



THE ST. MARY'S  
PARTNERSHIP

I am a  
Storyteller

Being an author

Excited to write my story

Step inside my imagination!

Curriculum Enhancement Week

## Opening a book is like opening a door.

Just a few short lines and... we've met new friends, visited new places and developed new feelings. We can never underestimate the power of a book; how it might change our perspective or the views we hold.

More than ever, writing is in decline. Fewer children write in their spare time. In 2024, the National Literacy Trust conducted research highlighting that fewer than 3 in 10 (28%) of children write for pleasure. And yet, we need to nurture the craft of writing and the importance of having a voice and using this to positively impact the world.

This curriculum enhancement week will provide pupils with opportunities to engage in viewing writing as a pleasurable experience. It will present writing as a creative, experimental process that gives them the freedom to express their ideas and their imagination - all using THEIR storytelling power!

### Why is this important to us?

Across the partnership, fewer pupils typically achieve as well in writing as they do in reading and mathematics. This correlates to children's shared views, where they often see writing as "too hard" and a process that is "boring".

The week will involve opportunities of immersion through drama and music, as well as texts aimed at the interests of boys as well as girls.

Pieces from each partnership school will be selected and submitted for publishing. A copy of the book will be given to each child and family, placed in the school's library and will appear on our website as impact of this work.

## Step inside my imagination!

EYFS

### Starting Point: A story in a box!

Explain to the children that it is Storytelling Week. (Prepare a decorated box or bag with stories, storytelling props and puppets to create excitement.)

Show the children a selection of their favourite, or most recent books that you have read together.

Discuss the children's favourite stories and explore their reading habits at home. Introduce the word storyteller and find out what children understand about it. Explore how they think they could become storytellers? **Record the children's comments.**



### Taking props and using them to express ourselves

Model storytelling using a selection of classroom items, such as small world people, vehicles, animals, puppets or natural materials (e.g., sticks, leaves or acorns). Include one or two more unusual items or decorate some to transform them and create curiosity (e.g., a golden stick or a glittery conker). Use these items to support and spark the children's imagination.

Model creating your own story and invite children to help by sharing their ideas or by taking the lead. Ask supportive questions to prompt ideas, for example: What could this be? Where do you think it came from? Who might it belong to? For example, Once upon a time there was a ...They had a ... Every time it rained, they felt and turned into a ! \*If you haven't tried this type of activity before you may choose to use props from familiar stories and work with the children to retell stories they already know first.



### Go on a big story prop forage!

During the first day of introducing storytelling week, let the children create their own storytelling box. Let them think of items they would like inside the box - things you've foraged from outdoors or items they would like to use to help tell their story. Limit each child to no more than 6 items for their story.

**Link to Comm/Lang:** children need to justify **WHY** they want to add an item into the storytelling box.

#### Outcome 1:

You could choose to re-tell the story to the children at the end or invite ideas from other children and create a new one. Record the stories to share with others by writing, drawing or filming.

Model the above. If the children have created storytelling boxes - allow them to share the materials they have collected.

- Could you try and tell **THEIR** story?
- Could they tell their story simply to their peers using the materials?

#### Outcome 2:

Using large sheets of paper. Create a narrative story.

- Who are the characters?
- What is the main outline story?
- Where does this take place?
- What is going to happen?

Be prepared to scribe and bring the children's ideas to life.



## Step inside my imagination!

EYFS



### Continuous provision: Lets tell stories!

#### Small world/construction area

- Enhance the small world and construction area with open-ended and natural resources to support imaginative play.
- Add "mini-me" characters for the children, so they can include themselves and their friends in their small world storytelling.
- Offer mark-making equipment alongside small world and construction areas, such as clipboards and sign-making materials.
- Provide new, or represent familiar resources in a different way, or in an unexpected place.



#### Role play area

- Enhance the role play area with a selection of open-ended resources, such as fabric, boxes, bags, hats and scarves.
- Offer unusual objects to spark imaginations, such as a foil survival blanket, natural materials and other interesting items.
- Project inspiring backgrounds onto the wall or using a large screen, for example, a castle, forest or stormy sea.
- Provide mark-making materials on a large and small scale.
- Provide mirrors for children to observe their transformations, movements and facial expressions.

#### Outside area

- Provide both large and small props and materials to support storytelling, such as crates, pipes, tyres, clipboards, blocks, chalk and natural materials.
- Enhance existing provision with new and surprising objects to inspire storytelling.
- Create a storytelling space or stage using large fabric or furniture.



### The story of me - using stimulus text: WHAT WILL I BE (Frances Stickley)

#### Read or watch the story What Will I Be?. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oxysnD\\_fSsI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oxysnD_fSsI)

As a group, create a list of some of the things that the children in the story were pretending to be, such as a clown, super kids, a robot and a pirate. Have a go at moving in different ways to represent the different characters. Ask questions to prompt children's thinking: How could we be a ? . How would you move like a ? , What does a look like? Provide a selection of open-ended resources, such as hats, pieces of fabric or bags, and either transform yourself, or one or two of the children, into some of the characters.

Explain to the children that they will be using their imagination to create a character or a prop for their character e.g., a pirate and a pirate ship. Talk to the children about different ways they could represent their characters and the types of materials they could use: puppets, models, cut-out drawings, loose parts etc. Provide large sheets of paper for the children to plan and draw their characters and props and think about what materials they might use (boxes, bubble wrap, tissue paper, clay/dough, card, construction sets, etc ...).

- Encourage the children to include colours, shapes, materials and any other special features.
- Encourage children to label their plans, or scribe for them.

#### Outcome 3:

Support children to refer to the designs they made previously.

You may decide to group children according to the media they have selected, such as pens and pencils, recycled and model making materials, clay or paint.

Encourage children to collaborate, share ideas and resources, as they work.

As the children create, encourage them to think about a short story involving their character. What adventures will they go on? What challenges might they face? Stop the sessions and have time in a circle to HEAR one another's story telling. What adventures do their characters go on? What happens to them?

#### Outcome 4:

Offer children the opportunity to create a story using their characters and props. Provide a range of resources to enable them to choose how to represent their story and encourage them to build on ideas developed in continuous provision during the week.

Encourage children to use descriptive language and storytelling elements (setting, problem, solution).

Provide resources for children to record their story if they choose to. For example, with a drawing, making a book or recording on a device.



## Step inside my imagination!

Year 1

Start with a story: Our Tower (Joseph Coelho)

<https://literacytrust.org.uk/resources/reimagine-your-world-ks1-storytelling-resource-joseph-coelho/>

### Read and enjoy the story

• Use the link above to access the story if you do not have a copy.

