

## TODAY YOU WILL...

- > THINK ABOUT LEADERSHIP AND WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A LEADER
- > CONSIDER HEROISM
- > BECOME A BETTER 'READER' OF IMAGES

## YOU WILL NEED...

- > ONLINE ACCESS TO ARTHUR DEVIS' *THE DEATH OF NELSON* PAINTED IN 1807  
[TINYURL.COM/TSNELSON](http://TINYURL.COM/TSNELSON)
- > ACCESS ALSO TO THE ENGRAVING OF *THE IMMORTALITY OF NELSON* BY CHARLES THEODOSIUS HEATH  
[TINYURL.COM/TSNELSON2](http://TINYURL.COM/TSNELSON2)

As a full-time teacher of English, media and drama, the topic of heroes and the heroic was one that came up frequently. It still does now I am freelance, travelling the UK delivering active workshops on the likes of Beowulf and his unapologetic boasting as prelude to confrontations with monsters, or Macbeth, whose final defiance in the face of Malcolm's army arguably marks a recovery of the energy and courage that his crimes and scheming had obscured and perverted. It has become even more central a theme when considering the life and times of Horatio Lord Nelson.

For the past two years I have been collaborating with historian Peter Warwick – author of *The Voices From The Battle of Trafalgar* – in the creation of a one-day workshop designed to teach Key Stage 2 and 3 students something of the importance of Nelson in our island's story and also the broader context within which his achievements sit. The project is an on-going one thanks to the support of the 1805 Club, which has funded the initial series of 'pilot' workshops as a prelude to our seeking the additional funding needed to broaden the programme.

It is at this crossroads that the project now sits. And while the workshops remain a work in progress, a core of highly active and interactive elements has emerged, some of which will be explained here: ideal introductions to Nelson, his significance, and the extraordinary life aboard the ships he commanded.

## THE NELSON TOUCH

Put heroism into an historical context, with Jerome Monahan's interactive ideas...



## + STOP PRESS:

Jerome Monahan and Peter Warwick are eager to hear from secondary schools that might be interested in their hosting a free, day-long Wooden World workshop both as pupil enrichment but also CPD. Please contact: [Jerome.Monahan@dsl.pipex.com](mailto:Jerome.Monahan@dsl.pipex.com)

## STARTER ACTIVITY+

On the 24th July (the day I am writing this) 1797 Nelson wrote to the commander in chief of the Mediterranean fleet Admiral, Sir John Jervis (later Earl St Vincent) prior to the sea-borne attack on the port of Santa Cruz de Tenerife during which he sustained the injuries that resulted in the amputation of his right arm. In his letter he said *'Tomorrow my head will probably be*

*covered with laurel or Cyprus.'*

This was a permutation of a favourite formula used by Nelson time and again prior to battles, and is highly suggestive of the kind of 'risk-all' role he took on such occasions. To get students into the shoes of the man, invite them to move around the room sharing this bold but quite self-conscious statement; speaking it in turns to one another, and then reflecting on it both in terms of the courage and self-promotion it hints at.

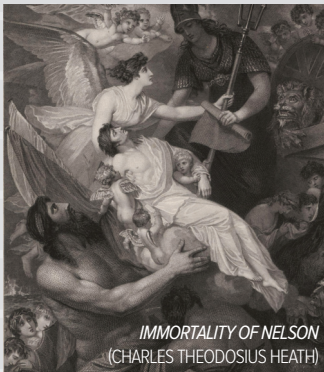
## MAIN ACTIVITIES+

## 1 NELSON – DEATH AND THE SAINT

Project or distribute Arthur Devis' famous picture *The Death of Nelson* painted in 1807. It is not important to know precisely who everyone is – though the Wikipedia site does identify them. The important discussions here relate to the possible liberties with truth that Devis may have taken in creating

this famous image. Remember that the orlop deck where Nelson was carried to was far more 'low-ceilinged' than the space depicted here, and it fantastical to think such a crowd would have gathered around Nelson at the height of the Battle. The task for students is to try to spot the underlying geometry that governs the arrangement of the figures – perhaps drawing the shapes they can see for themselves. The key thing is that students recognise how *constructed* the picture is. It would be valuable to compare it also to any medieval or Renaissance 'Christ's Deposition From The Cross' to help students see how painters borrow from an image tradition. That such pictures might be a source for Devis is also suggestive of the kind of 'sainthood' that would be bestowed on Nelson.

