

RENAISSANCE NORTH EAST

museums for changing lives



Exploring Literacy
through Museums





Exploring Literacy through Museums



Museums are resources for inspiration. In 2008 and 2009 projects took place between primary schools and museums that aimed to unlock this potential.

In 2008 the North East Regional Museums Hub developed *Exploring Literacy through Museums* (ELM), a pilot project with five Newcastle primary schools and five museums.

The success of this pilot paved the way for the 2009 project, which brought ten more museum and school partnerships together. It aimed to explore how a museum experience could inspire writing and cross-curricular teaching, raise attainment and provide a resource for the delivery of the Primary Framework for literacy.

This booklet has been produced to celebrate the success and share the learning of the project.

“...when I found out that we were writing about it, it was even better because ...we were kind of living it”

Year 4 pupil,
Gosforth Park First School

Summary of success

At the end of the project evidence showed:

- 75% of sampled children improved their writing during the project
- 26% of sampled children improved their writing by two or more sub-levels (far more than would normally be the case)
- Pupils were able to write longer pieces with more descriptive detail
- Teachers noted that the museum visits had inspired their children
- Comments showed that boys in particular became more engaged in writing
- Children said they found writing easier when it was based on real experiences
- Museums and teachers noted the value of working in partnership
- Teachers developed skills in using speaking and listening techniques to inspire and rehearse writing
- Museum educators increased their understanding of the literacy curriculum
- Museum educators developed confidence that their existing provision was well-placed to support the Primary Framework for literacy

“Children can struggle most of all with knowing what to write about. They need to talk about their ideas, share ideas and start to think about possible storylines. Being in the actual setting of their story helps them with vivid descriptions.”

Year 3 Teacher, Gosforth Park First School



Project Aims

Renaissance is a programme funded by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and managed by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA). It is a national scheme to transform England’s regional museums to meet the needs of their users. As part of Renaissance, a partnership of museums, or ‘Hub’ has been formed in each English region.

The work of the North East Regional Museums Hub (a partnership of Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums, Beamish, The Bowes Museum and Hartlepool Museums) is aimed at making a real difference for museum audiences, existing and new across the region. The experiences gained from the Hub’s work are shared across our region for the benefit of all museums and their users.

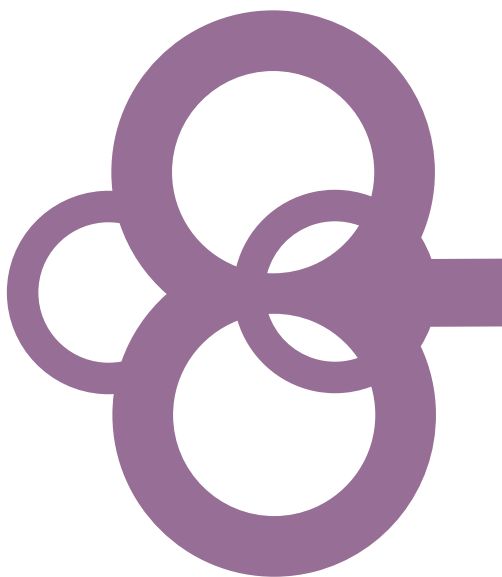
The North East Regional Museums Hub Learning Team developed the *Exploring Literacy through Museums* project in order to:

- improve the writing skills of primary school children by using museum resources
- raise awareness that museum visits can help to develop literacy skills
- inspire confidence in museum educators that they can support literacy learning
- champion partnership working between schools and museums to support visits
- provide evidence that museum visits can help raise literacy standards



Working together

In partnership, schools and museums planned and delivered a cross-curricular project over half a term. Classroom activities were developed to prepare the children for their visit and build on the experience afterwards. Each school assessed children’s work at the beginning and end of the project.