On the second read-through, focus on the double-spread pages where the characters discover the third tree and tumble into a secret world. These pages will serve as the inspiration for your pupils' own stories.

### To guide the discussion, consider asking the following questions:

- What do you think is at the bottom of the third tree?
- How would you feel if you found a hidden world?
- If you could find a secret tree like this, where would you want it to take you? What would you see there/do there? Who would you meet?
- What do you think the secret world looks, sounds, or feels like?



### Creating a magic stone (or similar)

In the story, the characters have special objects that help to unlock hidden worlds. In our pupils' stories, they will unlock their hidden world with a stone.

Before the children 'find a new world' in the school grounds, consider ways in which they may create their stone?

- Could you use clay to create a stone and paint it?
- Could they be given a pebble to decorate that becomes their magic stone?
- Could you use cardboard and decorate it into the magic stone they will use?



The stone from the text – pupils will create their own special stone.



### Finding the special place

Pupils are going to go on a journey (within school grounds) to search for a hidden door/entrance that leads to a magical place, just like the characters in Our Tower, who discovered a magical door in a tree stump outside their tower block. Encourage them to walk around in pairs or small groups, observe their surroundings closely and use their imagination (and magic stones) to spot potential "doors" or hidden entrances to magical worlds. Explain to pupils that just like the characters in Our Tower, they need to keep their eyes open for anything that might look like a magical entrance, whether it's a tree stump, an old bench, a curled up leaf....

- Encourage pupils to think creatively—there's no right or wrong "door"

Ask Questions:

- *What do you think could be a secret entrance? Why do you think this?*
- *Where might a hidden world be hiding in this area?*
- *What's something unusual you see around you?*

### Outcome 1:

#### Text mapping & Vocabulary Bank

Help elicit key aspects of the text so far:

- Characters
- Settings
- What do they encounter?

Think of different ways of recording this – for you and the children? Could this be visual with depictions as well as utilising traditional story maps?

Create a vocabulary bank. The more ambitious the better. Utilise not just the written text but children's vocabulary as they see/read the story.

### Outcome 2:

Children have now used their magic stone to find and locate their special door. They have images of where this is from iPad pictures taken. They have discussed why it might be a secret entrance and who might be hidden there.

Record in their books – using the iPad photo as a stimuli of the secret door chosen. Let them write about the door, where it was found and what they think magically happens there. Scribe and take ideas on flipchart paper so that you have a visual bank of these around the room.



## Step inside my imagination! Year 1

### Building your story: Sense Collectors

<https://literacytrust.org.uk/resources/reimagine-your-world-ks1-storytelling-resource-joseph-coelho/>



#### Becoming a sense collector!

- Once their secret door is found and you've established where it is. The children will then begin to use creativity and imagination. They do not yet know what is behind the door - we are yet to discover it. Remind them that there are no right or wrong answers.
- The questions need to be read to them and time allocated to pause and respond.
- **Capture their thoughts.** Could they take a freeze frame picture on the iPad that shows how they feel about discovering their place?

#### Read and enjoy the story

• The more they can record at this stage, the easier the writing process will be. Allow them to choose and model different processes for answering the questions:

-> **Mindmaps, sense collector tables etc**

• For those with neurodivergent needs, consider allowing them the opportunity to record verbally their thoughts on GoogleDocs. Let this record and write for them.

• Don't stifle creativity - even if the answers seem silly or far-fetched. Allow the child to be creative

#### My magic world (planning stage)

Write a setting description of the secret magical world you discovered in the school grounds.

**Planning:** Invite pupils to draw a picture of their magical world, labelling it with adjectives, nouns and verbs.

#### Scribing, note-taking, ideas around the room

• Encourage pupils to share ideas aloud. Have an adult scribe their ideas, noting key vocabulary, to be used back in the classroom. You could also take pictures and sound recordings.



Senses	Questions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What colours do you see? Are they bright or dark colours?</li> <li>• What does the entrance to your magical place look like? Is it tiny or big? Is it dark or light? Is it sturdy or fragile?</li> <li>• Can you see anything special nearby? Any clues that helped you to find the magical door?</li> <li>• Does anything nearby look like it might belong to a secret world?</li> <li>• How do you get inside?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What sounds can you hear nearby? Can you hear anything coming from inside?</li> <li>• Do the sounds near the door feel quiet or loud?</li> <li>• Do the sounds feel calm or exciting?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you smell anything coming from inside?</li> <li>• Does the air nearby have a smell? What does it remind you of?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the entrance or the ground nearby feel? Is it soft, bumpy or smooth?</li> <li>• Can you feel the air? Is it warm, cool, or windy near the door?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you feel sitting nearby this magical place? Do you want to step inside? Why? Are you curious, excited, nervous?</li> </ul>

#### Outcome 3: Drama - talking as writing

Take pupils to the hall. Invite pupils to imagine that their magical doors is right in front of them. We recommend you narrate this activity whilst your students are completing it - create an exciting atmosphere. Ask pupils to 'draw' their door in front of them, imagining the shape, size and detail of the door as they draw it. When they are done, step back from the door and show their reactions to it: are they curious, are they scared, nervous etc?

Ask pupils to 'walk through' their door. Encourage them to act out what they might experience as they step into the hidden world. What do they see? What are their emotions? Encourage pupils to show how they feel through their body language and facial expressions. Are they excited, surprised, scared, or happy?

What can they "see" in their magical world - maybe strange creatures, beautiful landscapes, or something magical?

Now ask pupils to pair up and take it in turns to tell each other about their magical worlds. You can use the following sentence starters to help support these conversations: • My door was...

#### Outcome 4: Finish setting description

What can you see inside? What colours can you see? Is it light or dark? • How does it feel inside - mysterious/exciting/spooky? • What can you hear? • What can you smell? • Who lives there?

#### Example description:

As I walked through the large oak door, the smell of sweet, juicy berries filled my nostrils. I was surrounded by tall, silver trees that glimmered in the moonlight. Each tree was covered in bright red, glistening fruits. My tummy rumbled! Just then, a tinkling sound, like jingle bells, echoed through the forest. I spotted a flutter of wings and there in front of my eyes, was a tiny, smiling fairy.


I am a  
Storyteller


## My hidden, magical world


Use the space below to draw a picture of the magical world you discovered




# I am a Storyteller

What can you see? 

What can you hear? 

What can you feel? 

What can you smell? 

Who lives there? What did they say? What did they give you?

