

Remembrance Day Peg Soldiers

By [Mandy Barrett](#)

In this post Mandy Barrett shows us how she inspired the children at Gomersal Primary School to create a powerful installation commemorating the 75th Anniversary of D Day. Encourage your children to get creative whilst helping them understand the significance of this anniversary in the post below. This activity can be adapted for all primary ages.



Remembrance Day or Armistice Day comes around each year, in the United Kingdom, on the 11th November. It is at this time that we take part in numerous activities, to teach our children the importance of remembering the sacrifices of those who served for our country during the wars.

To mark the 75th anniversary of the D Day landings, we wanted to create a memorable art installation. Something that would be meaningful, make an impact on our children and help them to understand the significance of this anniversary. In the past we have created displays of poppies but wanted this year's to

be different. Our children find it difficult to visualise large numbers, in fact many adults do too. I will never forget the impact of seeing the ceramic poppies displayed in London. A stark visual, to aid the comprehension of what the numbers actually represent. I wanted our school display to do the same.

We decided to create our own visual army with every child and adult in school. Each person was given a wooden dolly peg and asked to design their own soldier to be part of a battalion. What would 420 peg soldiers all look like displayed together? How would this portray a sense of community and camaraderie?



The children learnt about different battalions and looked at a range of uniforms from various army regiments, both past and present. We also looked at the range of materials and fabric available to us from the school cupboards. The children used their sketchbooks to consider how they would turn their wooden peg into a soldier. What would they need? How would we fix the materials to the peg? Time was allocated for the children to

explore and design. We talked about camouflage and why the Queen's guard wore red (because that certainly doesn't help them to blend in with their environment).

The battalion slowly began to grow as each year group tackled this project in a slightly different way. Some of our youngest children, painted their pegs with black trousers and a green top. Some children chose to use different colours. Some added matchsticks or pipe cleaners for arms and carefully considered the expressions on their peg doll's face. Some soldiers had helmets while others were given hair. What became increasingly evident was these little peg dolls were all unique and each had their own personality. One Year 6 child even had the idea to turn their peg into a War Horse.



Our older children spent time adding finer details to their soldier. Wool was carefully wrapped around the peg to create the uniform and fixed into place with either PVA glue or a

glue gun. Some created medals and backpacks and a small group of children wanted to add guns and grenades. The children were very much encouraged to be creative, resulting in some incredibly detailed soldiers. The children named their soldiers and began telling stories of their lives. Where were they travelling to? Who were the family members they had left behind? The links to Literacy were innumerable.



Finally, we displayed the battalion of soldiers all together in our school reception area. A lump of plasticine was used on the base of the peg to help the soldiers stand to attention. This is what 420 peg soldiers look like and we were able to use this as a teaching point when discussing figures and numbers relating to the war. Throughout the project we constantly remembered, thought and reflected on events from the past.





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creative and by working together and sharing ideas we can enable everyone to reach their creative potential.

What We Like About This Resource...

“It’s great to see a different approach to thinking about remembrance day. These peg soldiers are a refreshing alternative to artwork inspired by poppies. The processes involved encourage children to focus on fine motor skills: wrapping embroidery thread around the peg and creating small detailed clothes and helmets. These dolls look particularly effective when standing as a collection and would make a poignant alternative to a standard display board” – Rachel, AccessArt

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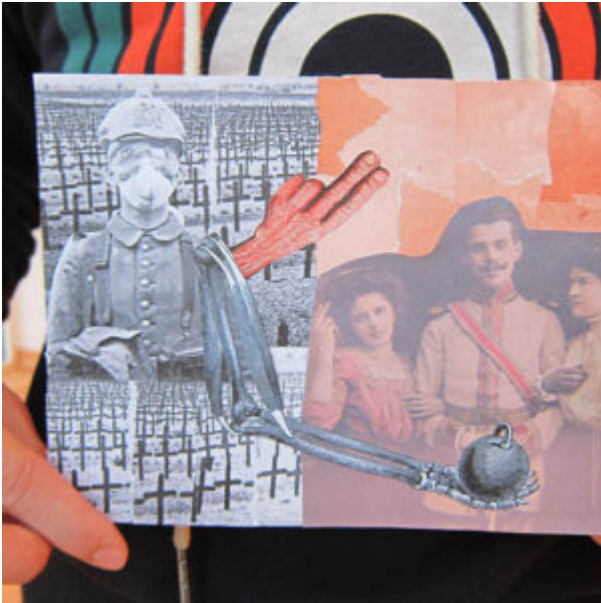
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For Remembrance Day



World War 1 Mail Art

Make First

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What We Like About This

Resource...