Exploring Literacy through Museums partnerships

School	Museum	Year	Topic studied	Type of writing
English Martyrs’ RC Primary	Shingley Art Gallery	5	Blaydon Races	Newspaper report
Gosforth Park First School	Hatton Gallery: Great North Museum	3, 3/4 & 4	Adventure mystery	Narrative adventure / mystery
Kenton Bar Primary School	Woodhorn	5/6	Coal mining	Playscripts
Kingston Park Primary School	South Shields Museum & Art Gallery	3	World War Two	Letters
Moorside Community Primary School	Discovery Museum	2	Great Fire of Newcastle	Diary
Ravenswood Primary School	Souter Lighthouse	5	Ghost story	Newspaper report
Throckley Primary School	Beamish: The Living Museum of the North	5	Victorians	Recount
St George’s RC Primary School	Beamish: The Living Museum of the North	3/4 & 4/5	Who Dunnit?	Newspaper report
West Denton Primary School	Segedunum Roman Fort, Baths & Museum	5	Myths	Myths
Westerhope Primary School	Durham Cathedral	3	Bede	Letters

Getting started

An INSET day was held at the start of the project at which museum educators and teachers could meet for the first time.

The partnerships heard an inspirational presentation from Louise Lennox of Cragside Primary School, on the teaching of speaking and listening in literacy. Teachers and museum educators explored how purposeful talk during museum visits can be used to improve writing.

Louise suggested the use of museum visits and resources to stimulate descriptive writing. Plenty of ideas were suggested, for example:

Persuasive writing

- using murder mysteries to present a case for the guilty or innocent
- gathering evidence to inform a presentation
- developing a radio advertisement for a museum or gallery
- planning a presentation for another school to encourage them to make a museum or gallery visit

“Having scheduled planning time as part of the pre-meetings this also gave time to develop ideas with teachers and tailor the detail to their particular classes.”

Museum Educator, Beamish.



Non-chronological reports

- gathering research during the visit, with groups focussing on, for example, a specific area or character
- taking on the role of curator giving a tour either during the visit or later using a photo-story

Each partnership then had time during the INSET to develop a cross-curricular teaching plan for their project. Museum educators devised workshops that made use of speaking and listening skills, drama and role-play to allow pupils to shape their ideas orally. Teachers took a cross-curricular approach to improving writing by adapting a topic they planned to cover that half-term.

The project was designed to link into and enhance schools' planned topics and priorities for the term and museums were encouraged to explore how their existing provision could be adapted to support this teaching.

Exploring Literacy through Museums

Planning sheet

School/ teacher GOSFORTH PARK FLEET SCHOOL ^{EMILY DICKENS}
 Topic focus WRITING SKILLS / ART / NON
THINKING SKILLS / APPRECIATION SKILLS
 Date for evaluator to visit school
 Museum/ educator HAZEL BARRON-COOPER
 Type of writing CREATIVE WRITING / NON FICTION WRITING
 Date for evaluator to run focus group

	Teacher	Deadlines	Museum educator	Deadlines	Joint action	Deadlines	Notes
Tasks to be completed by Christmas	1. ASSESS 10 WRITING SAMPLES FROM CHILDREN - <u>Adam Potts</u> 2. PUPILS COMPLETE EVALUATION 3. TEACHERS VISIT HTF SAT 6 DECEMBER	JAN 09	1. LOCATE DATING TO BASE WRITING SAMPLES 2. FURTHER DISCUSSION + DEVELOPMENT 3. PREP FOR VISIT ON SAT 6 DECEMBER	JAN 09 NOV 08	1. MEETING ON SAT 6 DEC. GALLERY FAMILIARISATION		- Baseline writing samples marked and levelled
Role before museum visit	1. ARRANGE COACHES 2. CONTACT M. BURGESS 3. WRITING PERCEPTION SURVEYS		1. VISIT 3 CLASSES AT SCHOOL. READING AN IMAGE. 2. CONTENT & FORMAT OF 'CLUE TRAIL'	JAN 09 week 5 Jan or 12 Jan	CONTACT BY EMAIL 6 DISCUSSION • Evaluation Observations at Gallery staff visit	JAN 09	- Email Melanie coach costs & date of visit - Writing perceptions surveys
Role during museum visit	1. ENABLE SESSION 2. PHOTOGRAPHING 3. FREELIMING NOTE TAKING 4. PHOTO CONSENT FORMS 5. RISK ASSESSMENTS	6 FEB 09	1. LEAD SESSION WITH TEACHERS + ADULT HELPERS ASSISTANCE 2. HAZARD 1) STREETS TO SCHOOL	6 FEB 09 VISIT WITHIN THIS WEEK	EVALUATION SHEETS	6 FEB 09	- Photo consent forms signed by parents in advance
Date of museum visit		26 JAN - 6 FEB TBC					
Role after museum visit	1. WRITING BY PUPILS BEFORE HALF TERM 2. LEVELLING BEFORE 5 MARCH 09 3. PUPILS WRITING PERCEPTIONS	- HALF TERM	1. Gallery staff to attend school for presentations by pupils.	MARCH 6 09	• RETURNING TO ARRANGE FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS	6 MARCH 09	- Writing samples marked and levelled - Writing perceptions surveys