# I am a Storyteller



## Scaffold/sentence stems

My door is a

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It leads to

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Behind the door, there is

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When I stepped in to this magical world, I felt

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I heard

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I met

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They were

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## Step inside my imagination!

Year 2

### Storytelling through Art

#### Do we need to understand and literally interpret everything we see?

Children will look at surrealist artist Joan Miró - who they should be familiar with from Spr 1, Wk 2 (Art & Design). They will look at Miró's famous painting of a surrealist party (soirée): "*Soirée Snob Chez La Princesse*". Staff will receive an AI printout of the painting (Jon on our Poster Printer) Ideally this should be framed to make the children appreciate and associate this as a piece of artwork.

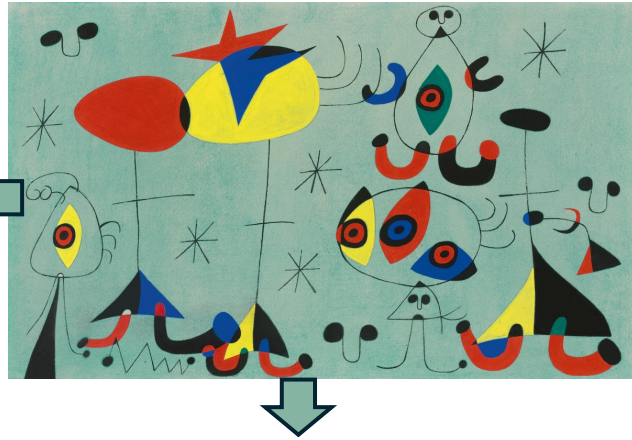
#### Activity: Stepping into the painting! Who is at the soiree?

Children will explore the painting and imagine the characters attending the soirée.

Display the painting and ask: **What do you see? Who might these strange shapes be? What are they doing?**

Create a 'Character Guessing Game' - children invent names and personalities for the shapes. Are they guests? Magical creatures? Talking furniture? Model these on your flipchart paper using their ideas. What is the backstory of the character?

In books: **What do they look like? Why have they come to the soirée?**



#### Activity: Setting the scene

Ask: What kind of place is this? Is it a floating castle? A magical garden? A palace in the clouds?

Create a 'Sensory Word Bank' with words for: What they see (sparkling lights, golden doors, floating chairs...)

- What they hear (whispering walls, tinkling laughter, a band of talking instruments...)
- What they smell (sweet candy air, bubbling potions, perfume that changes scent...)

Children write a short paragraph describing the setting, using at least three senses.

Example text

Madame Nocturna—the most mysterious figure of them all.

Her sharp, triangular frame is pointed and heavy, as if she were stitched from the fabric of the night itself. Atop her pointed head, a delicate golden thread floats, swaying gently as though whispering secrets only she can hear.

Her eyes — large, dark, and endless — gleam like two enchanted black pearls, holding stories of ancient spells and forgotten dreams...



#### Outcome 1:

##### Character descriptions - zooming in

Pupils should create a character description having 'zoomed in' on one of the characters at the party. (It may be useful to snip different guests from the painting so that children have copies in their books to choose from). Children need an opportunity to collate their descriptive words and ideas.

Demand that they are full descriptions, aided by opportunities to describe (at their level). This will be added to the rest of the written pieces to create an 'outcome' at the end of the week.

For SEND/LA: use a word resource bank and help the children connect to feelings. How does the character at the top of the box feel?



#### Outcome 2: The unexpected guest!

Discuss: Everything is going well at the soirée until... something happens!

Present a 'Mystery Bag' (filled with prompts like: a storm crashes in, a spell goes wrong, an uninvited guest arrives). Children pick one and decide how it changes the soirée. Spend time storytelling. Scribe some of their ideas onto flipchart.

They create a short dialogue between two characters reacting to the event. Model on flipchart the unexpected guest's behaviour and support the children in correctly writing dialogue.

## Step inside my imagination!

Year 2



Pulling all our senses together

**The music of the soiree.** Children will listen to different types of music - from suggested styles. They will study the painting whilst listening. Which do they feel matches? Why?

Composer & Musical Piece	Link to play the associated musical piece	Musical style and ideas
Claude Debussy "Clair de Lune"	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c977QdbTImU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c977QdbTImU</a>	Classical, whimsy (Dreamy and mysterious)
Camille Saint-Saëns "Carnival of the Animals"	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UmoZNL-LBKA">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UmoZNL-LBKA</a>	Playful, light. (Grand and elegant)
Danny Elfman "Alice's Theme"	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=148eG4U8skE">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=148eG4U8skE</a>	Magical and mysterious (Dreamlike)
Philip Glass "Glassworks: Opening"	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_2vRbNehGB0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_2vRbNehGB0</a>	Experimental, abstract (Enchanting, repetitive)
Jean-Michel Jarre "Oxygen Part IV"	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8dIo7OHXfKI">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8dIo7OHXfKI</a>	Futuristic, surreal (Sci-fi, spacey, floating feel)
Igor Stravinsky "The Firebird (Infernal Dance)"	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jmRU6cJeVDs">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jmRU6cJeVDs</a>	Abstract (Chaotic and unpredictable)

Allow the children to have space. Take them to the hall.

Have the projector on AT ALL TIMES (frozen on the painting). Play the music, but let them choose how they want to respond...

How to use the music in class:

- **Play different styles** and ask children how each one **changes their view of the painting.**
- **Let them choose** a song that fits their imagined story of the soiree.
- **Encourage movement**—can they move like the characters in the painting while the music plays?
- **Pair the music with writing**—as they listen, they can describe the party using words that match the sound (e.g. "bouncy and silly" for jazz, "mysterious and strange" for classical).

Example text

The soiree sways like a silver lullaby, wrapped in the hush of moonlight. Clair de Lune hums through the air, its soft notes curling like mist around the floating chandeliers. The guests move as if carried by the music—whispering, gliding, spinning in slow, weightless circles.

Madame Nocturna watches with her midnight-black eyes, her gown flickering between shadow and starlight. The Silver Whisperer drifts silently through the room, catching the softest echoes of laughter in his shimmering hands. A long-limbed figure with a beak-like nose tilts his head, listening. The guests are not speaking with words tonight; they are speaking with glances, with movements, with secrets hidden between the notes.

### Outcome 3: Drama and immersion

Find hats, or pieces of material to enhance characterisation. Use music.

Pair children up and ask them to introduce themselves in character.

Encourage dramatic voices, exaggerated gestures, and mysterious whispers.

Ask them to invent a reason why they are at the soiree:

- Have they come to deliver a magical message?
- Are they hiding from someone?
- Are they searching for a lost treasure?