Working collaboratively towards a shared aim provides an alternative experience to working on individual projects. Creating together encourages listening, peer feedback and creative problem solving – all of which are hugely valuable in all areas of education” – *Rachel, AccessArt*

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Wish List

Which Artists: The Life & Works of Madge Gill

What We Like About This Resource...

“The life of Madge Gill that Sophie Dutton recounts here gives us real insight into the challenges that Madge Gill experienced, and how these challenges would have been common among women at the time. When we study the work of Artists, it adds a rich context to our experience of their work to consider their personal history, and helps us ask questions like ‘why do you think the Artist painted in this way or was inspired by this subject matter?’ If you introduce your class to Madge Gill, begin with looking back over her younger life to try and better understand her motivations as an Artist” – *Rachel, AccessArt*

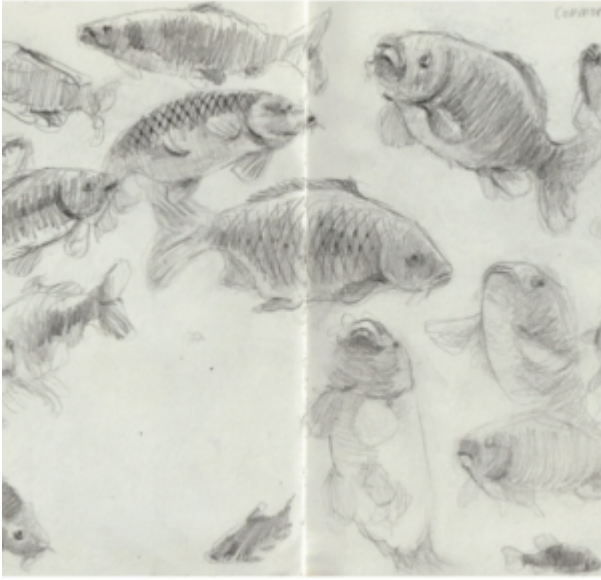
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The Transformation Project