Completion of project by February half term; all paperwork sent to Melanie Burgess by 6 March 2009

Hub Literacy Officer: Melanie Burgess

Freelance evaluator: Stephanie Hawke

Teachers and museum educators worked together to devise a scheme of work, using a simple planning sheet



Robbery at the Hatton Gallery!

"Going on an actual trip to the Hatton Gallery kind of put a better picture in your head of what you were writing."

Year 4 pupil, Gosforth First School.

The Hatton Gallery worked in partnership with Gosforth Park First School. Teachers met the Education Officer at the INSET day where a scheme of work based around a crime-mystery idea was developed.

The Education Officer visited the school to meet the children before their visit. Children looked at photographs of the Gallery which built up anticipation before their visit. The children were informed that a mystery criminal had attempted to steal a painting from the gallery. During their visit they would have to solve the crime.

At the Hatton Gallery the children followed clues to find information. Inspired by the clues, the children were encouraged to imagine details of the crime such as the criminal's appearance and possible motive.

Attention was drawn to details of the building to help the children imagine how the criminal made their escape. The whole visit was designed to be an experience the children could draw on when developing rich description in their writing.



"He's got scratches on his face, as red as the sun.."

"I think he could hear the police coming so he went up the stairs..."

"He climbed up the sculpture and hid..."

Discussions of Gosforth Park First School pupils at the Hatton Gallery.

Back at school the children developed a story based around the mystery of the Hatton Gallery robbery and their discussion during the visit gave them confidence with the narrative structure. Interesting setting descriptions were inspired by a slideshow of photographs of the Hatton Gallery displayed on the interactive whiteboard.

26 of the 30 sampled children showed progress of at least one National Curriculum sub-level in their final written piece.

"When the pictures were on the Smart Board it made it easier to write the story."

"You could like, get your memories back by seeing pictures from when we were there."

You could imagine what the gallery was like."

Year 3 & 4 pupils, Gosforth Park First School.



Writing samples from one Gosforth Park First School pupil show progress of one sub-level between the beginning (left) and end (right) of the project.

Wednesday 10th December

The boat What Never Return To A lady
long long ago in victores times there
was a lady with her husband
and at midnight there was a terrible
Storm! She climbed up a cliff She
had No Shoes She done a fire
so she can keep her warm it
started to rain. so the fire went away
she did it again and she was waiting
for a Nother boat to come. She looked
where the Ship wreck and her husband
was killed

Tuesday 10th February

The mystery at the Hatten Gallery

one day way before you were born Something Mysterys
went on at the Hatten Gallery. Now it was
Midnight! The church clock struck twelve pm.
It was time for Two face to make a movement
because he has been waiting for ~~many~~ many
years. So he Stamped up the Slippery, Slimmy
Steps. He Stopped right next to the oaky
door and he heard a Noise but it was him
crunching in the snow. So he opened the oaky
door. The door ^{stomped} shut behind him. So he walked
and he saw the piranase picture but he
saw a Good picture. So he thinket in his
head 'I could get all of them'. So he
tried to Steal all of them but he couldnt
becuase he forgot where the piranase picture was. But
he remembered ~~where~~ where it was. So he
went and got it but he saw that it was alarmed
so he got a Staperlar and ~~ate~~ the power
off and he got the piranase picture and put it
behind his back and quietly tiptoed to the
other room in to the dark gloomy room.
He couldn't see a thing. So he walked
into a wall but he got his night vision
goggles. So he could see in the dark
gloomy room and went in the little Shop. He
stole loads of the things that were there. He
stole pictures, bolleys, Sharpings, pencils, and
then he ran out the oaky door and
sprinted up the long Slippery Slimmy Stones.
and he was never seen again. Neither was
the piranase picture or all the other
pictures. Or will they been seen again?

Murder at Beamish Town!