Give them 2 minutes to act out a short scene together (e.g. exchanging secrets, showing off magical powers).

Take stills on iPads for exercise books. Children to write a reflection of their time at the Soiree.

### Outcome 4: Narrative ending and closure

Children resolve the problem—how is the mystery solved?

- Does the main character use a magical object?
- Does someone remember a hidden clue?
- Does a guest have a secret power to fix the problem?

👉 Example:

*"Madame Nocturna stepped forward. From her sleeve, she pulled out the Echo Key and pressed it to the piano. A golden sound burst into the air—soft at first, then growing into a shimmering melody. The music returned, the lights flickered, and the soiree was saved."*



## 1 Setting the Scene - Describe the Soirée

- ◆ Where is the soirée? (A floating palace? A castle in the stars?)
- ◆ What does the ballroom look like? (Floating chandeliers, swirling mist, tall windows with twinkling stars?)
- ◆ What sounds can you hear? (Soft music? Whispering voices? A piano playing by itself?)
- ◆ How do the guests move? (Gracefully? Floating? Sneaking through shadows?)

👉 Sentence Starter: *The ballroom shimmered in the moonlight, its golden chandeliers drifting above the guests. Soft music floated through the air as...*

## 2 Meet Your Mysterious Guest

- ◆ What is your character's name?
- ◆ What do they look like? (Tall and elegant? Small and glowing? A swirling shadow?)
- ◆ How do they move? (Gliding? Twirling? Tiptoeing?)
- ◆ Why have they come to the soirée? (A secret mission? A lost treasure? A spell to break?)

👉 Sentence Starter: *At the edge of the ballroom stood \_\_\_\_\_. Their eyes sparkled like \_\_\_\_\_. They had come to the soirée for a reason, but no one knew why...*

## 3 The Problem - Something Goes Wrong!

- ◆ What suddenly changes? (The music stops? The chandeliers flicker? The guests freeze in place?)
- ◆ What has been lost or stolen? (A magical key? A glowing star? The last note of the music?)
- ◆ How does your character react? (Do they gasp? Look for clues? Accuse someone?)

👉 Sentence Starter: *Suddenly, the music stopped. The chandeliers froze. A hush fell over the room as \_\_\_\_\_ realised that...*

## 4 The Solution - How is the Problem Solved?

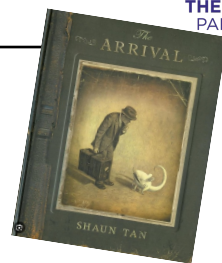
- ◆ What does your character do to fix the problem? (Use a magical object? Solve a riddle? Follow a hidden clue?)
- ◆ Do they work alone or with another guest?
- ◆ What happens as they solve it? (The music returns? The chandeliers start to glow? A hidden door appears?)

👉 Sentence Starter: *Thinking quickly, \_\_\_\_\_ reached into their pocket and pulled out \_\_\_\_\_. A soft glow filled the room as...*

## 5 The Ending - A Moment of Celebration!

- ◆ How do the guests react? (Do they cheer? Dance? Breathe a sigh of relief?)
- ◆ What does your character do next? (Smile mysteriously? Disappear into the night? Whisper a final secret?)
- ◆ Is there a hint that another adventure is coming?

👉 Sentence Starter: *As the music played once more, the guests twirled in delight. But in the shadows, \_\_\_\_\_ knew that this was only the beginning...*



## Excited to write my story

Year 3

### Storytelling through an unknown journey - The Arrival (Shaun Tan)

Is a story still a story, even if there are no words?

Children will become familiar with the graphic narrative, *The Arrival*, and have a chance to place themselves in the shoes of an immigrant moving from one place to another.



What do you see? (ships, clouds, sea, sky)

What do you notice about colour? (dark tones, shadows)

Observational prompts

Where is the ship going? Leaving or arriving?

Does the picture feel warm or cold? Why?

Use these to scaffold and model thinking

What do the clouds make you think about?

If you were standing on the ship, how would you feel? (lost? Excited? Hopeful?)

Emotional inference

Does this picture feel happy? Sad? Why?

What signs could there be in the image of something changing?

#### Storytelling through the image

- Imagine you are a person on that ship—why are you there? Where are you going?
- If the clouds could speak, what would they say? (“You are about to start something new” or “A storm is coming”?)
- If this picture had a title, what would you call it?
- How do the clouds move? How would you describe them?

#### Sensory & Imaginative play

- What sounds might you hear in this picture? (Waves, wind, seagulls, the ship’s horn.)
- If you could step inside, what would you feel on your skin? (Cold wind? Raindrops? Sea spray?)
- If this picture was part of a book, what might happen next?



#### Time to write - A postcard home

Dear... (Mum, Dad, my friend, my little sister, etc.),

**Where are you?** (I am on a big ship, sailing towards a new land...)

**What do you see?** (The sea stretches forever, the clouds above me look heavy...)

**How do you feel?** (I feel... nervous, excited, a little scared, but hopeful...)

**What do you hope for in your new home?** (I hope I will meet kind people and find a warm place to stay...)

#### Outcome 1: Immersion & Characterisation

Complete a read-through using the YouTube video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PGICxUCLsXM>

Ask children: Have you ever been somewhere new where you didn't know anyone? How did it feel?

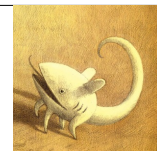
Imagine arriving in a place where nothing makes sense—the signs are in a language you can't read, the food is strange, and the people look at you but don't speak your language.

Imagine you are stepping off a boat, train, or spaceship into a land that feels completely alien. You don't know the language, the buildings are strange, and people look at you curiously.

- Describe what you see (What do the buildings look like? Are there unusual creatures?)
- Describe how you feel (Are you nervous? Do you feel small?)
- Describe how people react to you (Do they smile? Ignore you? Try to help?)
- Describe what you do next (Do you run? Stay still?)

#### Outcome 2: Meeting a mysterious creature

*"You have just arrived in a new world and met this unusual creature. Describe it as if you were explaining it to someone who has never seen it before."*



##### Writing Guide:

- **What does it look like?** (Its body is shaped like... Its skin feels like... Its eyes are...)
  - **How does it move?** (It scurries, it glides, it bounces, it shuffles...)
  - **How does it behave?** (Does it sniff you, circle around you, tilt its head in curiosity?)
  - **How do you feel meeting it?** (Are you excited, nervous, confused?)
  - **Does it make a noise or try to communicate?** (How do you understand it?)
- Sentence Starters:**
- I have never seen a creature like this before. It has...
  - As it moves, I notice...
  - It looks at me with...