Now project or distribute the extraordinary *Immortality of Nelson* by Charles Theodosius Heath. It reflects the next advance in Nelson hero-worship following his death. The detailed description of the picture and its myriad symbols and emblematic figures is provided at the Royal Greenwich Museum's online pages dedicated to the picture (see You Will Need).



IMMORTALITY OF NELSON (CHARLES THEODOSIUS HEATH)



THE DEATH OF NELSON (ARTHUR DEVIS, 1807)

## HOME LEARNING

A challenging task is to invite students to investigate the Battle of Trafalgar so that they can then either draw a picture of Nelson's unique approach or even 'fight' the battle with students sitting on chairs – each depicting ships in the French/Spanish fleet or one of the two English columns that drove directly into the enemy line – despite the damage they had to suffer in the approach. It has proved one of the most popular elements of the Wooden World workshops!

Investigate the 1805 Committee's site – one highlight of which is 'A Day In The Life' of Nelson, which provides a year-round day-by-day happening from his biography (1805club.org).

Ideally teachers should explain the picture and get students to practise some of its specialist vocabulary: 'Britannia'; 'Neptune'; 'hippocampi'; or 'putti'. In order to help students get close to the picture, put them in pairs and then designate one 'the sculptor' and the other 'the clay'. In each case the pair must select a figure in the picture to create, keeping their choice secret from others. The challenge then is for a chosen sculptor to build their figure, slowly manipulating their classmate into the right shape. The rest can call 'freeze' at any stage, with the 'sculptor' taking suggestions from the 'audience' as to what bit of the picture (s)he is creating. The audience should be encouraged to use the correct vocabulary to describe the figures.

## 2 THE LEADER

*Heroism; vocation; compassion; courage; passion; loyalty; diligence; self-sacrifice; consideration for his men; inspiration; rigour, and a thirst for glory*

All of these qualities have been attributed to Nelson by his biographers over the last 213 years since Trafalgar. There were other, less positive characteristics too. He was a flawed man, doubtless,

but he was loved by those he commanded and proved a source of inspiration when it really mattered. A simple way of helping students gain a better understanding of Nelson and the 'Nelson Touch' that marked out his leadership, is to invite students to create a living virtue line of frozen scenes depicting these characteristics.

If time allows, watch Peter Weir's wonderful 2003 film *Master and Commander* and keep a tally of the 'Nelsonian' leadership traits apparent in Russell Crowe's depiction of Captain Jack Aubrey. Another terrific exercise would be to read an account such as that in Christopher Hibbert's biography of Nelson (pages 121-126) of Nelson's behaviour following his injury at Santa Cruz de Tenerife.

A further, useful source of online information about Nelson's genius for leadership can be found at: [aboutnelson.co.uk/nelsons-genius.htm](http://aboutnelson.co.uk/nelsons-genius.htm)

## INFO BAR

### + ABOUT THE EXPERT



Jerome Monahan has taught for over 20 years. In 1999, after a decade working in London secondary schools – both state and independent, he became a freelance teacher, educational writer and journalist. His background is English, drama, humanities and film/media studies. Since 2000 he has devised and delivered a broad programme of primary and secondary inset and student workshops across the UK and internationally. The Nelson and The Wooden World workshops, which he delivers with historian Peter Warwick, have been developed with the support of the 1805 Club.

## SUMMARY

Invite students to come together in a standing circle. The task is then to read the following, stirring prayer – the one composed by Nelson before the Battle of Trafalgar – around the group, one word at a time, but done as much as possible without pauses and with maximum concentration. Once completed, each student will have at least one or two words that are 'his/hers'. Now repeat the circle read, but with each student supplying an action with his/her word or words – including every functional 'in', 'on' and 'the'. Encourage a discussion of the varied

emotions and impulses exhibited in the prayer.

*"MAY THE GREAT GOD, whom I worship, grant to my country and for the benefit of Europe in general, a great and glorious victory: and may no misconduct, in anyone, tarnish it: and may humanity after victory be the predominant feature in the British Fleet. For myself Individually, I commit my life to Him who made me... and may His blessing light upon my endeavours for serving my Country faithfully. To Him I resign myself and the just cause which is entrusted to me to defend.  
All: AMEN AMEN AMEN"*