Beamish Museum worked in partnership with St George's RC Primary School. A scheme of work was developed around the Museum's Murder Mystery activity for Key Stages 2 and 3.

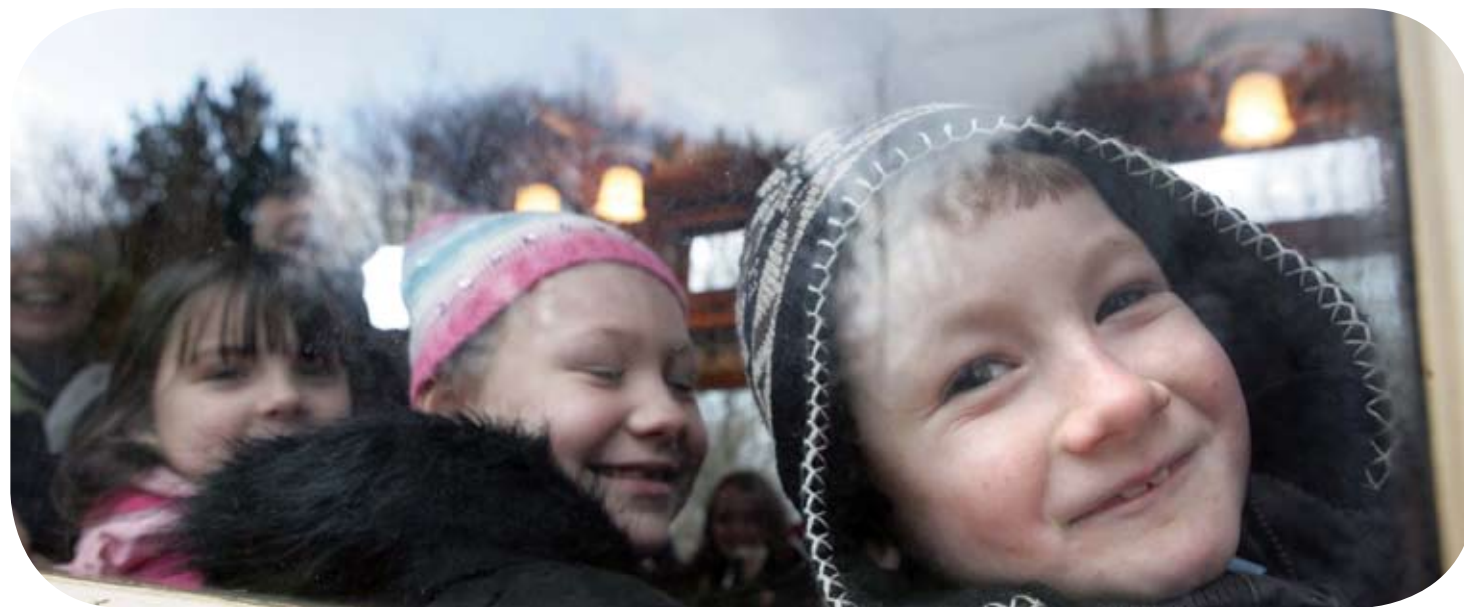
The children received a job advertisement from Beamish Town. They could apply to be a police constable or reporter. Then an education officer visited the class to set the scene.

The children decided that they would need questioning skills and observation skills in order to be successful police or reporters. The Education Officer helped them to practise these skills using mystery objects and photographs, questioning games and drama freeze-frame activities.

Throughout the pre-visit children were rehearsing the phrases they would use when writing their newspaper report by participating in speaking and listening tasks.

"We know who the murderer is!"

Discussion of St George's RC Primary pupils at Beamish



"A man was fighting at the station...a lady went in and the man who killed the other man ran quickly."

"He owed loads of people money!"

Discussion of St George's RC Primary pupils at Beamish



A week later children arrived at Beamish, notebooks in hand, ready to prove themselves as investigators.

At the Railway Station, the children were greeted by a flustered murder-witness who encouraged them to gather evidence from the victim's body. The investigators followed the trail to interview Beamish residents at locations around the Town.

Back at school the children wrote newspaper reports about the crime using the words and phrases they had rehearsed before and during their visit to Beamish.

At the end of the project 29 of the 30 samples showed progress of one National Curriculum sub-level or more.

