptions of themselves using and extending an animal metaphor with simile.
- Pupils can then present their stanzas, justifying their changes and additions in terms of the impact they were aiming for both purpose and audience.

Session 9: Retelling

- Read the epilogue poem ‘The Heart Song of Wayland Smith’.

- Ask the pupils to think about the form and features of the poem and the effect each stanza has. How has the author used this effect to express Wayland's feelings? How is repetition used? What examples of rhythm and rhyme are evident? Compare the effect of this poem with the main poem – how and why is it different?
- Provide the poem to groups or pairs of pupils and encourage them to text mark and highlight the examples of poetic features used by the author. Have them justify why the feature has been used by considering the impact on the reader.
- Ask the pupils to retell the poem in their own words. They might then write this retelling as their own poem which expresses the feelings of Wayland or retell in poetic form as one of the other characters in the main poem.
- You could use the illustrated frames to present their writing as in the text, displaying them in the classroom or combining them into a class anthology.

Session 10: Role play

- Read stanzas 55 – 57 which begins by explaining that Nidud thought he had tamed Wayland, but that Wayland was 'hatching a plan.'
- Relate this section back to the feelings of Wayland, trapped on the island, in the epilogue poem. The feathers he collects represent his quest for freedom and his willingness to wait patiently while he collects these tells us something about his character. What do the pupils think about this? Role play as Wayland to explore his feelings.
- Give each pupil one of the feather frames provided. On the two smaller feathers they could choose two words or phrases to write which express Wayland's feelings about his quest for freedom. Gather in the students' smaller feathers then scatter them on the floor. 'The feathers [they find] blowing loose on the ground,' can be gathered and they can 'bring them all back' to their desks. Use the suggestions they have collected, from the other students' feathers, to write a poem which they can present on the larger feather from the worksheet for display or inclusion in the class reading journal.

Session 11: Role on the wall, conscience alley and debate

- Read stanza 58 which talks of Gunhild's shame at how Wayland had been treated.
- Use role on the wall to explore her feelings – write how she is feeling on the inside of her outline, and write how others expect her to feel and react on the outside.
- Pupils could consider the advice they would give to Gunhild. Explore both sides of this debate by using conscience alley. Have one pupil walk down the alley as Gunhild, while other pupils state their advice from either side. Build up a list of potential ideas by recording comments made by pupils on a flip chart.
- Debate: Should she go to the island to visit Wayland? Debate across the room. Use the list of potential responses/ideas and then write letters of advice to her.
- You might like to write these on notebook pages torn from a notebook, fold them into paper

darts and fly them across the room. Pupils could then pick up one of the paper darts and reply to the advice from the point of view of Gunhild. Roll them in a ball and throw them back. Display writing in class reading journal or in classroom.

Session 12: Readers theatre and role play

Learning Objectives: Explore the dialogue through readers theatre and role play

- Read stanzas 74 – 91 which introduces the Nidud’s sons and explores their greed.
- Ask the pupils in groups of 4 to turn this section of the poem into a readers theatre script. They could highlight each part, using the punctuation to guide them to identify the 3 character parts and the text that belongs to the narrator.
- The pupils might rehearse and perform these to another group, providing advice on improving their performances for next time.
- Pupils might like to then extend this section of the poem by exploring the action through role play. They could write a play script, using the poem text to help structure events. What else might they say to each other? What are they thinking? How would the action need to be described by a narrator?

You might like to extend this into an additional session by showing the images of the goblets and explore them as a story map example. What other images could Wayland have added or used? Why did he choose to stop at these? How do these images show Nidud’s son’s greed? What images might you use to demonstrate their greed more fully? Explore these as added layers to the pupil’s story map.

Session 13: Role play and diary writing

- Read stanzas 104 – 108 in which Wayland speaks to King Nidud.
- The pupils could discuss what this section tells us about Wayland, his capture and his planned and subsequent escape. How is he feeling at different points in the story?
- Provide the image of Wayland escaping on A3 paper and ask the pupils to record their ideas around the image to help prompt their thinking and writing. They might role play the scene to explore the character’s thoughts and feelings
- Ask the pupils to write short diary extracts that Nidud’s men might have found after Wayland’s escape. What would he have said in these diary entries? How would he have expressed them?
- Display the diary extracts or record them in the class reading journal.

Session 14 and 15: Poetry performance and recitation

- Ask the students to select a section of the poem to perform. They should consider the part the section plays in leading the reader or audience on into the overarching story of the poem.
- The pupils should be given time to rehearse and refine their performance, taking notes from

rehearsal critique given by other students.

You might like to have pupils create a musical accompaniment or percussive soundscapes to accompany their poem. These would help add atmosphere and mood to their performed pieces, and could be supported by the video clips watched during the earlier sessions of the teaching sequence or other's that the pupils could research.