Year 3

## Excited to write my story

Developing a mysterious setting: Art & Description



The land and terrain in *The Arrival* are different to that he came from.

When you are new to a place, it feels different and looks different. To us, the image on the left is a strange place. A cog in the sky is the Sun. Strange fish-like creatures appear to move among leaves which stand on their end. What helps us is the familiarity in how these things are placed – such as the roving hills and the tree-like shapes.

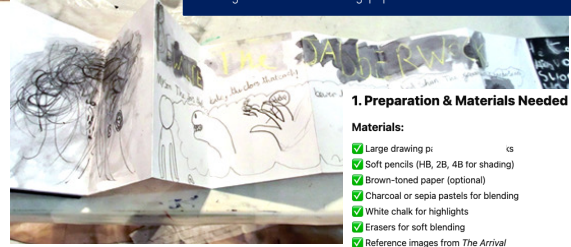
**Activity:** You are going to model and help the children to create their own mysterious setting. They are going to take Tan's colour scheme and draw in charcoals and a muted palette.

Large sheets of drawing paper to be folded into books

### Understanding how the illustrator uses art to tell the story...

#### Exploring Shaun Tan's Style

- Show examples of Shaun Tan's artwork (especially from *The Arrival*).
- Discuss the colours: What do you notice? How does it feel different from normal colours?
- Highlight the soft blending, unusual creatures, and surreal landscapes.



#### 1. Preparation & Materials Needed

##### Materials:

- ✓ Large drawing pt. cs
- ✓ Soft pencils (HB, 2B, 4B for shading)
- ✓ Brown-toned paper (optional)
- ✓ Charcoal or sepia pastels for blending
- ✓ White chalk for highlights
- ✓ Erasers for soft blending
- ✓ Reference images from *The Arrival*

### Outcome 3: Recreating a setting inspired by *The Arrival*

#### Step 1: Choosing a Setting Theme

Ask children to imagine they are in a completely new world.

Is it a city, a desert, a floating island, or an underwater world? What's in the sky? (Giant gears, glowing suns, flying fish?) What's on the ground? (Strange plants, creatures, moving houses?)

✨ Encourage them to think like Shaun Tan—where ordinary things become extraordinary.

#### Step 2: Sketching the Background First

1 Draw lightly in pencil to outline the main elements:

Large objects first (mountains, rivers, city buildings, mechanical suns).

Add curved shapes and unusual patterns—Shaun Tan's world isn't just straight lines!

2 Think about depth:

- Big things in front, smaller things in the background.
- Use lighter pencil strokes for distant objects and darker ones for close details.

#### Step 3: Adding Shaun Tan's Signature Elements

##### ◆ Unusual Creatures:

- Add fish-like birds, creatures with gears, plants that look like machines.

##### ◆ Strange Buildings & Machines:

- Maybe houses float, or stairs lead to nowhere.
- Add pipes, gears, windows that glow! Ships out of water...

### Outcome 4: Final piece – based on artwork

Throughout the week, children have had the opportunity to get to grips with the images from *The Arrival*, to explore character feeling and to then create their own. In this final piece, they will write (from a character perspective) about arriving in their own artwork (outcome 3).

Model to the children as follows – unpick and experiment with writing:

Example text

I step off the boat, gripping my suitcase tight. The city rises before me, twisting towers and curving roads stretching into the distance. Strange symbols glow on enormous signs - I cannot read them. I do not know where to go.

The air is thick with smoke, and shadows flicker under the streetlamps. Machines hum in the distance, their gears clicking like whispers. A train snakes through the city, but I do not know if I should follow it. People hurry past, their faces kind but unfamiliar. I open my mouth to ask for help, but no words come out. My heart thumps.



Year 4

## Excited to write my story

Abandoned places, what story do they have to tell?

We are going to use AI generated images to take us on a narrative journey, that re-imagines what Britain might look like if people were no longer around...

In exercise books, brainstorm all the possible vocabulary to describe...

lichen-covered stone

timeworn

crumbling



desolate forgotten derelict ivy-clad

### Setting the scene

- A forgotten bicycle leaned against a crumbling wall, its frame \_\_\_\_\_ and its wheels \_\_\_\_\_.

### Personification and Similes

- The buildings hunched like old men, their roofs sagging under years of neglect.
- Ivy snaked up the walls, wrapping the forgotten village in its emerald grip.
- The windows whispered secrets of the past, their shattered glass glinting in the fading sunlight.

### Outcome 1:

#### Setting description - built using precise vocabulary

Pupils should create a short setting description using the images as a muse. They need to layer and build upon the images. Teach them to ZOOM in first.

The village lay frozen in time, its empty windows staring like hollow eyes. Ivy crawled up the forgotten walls, reclaiming the once-lively homes. The cobble street, now cracked and uneven, littered with fallen leaves and tangled weeds. A single rusted bicycle rested against the rotting window frame of an abandoned shop, the metal barely visible beneath creeping vines. Somewhere in the distance, a bird called, its lonely song echoing through the silence.

warped shelves dimly lit



eerie splintered chair broken windowpanes

### Setting the scene

- Dust swirled in the dim light, settling on \_\_\_\_\_.
- The once-bustling grocer's shop now lay \_\_\_\_\_ filled with \_\_\_\_\_.

### Nature reclaiming

- Moss spread across the wooden floorboards, soft and \_\_\_\_\_ underfoot.
- Ivy curled around the shattered window, its tendrils reaching for \_\_\_\_\_.

### Outcome 2: Creating the backstory - group work

#### Group Discussion (10 mins)

Ask children:

- What do you notice in the picture that gives clues about what happened?
- What does the overgrown nature tell us?
- Who do you think lived here? Why might they have left?

#### Small Group Challenge:

Give each group a specific element of the scene to discuss:

- The church - Was it once a place of safety or gathering?
- The shops - What kind of people worked here?
- The abandoned bicycle - Who might have left it behind in a hurry?
- The overgrown houses - What happened to the families who lived here?

Pupils to write down these ideas in pairs or groups



## Excited to write my story

Let us visit the abandoned village...

### 👉 Story Starter Prompt:

*"The village was once full of life—children playing, shops bustling, villagers chatting by their doorsteps. But one day, everything changed. Now, the streets are silent, the buildings crumble, and only the wind echoes their story..."*

Ask children to **decide on a reason** for the village's abandonment. Some ideas:

- A **great storm** or flood drove the people away.
- A **mysterious disappearance**—everyone vanished overnight.
- A **war or conflict** forced people to flee.
- A **disease or illness** spread through the town.
- A **curse or legend** that scared people away.