"The children were able to imagine what they were writing." Teacher, St George's RC Primary School

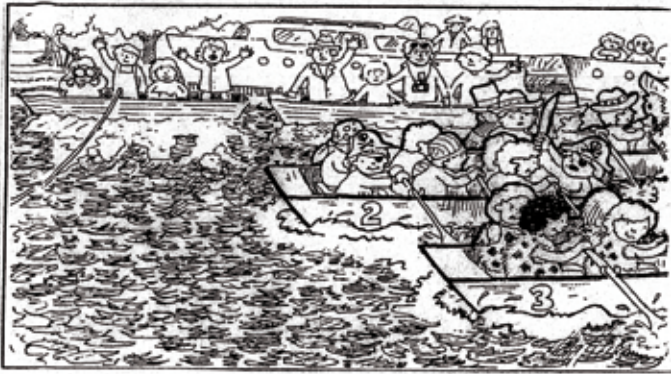
Teacher, St George's RC Primary School

"The children are more eager to write – it has given the boys in particular more motivation."

Teacher, St George's RC Primary School

Writing samples from one St George's RC Primary School pupil show progress of two sub-levels between the beginning (left) and end (right) of the project.

The crazy boat race



The river time race!

Yesterday at newbarn
ther was a crazy
boat race. It was
on the 23 of
Jlie 2002 Friday
Ther was three
boat's. They wher
called p.tat's,
Cave men and cowboys
They wher using
rowing boat's.
All of the popple
hate to race

Too mied's. After
a ~~PA~~Wile popple
got tied. Somewhere
Stoped rowing
and fel of the
boat that was
the cowdog
boat. Then one
of the pikets
lost it's path
and started
to chie as
lowd as posibol.

The cave
men wer
in the
iced they
cheerd. The
uther tow
boat's said
off and
started to
rowe faster.
Most of them
Just ~~to~~ don
it for chark
but the rest
Just whanted
to win. Then
they all got
to the end
of the
race and
the cave
men won.
They got
a trophy and
a 7000 pond.

Beamish Courant

NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

Strangeld Man alound B E A M I S H T O W N



The Body Was Found in
Spk Sufcam Stanses the
Killer. S Still on the
Loos! This is whel he
was Murdered.

Written by

Last week Tuesday
the 27th ther was a
mans dead body
discovered. It
was found in the
lady's waiting room.
B E A M I S H County duram.
The eye witness was
Jewen colens 23.
At first she was
just waiting for a
train to come ~~quelly~~
and then she spotted
two men fighting so
she decided to
go and see if
she could help!
It was a

Bumbled robbery.
Latter on they
found out the
victims name was
Charles ~~tumbel~~
Then they found
the fight was
over money. They
also found Joun
Smith was the
murderer. all thanks
to Floris Smith
the music teacher.
She said "Joun
was in a rush
paul a train
and he was
a hard man!"

also the denker
menshend 'Joun
was a strange
man and didnt
pay for hardly
enough. "Joun
only took money
and he lefed
his glasses
case. He took
the money to
pay popel Bake.
Charles had
finger marks
on his neck so
that means
he had been
strangeld.