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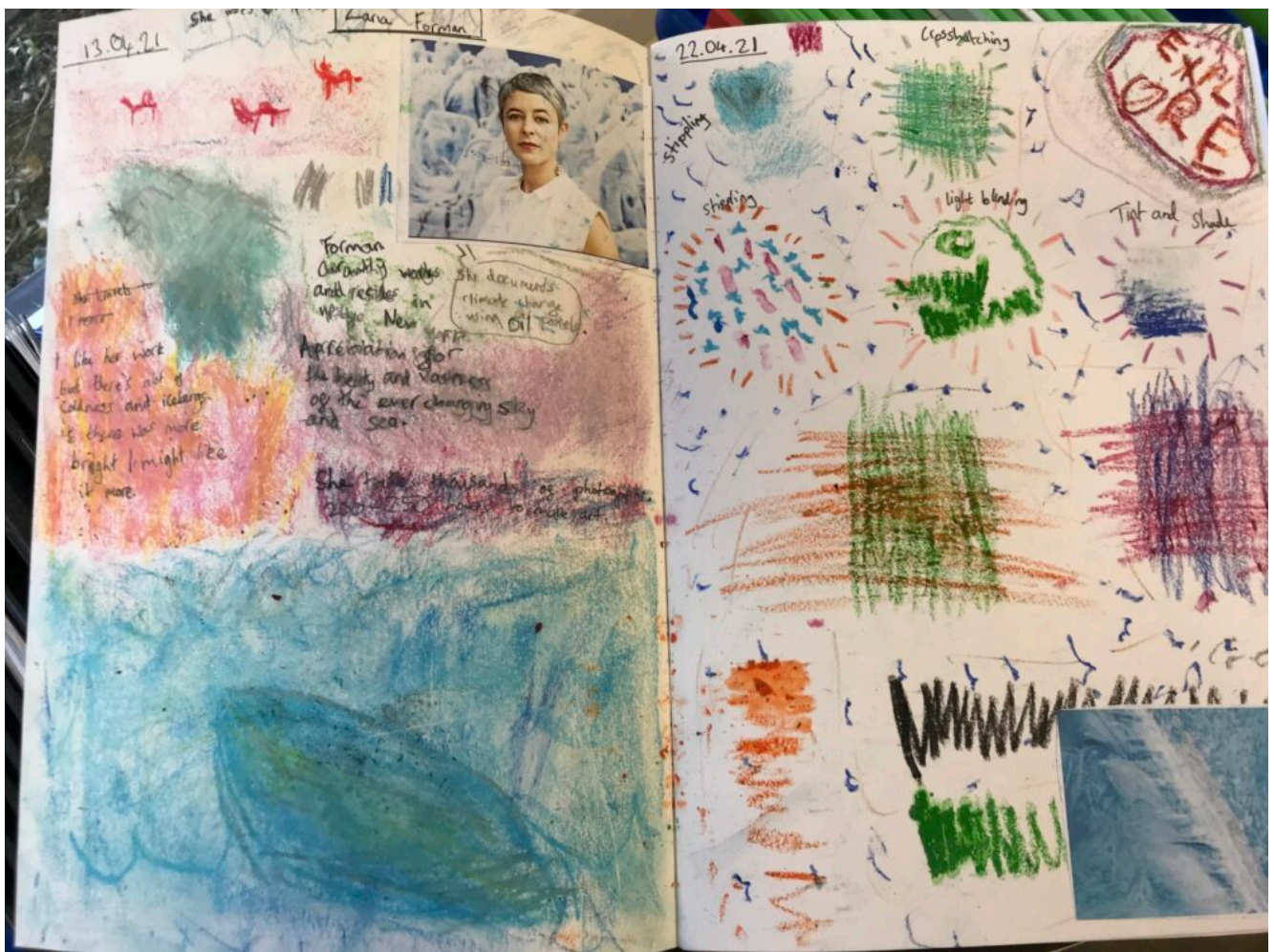


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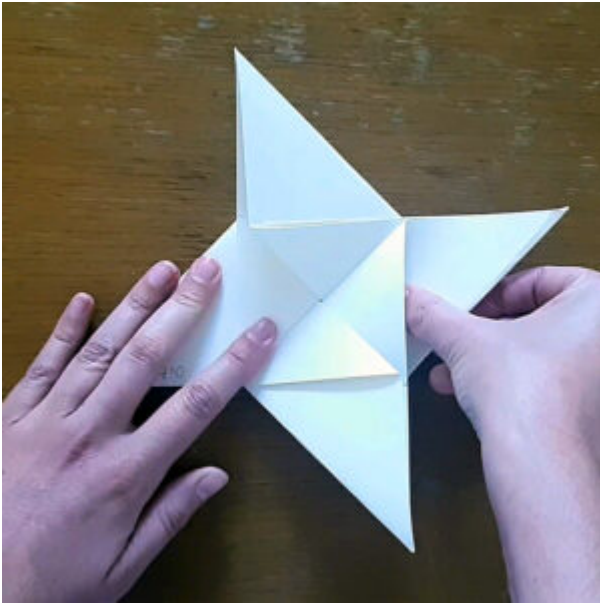
What We Like About This Resource...

“This activity is a great example of how we can use paper as the focus of creativity. Often we use paper purely for drawing or painting on, but

here, it is central to the activity itself. While these particular folded sculptures have their roots in Turkish culture, you could still deliver the activity if looking at things like Origami too, thus linking it across different cultures” – *Rachel, AccessArt*

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**Which Artists: Liz
West**

**What We Like About
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“It’s really interesting to hear how the interest Liz has in the quality of light comes from a

personal place and is something she has responded to since childhood. Seeing how her work has developed over the years is therefore a really positive reinforcement that individual creative journeys, where nurtured, are so central to a rich arts education. We also love hearing Liz is always on the 'quest for knowledge' – meaning she is open to her ideas constantly evolving and the process of gathering new information and inspiration never stops!" – Rachel, AccessArt