The night everything changed...



### Outcome 3: Newspaper article - neighbouring village

#### Writing formality - writing as a reporter in 1800s

Pupils are to create a newspaper that tells the story of the strange going on. This is to build upon the children's choices in role play and decisions made about the village's fate.

On the next page is a model text, that should be used to break down the language and support pupils in understanding the viewpoint of the reporter. In the model text, the disaster is linked to a great storm that happened within the village - children may wish to apply their own fate - based on their earlier work.

Model backgrounds are available to enable pupils to publish their Newspapers, once complete, and to be affixed in exercise books.

### 🎭 Role-Play Task:

- One child is the **last villager** left behind, telling their story to a traveller.
- The traveller asks questions:
  - *Why did everyone leave?*
  - *Why did you stay?*
  - *What do you remember before the village changed?*



#### 📖 Diary Extract Example:

*"Tuesday, 14th October 1896 - The villagers packed their things in a hurry. The sky had turned black, and a strange silence filled the air. The church bell rang once... then never again. We left, but some stayed behind. No one has heard from them since."*

### Outcome 4: The final diary...

#### 📖 Writing Prompt:

*"Everyone has gone. The village is empty now. But I remain. Today, I walked through the streets one last time, remembering what once was. I heard... I saw... I felt... And now, I wonder if I made the right choice to stay."*

#### Sentence Starters to Help Structure Writing:

Opening (Setting the Scene):

- *The village is quieter than ever before. Not a single soul remains except for me...*
- *Once, these streets were filled with laughter, but now...*
- *The wind whispers through the empty houses, carrying memories of the past...*

Remembering the Past:

- *I remember the baker's shop, where the scent of fresh bread used to drift through the air...*
- *Children once played in the village square, but now weeds grow between the cobbles...*
- *I used to stand by the church steps, watching people come and go, but today, the doors remain shut.*

What Happened? (Hint at the Backstory):

- *They left in a hurry. Some packed what they could; others ran without looking back...*
- *I wanted to leave too, but something held me back...*
- *The night before the village emptied, I heard a strange noise...*

Ending (A Sense of Mystery or Fear):

- *I am alone now. Or at least, I think I am...*
- *The village may be empty, but I feel as if someone... or something... is watching me.*
- *Tonight, the wind carries voices I do not recognise. Perhaps I should have left too...*

THE BRIDGEMOOR

## BRIDGEMOOR GAZETTE

14th October 1896

The once-thriving village of Blackwood Hollow now stands eerily silent. Just days ago, its cobbled streets bustled with merchants, families, and laughter. Today, the doors of homes hang open, shopfronts are deserted, and the grand church spire of St Boniface looms over an empty landscape. What could have driven an entire community to flee so suddenly?

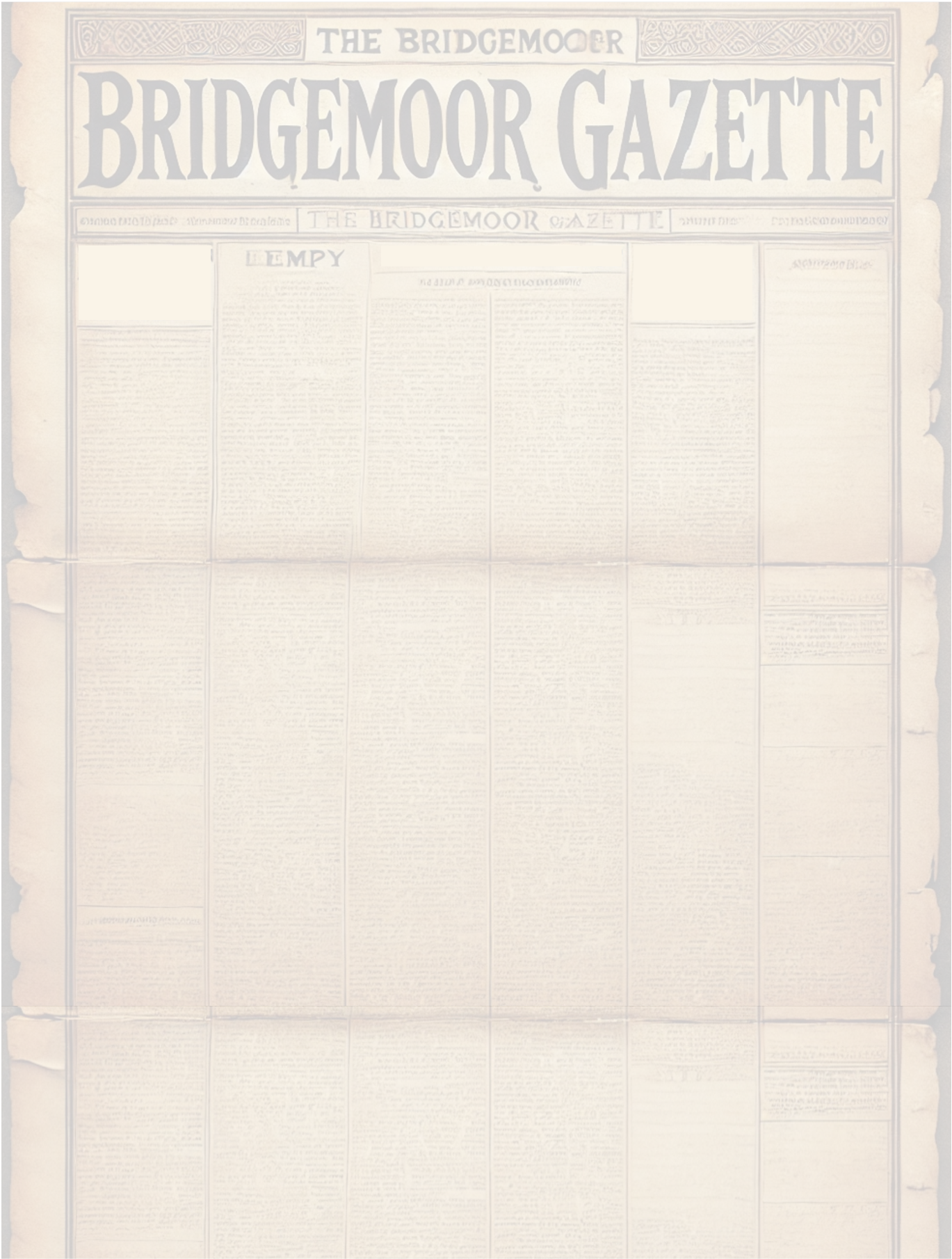
Eyewitness accounts from neighbouring villages report **wagons loaded with belongings** seen travelling through the valley late into the night. "They left in a hurry," said local farmer Thomas Whitmore, "some without even taking their livestock." Chickens still roam the market square, and washing flutters on the abandoned clothes lines.