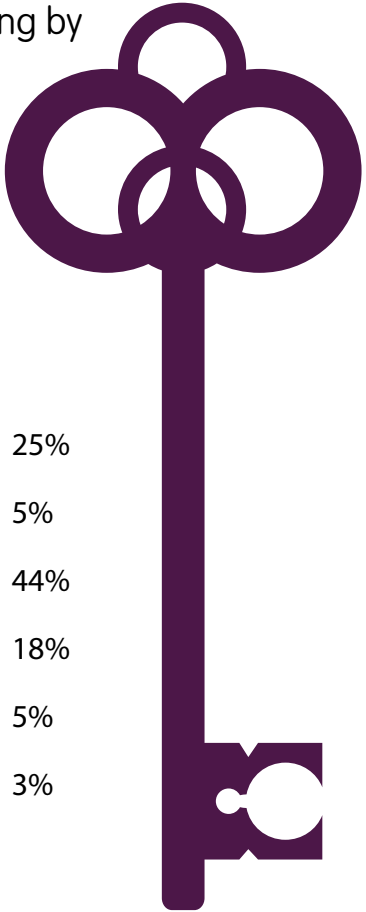
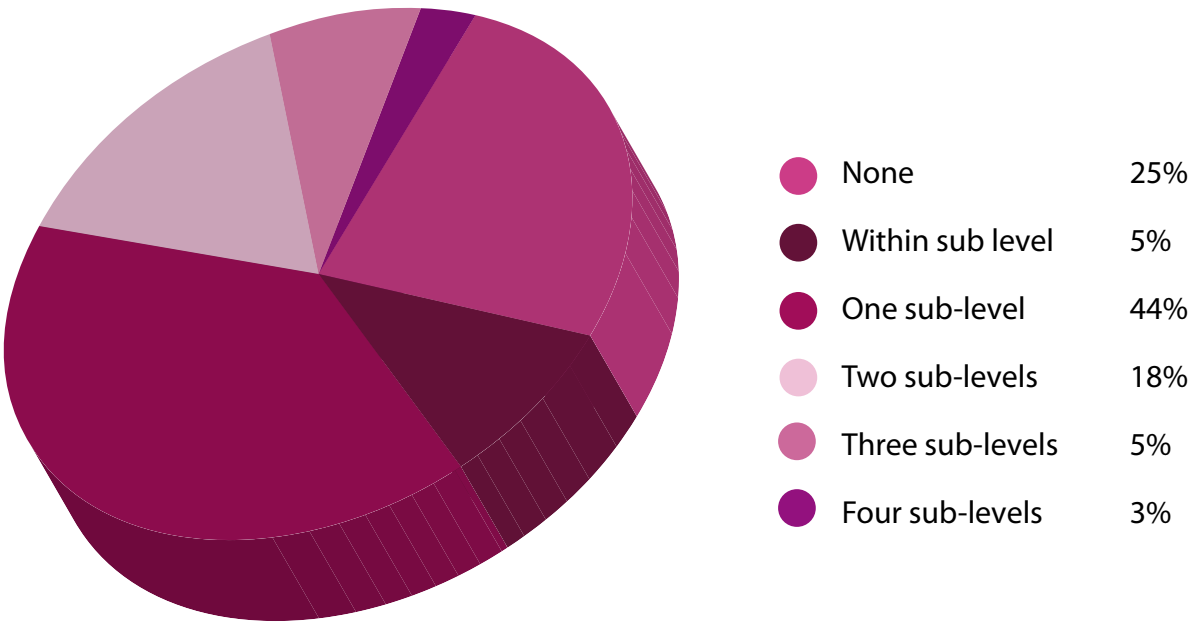


Inspiring Evidence

Writing samples were received from 192 pupils, 70% of whom achieved progress of at least one National Curriculum assessment sub-level when compared with writing samples at the start of the project. A quarter of the children sampled had made progress of two or more sub-levels. Normally children would be expected to progress by 3 sub levels over the course of two years, these children achieved this over half a term demonstrating very good progress.

Overall a 75% majority of the children sampled had improved their writing by the end of the project, exceeding the expectations of their teachers.

Number of children making progress



“We are inspired. We could use similar teaching strategies in future – as we have seen the benefits and the children’s enthusiasm.”
Year 4 teacher, Gosforth First School.

Benefits of Partnership

Participating teachers and museum educators commented on the effect of the project for their practice.

Impact on children's approach to literacy

Confidence

"The writing from this topic has instilled belief and shown the children how much they are capable of producing. One boy in the class wrote three lines in his Year Four optional SATs test. When writing his recount he produced 6 pages. His confidence has grown immensely." Throckley Primary School

Enthusiasm

"The children are more eager to write ...they were very keen to write about their experiences. They had first hand knowledge so this enabled them to extend and improve their writing... before the project some children (mostly boys) didn't have a positive approach to writing. Afterwards, they were all excited and their writing is now more detailed and has a clear focus." St George's RC Primary School



Attitude to writing

"The children were enthused ...and eager to learn...They enjoyed the activities and were keen to write...Even the most reluctant writer's attitude toward writing changed." Moorside Primary School

And in the children's words....