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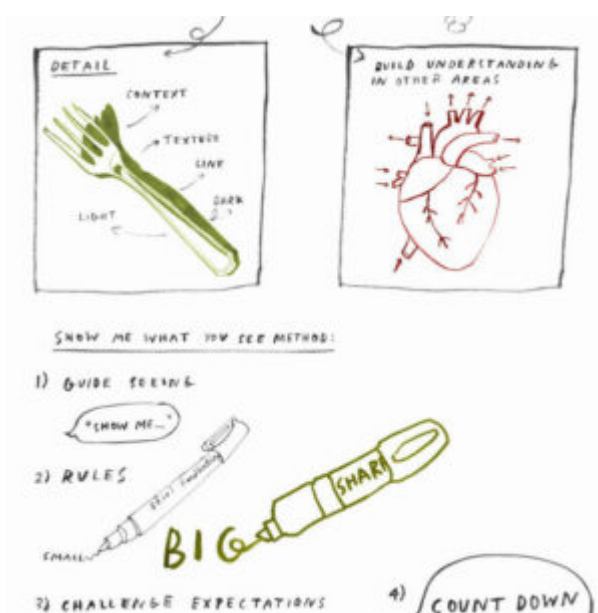
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using sketchbooks to make
visual notes



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Enable close looking and drawing with this exercise

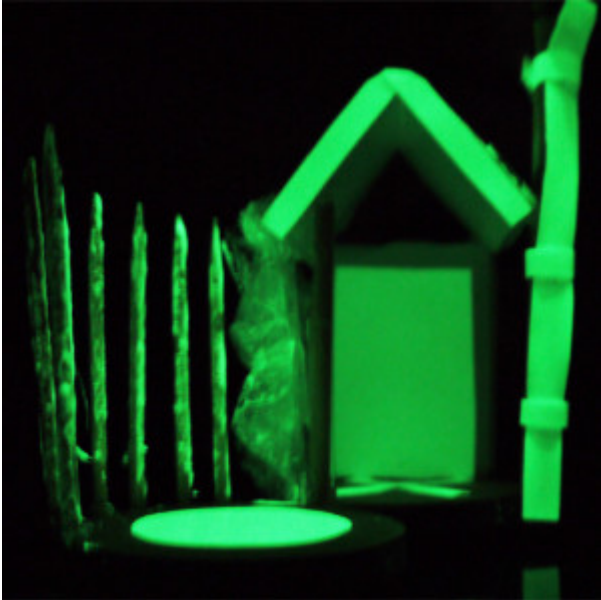
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What We Like About

This Resource...

“This project provides a real opportunity for children to engage with a range of different processes to produce truly individual final results. Jan Miller is an experienced teacher and connects her projects well with learning outcomes. In this case, children are encouraged to have a loose approach and to make their own creative decisions – which is such a valuable part of any child (or adults!) creative education”. – Rachel, AccessArt

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What We Like About This Resource...

“This project links poignant subject matter with meaningful art processes and local history. What we learn about the repurposing of materials, (in this case spent ammunition) reaffirms how we can use what is around us as a starting point to making and creating. You could extend or adapt this project by

looking at broken pottery, re
purposing that into new
sculptures that link with Roman
or other local historical
cultures” – *Rachel, AccessArt*

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Drawings



Remembrance Day Soldiers



For Remembrance Day

Which Artists: Claire Harrup

What We Like About This Resource...

“We really enjoyed reading about the process of creating art work according to a design brief and how the experience of this differs to when an artist begins with their own idea or concept. That’s not to say an artist can’t approach a brief with

their own individual style and ideas, but what this post shows us is that there can be a balance between the two. This would be a great resource to show older KS pupils who may be beginning to consider their options beyond Primary School".
– *Rachel, AccessArt*

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Block Printing Repeat Patterns



Which Artists: Theresa Easton

What We Like About This Resource...

“It’s interesting to hear Theresa describe Printmaking as a social activity, with the shared use of materials and equipment so central to the practice. This could be a positive way of working for lots of children in school, where

instead of just working on individual art work, they can collaborate and embrace the creative sharing experience!” – *Tobi, AccessArt.*

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