Rumours swirl of a **great misfortune**—some say it was disease, others whisper of a terrible omen seen in the skies. "A storm unlike any I've ever seen gathered above Blackwood the night before they vanished," claims Mrs. Edith Langley of Rivermere. "Lightning struck the old chapel. After that, it was as if the village held its breath."

Yet, curiously, **one villager remains**. An elderly man known only as Mr. Alcott has refused to leave, his reasons unknown. "I have my own unfinished business here," he muttered when approached by a local post rider.

Authorities are hesitant to enter the village, awaiting guidance from officials in the city. For now, Blackwood Hollow remains **a ghost of its former self**, leaving neighbouring communities to wonder: **what truly happened in the final days before its abandonment?**

*The Bridgemoor Gazette* will continue to provide further updates on this unfolding mystery.



## Being an author

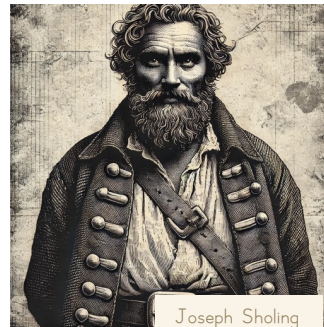
Year 5/6



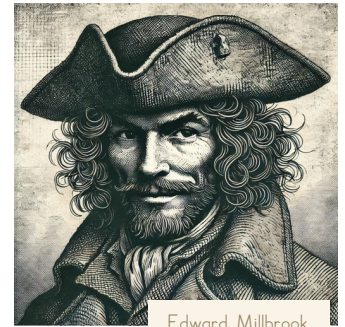
### Welcome to the port City of Southampton

Southampton has one of the most famous ports in the world. Not only because of the infamy bestowed because of its links to Titanic, but because the city has been one of our country's biggest trading ports for hundreds of years. This unit will explore some of the 'urban legends' around famous pirates and tunnels that many will not know existed. *This will support links to Y5 History Unit Spr 1 'Local Area Study'.*

### Meet Southampton's most notorious smugglers



Joseph Sholing



Edward Millbrook

**Secret Tunnels of Southampton - Smugglers paradise**  
Beneath the bustling streets of Southampton lies a hidden world – a maze of secret tunnels that once played a crucial role in the city's smuggling past. These underground passages, stretching from the docks to inns, warehouses, and even churches, provided the perfect escape routes for those who sought to move illegal goods undetected.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, smuggling was a dangerous but lucrative business. Southampton's busy port made it an ideal location for smugglers to bring in contraband – barrels of French brandy, fine silks, and tobacco – all without paying the hefty taxes imposed by the government. And who better to use these tunnels than the notorious smugglers Edward Millbrook and Joseph Sholing, two of the most cunning criminals in Southampton's history?

### The Smugglers of Southampton

Edward Millbrook, known as "The Rat" for his ability to slip through any gap unnoticed, was a mastermind of tunnel navigation. He had a map of Southampton's underground in his head. It was said that he could vanish from the sight of pursuing excise officers within seconds, disappearing into the tunnels and re-emerging miles away, safe and sound.

His partner in crime, Joseph Sholing, was the muscle behind the operation. A former sailor turned smuggler; he was an expert at disguising stolen goods. He could hide barrels of brandy inside innocent-looking fishing boats, roll them through hidden tunnel entrances, and have them unloaded in taverns before the authorities even knew they had arrived.

One of their most daring exploits took place beneath The Red Lion Inn, an old Southampton pub that still stands today. With excise officers closing in, Millbrook and Sholing led their gang through a tunnel hidden beneath the inn's cellar. The officers stormed the pub, sure they had their men trapped – but when they reached the cellar, the barrels and smugglers were gone.

### Why the Tunnels Were Perfect for Smugglers

The tunnels beneath Southampton were not built by smugglers, but they became invaluable to them. Some were medieval cellars connected by underground walkways, while others had been dug for drainage. Many had hidden entrances inside homes, churches, and warehouses, making them impossible for authorities to track.

The most famous smuggling tunnels connected the docks to Bugle Street, where tavern owners and black-market dealers eagerly awaited their share of illegal goods.

### Outcome 1: Diary entry

Having read this information and the newspaper in the appendices for outcome 1:

Pupils are to assume the role of either Joseph or Edward. Spend time using drama, in table groups, to spotlight the smuggling pair. Children should try and think and behave like the smugglers. They were daring, successful and notorious.

Once they have had an opportunity to read and comprehend the information from this page and the newspaper:

In role, they are to create a diary entry for the night of 14 October 1783. In the diary, they should account for what happened:

- What goods did they take?
- How did they escape the excise officers?
- What did they think about their notoriety in the local newspaper?
- Did they feel at all guilty or were they master criminals?



## Being an author

Year 5/6

Model text

The moon hung low over Southampton water as I pressed my back against the damp stone of God's House Tower, my breath ragged. The excise men had been quicker than expected, their boots hammering the cobbles of Bugle Street, lanterns slicing through the fog.

Only minutes earlier, I'd slipped a cask of French brandy through a hatch beneath The Red Lion Inn, the tunnels swallowing it into darkness. Joseph Sholing had hissed for me to run as the alarm was raised, but I'd barely made it past St. Michael's Church before the shouts closed in.

Now, as the patrols thinned, I crept towards the old walls, skirting the Bargate's watchful eyes. By dawn, I'd be on a skiff bound for Hythe, leaving the city's suspicions behind. Next time, I'd be more careful—but tonight, I lived to smuggle another day.



### Urban folklore - The Phantom Pirate of Southampton

Even today, as the tide rises and the mist rolls through the city, Southampton's dockworkers murmur of a **ghostly pirate** who once outwitted the city's most feared smuggler. They say that if you listen closely near **Bargate**, you can still hear the faint whispers of a deal gone terribly wrong.

In **1751**, the notorious smuggler **Vernon Valentine** ruled the underground trade of Southampton. From the hidden cellars of **The Tudor House** to the shadows of **God's House Tower**, his men moved silks, brandy, and stolen gold through the labyrinth of tunnels beneath the city. But one night, a pirate named **Captain Elias Blackstone** came to Southampton, not to buy—but to steal. Blackstone lured Valentine into the tunnels with promises of Spanish silver, leading him deep beneath the Tudor House. But while Valentine counted his gold, Blackstone's men sealed the exits—locking the smuggler inside. Some say Valentine roamed the tunnels for days before perishing beneath **God's House Tower**, never to be seen again.



