



OVERVIEW This session is designed to encourage creative responses to the past and present realities of Marriott's Way, including a focus on nineteenth-century travel and entertainment. Children can create poems using different poetic forms, and practice learning and performing the Robert Louis Stevenson poem 'From a Railway Carriage', increasing familiarity with, and confidence in performing, poetry.

Introduction and Context

Establish aims of the session: to think creatively, to use your imagination, to work together, to look at things in a different way.

Discussion: what is poetry? What do poets do? What is and was Marriott's Way?

Walking to the Marriott's Way: using the senses. Poetry is about paying attention and describing things in a creative way, so make sure you are listening and looking carefully. Be open to inspiration.

On-site introduction (Marriott's Way)

History: where are we? What can we see? What would we have seen a hundred years ago? What has changed?

What kind of trains would be going past if we were standing here 150 years ago? What would they have sounded like? Smelled like? Looked like? How did people get around before steam trains were invented? How did they feel about them once they were an option?

Stevenson's poem captures some of the mixed emotions people had following the advent of steam travel. Although, for those who could afford it, rail travel provided unprecedented speed and opened up destinations and trading opportunities previously unknown, there were also many fears around the safety of steam trains, and concerns over the desecration of the countryside.

From a Railway Carriage

'From a Railway Carriage' (1885) by Robert Louis Stevenson.

First read aloud, then line by line, more than once to get the sound right. Explain any difficult language. What does it sound like? (The poem's rhythm mimics that of a chuffing steam train).

- Discussion of the poem—how is it made to sound like a train? Can you spot any techniques Stevenson uses? Why does he choose to compare the train to 'fairies' and 'witches'? What does that suggest about how he feels about trains? How does he build up a sense of movement in the poem?
- Divide into groups of approximately three (depending on class size). Learn and come up with movements for, or ways of performing, two lines (a couplet) per group. This could be one person saying the lines and the other two acting them out, or all three performing them in a certain way.

Emphasise the need to remember the rhythm of the poem, and challenge students to learn the lines off by heart.

Performance

Perform the poem, with each group performing their couplet in order.

Consider the performance as a whole: could anything be changed to make it work better as a piece of performance e.g. is the pace consistent? Should the volume vary? Perform again making necessary improvements.



Inspiration Book and Poems

Create a simple notebook, for sketching, note-taking, and poetry-writing.

Record impressions of the landscape— in sketches, words and phrases.

Collect inspiring objects e.g. feathers, leaves. What you can't pick up, you could draw or describe.

This part can be as free or instructed as you like, depending on the group involved. Children could be challenged to use specific techniques (e.g. a metaphor for something they can see) or write in different forms (e.g. create an acrostic poem). You might like to encourage them to choose a specific thing, like a flower or a bridge) and write a poem about it.

Group poems: in small groups, read work aloud to one another and choose favourite words or phrases. Organise the lines according to what sounds the most poetic. An adult can scribe, to create a class collection of poems. This can also be done as a whole class group, going around the circle and taking a line or phrase from each pupil.

From a Railway Carriage

- 1 Faster than fairies, faster than witches,
- 2 Bridges and houses, hedges and ditches;
- 3 And charging along like troops in a battle,
- 4 All through the meadows the horses and cattle:
- 5 All of the sights of the hill and the plain
- 6 Fly as thick as driving rain;
- 7 And ever again, in the wink of an eye,
- 8 Painted stations whistle by.

- 9 Here is a child who clambers and scrambles,
- 10 All by himself and gathering brambles;
- 11 Here is a tramp who stands and gazes;
- 12 And there is the green for stringing the daisies!
- 13 Here is a cart run away in the road
- 14 Lumping along with man and load;
- 15 And here is a mill and there is a river:
- 16 Each a glimpse and gone for ever!

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Robert Louis Stevenson