"It helped me have a bit more imagination." Year 4 pupil, Gosforth Park Primary School

"I'm using formal words more. Like writing letters that are formal. These are the letters we wrote to Ray [a miner who visited the school]. We posted one and kept one." Year 5 pupil, Kenton Bar Primary School

"I was quite proud of... writing six pages!" Year 4 pupil, Gosforth Park Primary School

82% of children surveyed felt they were 'good writers' at the end of the project compared to 71% before





Impact on teachers

The value of visits

"(I most valued)...the excitement and motivation the children got from the visit and the fact that they brought their learning and enthusiasm back to the classroom for a prolonged period of time." West Denton Primary School

Cross-curricular approaches

"It encouraged us to teach and plan our topic throughout the curriculum. I have increased my time teaching speaking and listening after our session at Segedunum [at the INSET day]." Kenton Bar Primary School

A focus and context for literacy

"The use of the [Blaydon Races] painting gave me a new approach and context for persuasive writing. The use of role play has made me use this more in the classroom." English Martyrs' RC Primary

Speaking and listening

"(The most valuable thing was)...the opportunity for the children to take part in an exciting and stimulating speaking and listening activity within an atmospheric historical setting." Westerhope Primary School



Impact on museum educators

Confidence to support literacy

“We currently don’t offer [a pre- visit into school] but I would do this again as I think it worked really well. I will suggest that the teachers link the workshop to their literacy session and produce a piece of persuasive writing based on the Blaydon Races.”

Shipley Art Gallery

The value of building relationships

“ (I valued most)... the time to sit down, talk through ideas and plan sessions together; working in partnership, so whatever was done by museum staff was built upon in class and vice versa; the opportunity to work with schools over a period of weeks and build up ideas over time.” **Beamish Museum**

Awareness of classroom activities to enhance a museum visit

“(the most valuable thing was) ...the chance to see how much more can be achieved through participating in one of the museum workshops; that a workshop doesn’t have to be just a stand alone experience; that it can be further developed in various different ways after the museum visit...it made me think more about how children could follow up the activities when back at school, and what we could talk about in the session that might encourage follow up activities.” **Discovery Museum**

“I think my writing has improved a little bit because when we went to the [Shipley Art] Gallery we dressed up. And when you write the story I just imagine that the main character is me like I’m acting.” – year 5 pupil, **English Martyrs’ RC Primary**



Project participants

Evaluation and project report

Stephanie Hawke – Freelance Evaluator

Co-ordination, support and training

Melanie Burgess – Literacy Officer, North East Regional Museums Hub

Jeanne Hale – Advisor for Creativity and Culture, Newcastle City Council

Janet Longbottom – Advanced Skills Teacher for Creativity and Culture, Newcastle

Louise Lennox – Teacher, Cragside Primary School

Participating teachers

Ann Howe & Rory Cook, English Martyrs’ RC Primary School

Gill Taylor, Emily Dickons & Jayne Thorpe, Gosforth Park First School

Finn Willcock, Emma Cullen & Kimberley Craven, Kenton Bar Primary School

Darlene Fielding & Jason Alexander, Kingston Park Primary School

Linda Hall & Russell Hill, Moorside Community Primary School

Rachael Murray, Kenny Jamieson & Kim Richardson, Ravenswood Primary School

Anna Tumelty & Liam Kelly, St George’s RC Primary School

Darren Kidger, Throckley Primary School

Sarah Phazey, West Denton Primary School

Jenn Stoker & Jill Dodds, Westerhope Primary School

Participating museum educators

Catherine Rice & Angela Bromage, Beamish Open Air Museum

Rachel Thompson, Discovery Museum

Elizabeth Baker & Charlotte Arnold, Durham Cathedral

Hazel Barron-Cooper & Amanda Kennington, Hatton Gallery

Maggie Birchall, Segedunum Roman Fort, Baths & Museum

Anne Fountain, Shipley Art Gallery

Charlotte Parish, Souter Lighthouse

Sarah Savile-Evans & Hayley Johnson, South Shields Museum & Art Gallery

Caroline Metcalfe, Woodhorn

Participants in 2008 ELM pilot project

Rebecca Cornell & Rosie Littlefair, Archibald First School

Anne Dooley, Newburn Manor Primary School

Michele O’Donnell, St Joseph’s RC Primary School

Lucy Koeppl, Thomas Walling Primary School

Simon Woolley, Beamish Museum

Jane Gosling, Bede’s World

Elizabeth Baker, Durham Cathedral

Anatoli Kotaidou, Stephenson Railway Museum

Julie Gowland, Woodhorn