Yet to this day, those who pass Bargate at night claim they hear footsteps in the dark, the sound of a man still searching for an escape... or his revenge.

### Outcome 2: Short narrative

#### The perspective of the smuggler

Pupils are to create a short narrative, utilising their own street journey (as in the streets they may know well) to add depth to their writing.

They are to write as if they have been lured to smuggle alongside Edward Millbrook and Joseph Sholing.

Use the model text above to support.



An engraving and memorial to remember the underworld trade of smuggling - said to be hung at the entrance to one of the secret tunnels!

### Outcome 3:

#### Writing a "think piece" for a Southampton outlet - magazine, newspaper, blog, podcast or speech.

Having learned more about the Port City's past, and now considering the evidence laid before them (through the newspaper article, the diary extracts and urban folklore) - pupils are to answer the question: 'Should smugglers like Edward Millbrook and Joseph Sholing be remembered as heroes or villains?'

Pupils should choose how they wish to respond - for example: do they want to utilise the information from this unit to create a magazine article - carefully considering the age range and audience? Or are they going to write a piece for the Daily Echo - considering the moral implications of the smuggling trade?

Pupils may make links between smuggling and organised crime today - Is Southampton any different?

## THE SOUTHAMPTON HERALD

*Published this day, the 14th of October, in the Year of Our Lord 1783*

### **SMUGGLERS STRIKE AGAIN UNDER COVER OF DARKNESS!**

#### **Suspicious Cargo Seized in Bold Nighttime Raid**

Reports reach us this morning of a most audacious act of maritime villainy upon the waters of our fair port. Late last eve, the merchant vessel *The Lady Eleanor*—arriving from the shores of Calais laden with fine silks, brandy, and tobacco—fell prey to an organised gang of smugglers, striking under the cover of night's thickest cloak.

#### **Infamous Names Whispered in the Streets**

Amongst the names murmured in fearful tones by dockhands and traders alike, none are spoken with greater trepidation than those of **Edward Millbrook** and **Joseph Sholing**—two men long suspected of nefarious dealings in the clandestine trade that haunts Southampton's waters.

Whilst official records bear no proof of their involvement, the pattern of their misdeeds is all too familiar. Witnesses claim to have seen shadowy figures slipping away with casks and bundles upon swift boats, vanishing as if swallowed by the very air itself.

#### **A Port That Knows Nothing?**

The Herald's own investigative reporter sought answers from those who dwell nearest to the murky dealings of the docks.

"I saw naught but the tide and the moon," declared Master Robert Henshaw, an aging watchman stationed near the quayside. "If these smugglers do indeed exist, they are spectres upon the wind, for I have never laid eyes upon them."

Mistress Eleanor Wicks, keeper of The King's Arms Tavern, likewise pleaded ignorance.

"Smugglers?" she scoffed. "I know nothing of such men. Southampton is a town of honest merchants, and if any speak otherwise, they should hold their tongues lest they find trouble."

#### **The Mystery of the Tunnels**

Rumours persist that a hidden network of subterranean tunnels links the waterfront to the heart of the city, providing smugglers with the means to slip unseen beneath the very feet of the authorities. Yet when our reporter pressed for details, the responses were curiously dismissive.

"There are no such tunnels," declared Alderman James Thornton. "Such tales are the stuff of children's fancies."

Yet why then do some swear to hearing the echo of hurried footsteps beneath the cobblestones? Why do barrels and crates disappear as if by sorcery?

#### **Authorities Promise Action**

The Mayor's office has issued a firm decree, vowing to redouble efforts to quash these crimes. "Let it be known," came the pronouncement, "that Southampton shall not serve as a den of vice for those who would cheat honest men of their trade."

Despite such bold words, the tide waits for no man. Even now, the whispers persist, the shadows lengthen, and the smuggler's work continues.

One must wonder—will Millbrook and Sholing finally meet justice, or shall the darkened alleys and hidden waters of Southampton forever be their refuge?

*The Herald shall continue to report on all developments in this most urgent matter. Citizens with knowledge of the events of last eve are urged to come forward.*

## Diary of Thomas Weaver

Newgate Prison, October 3rd, 1784

I never thought I would find myself in this wretched place. The walls are damp, the air thick with the stench of too many souls crammed together, and the rats scurry about like they own the place. I should be home in St. Mary's, helping my father, not rotting in this cell like a common thief. But now, I fear I shall never see him again.

I was always a good lad, or so I thought. I did as Father asked, I worked hard, and I never strayed too far from home. But when you live in the shadows of the docks, it is hard to ignore the whispers of easy coin. And when you've a father who cannot work, whose broken leg keeps him bound to his chair, what is a boy to do?

Edward Millbrook and Joseph Sholing were not bad men, or at least, that's what I believed. They were clever, knew the secret ways of the tunnels beneath the city, and they always had work for a quick-footed lad who knew how to keep his mouth shut. At first, it was small things—carrying letters, keeping watch while the men moved barrels through the tunnels near the Tudor House. I never touched the goods, never even asked what was inside.

But greed is a cruel master. The more I earned, the more I wanted. And when Millbrook said they needed help with a larger job—hauling casks from God's House Tower to the Bargate—I did not hesitate. I thought of the bread it would buy, the medicines my father needed. I thought I was being clever.

I was a fool.

The excise men came down upon us like a storm. The others scattered into the night, their feet knowing the tunnels better than mine. But I was not so lucky. They dragged me out by my collar, my face pressed to the cold stones of the street. I begged, I pleaded—I was just a boy, I knew nothing, I meant no harm. But they would not listen. A smuggler's hand is a guilty one, no matter his age. Now, I sit in the dark, awaiting judgment. They say I will hang. Or perhaps they will send me across the sea, far from Father, far from St. Mary's, far from the only life I have ever known.

I was a good boy. A good son. But none of that matters now.

All that remains is regret.

An illustration of a submarine underwater. The submarine is shown in a cross-section, revealing its interior with various rooms, including a kitchen, a living area, and a control room. The exterior of the submarine is decorated with colorful patterns and symbols. The water is a vibrant green, and several jellyfish with yellow and blue bells are swimming around. A large sea turtle is visible on the left side of the submarine. The title "I am a Storyteller" is written in a large, black, cursive font across the center of the image.

# I am a Storyteller



**THE ST. MARY'S  
PARTNERSHIP**