



# EXPLORATHON

ART OF EMPOWERMENT LEARNING RESOURCE



**EXPLORATHON '20**



UPPER PRIMARY | TEACHER'S NOTES

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You can access this resource via the Art of Empowerment  
Google Classroom using this code: pe6iouy

European Researchers' Night, known as Explorathon in Scotland, is a celebration of research that takes place in over 300 cities in Europe each year. Explorathon events are dedicated to bringing researchers closer to the public. They showcase the diversity of research happening in Scotland and highlight the impact it has on our daily lives.

In 2019 Explorathon engaged with 22,000 people across Scotland through events and activities in science centres, community spaces, and shopping centres. 2020 Explorathon will of course look very different as new modes of delivery are explored, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. From virtual workshops and tours to Q&As and films, this is a chance to get creative! By taking events online, this is an opportunity to involve partners and collaborators from across Europe and the world.



Photograph courtesy of Explorathon

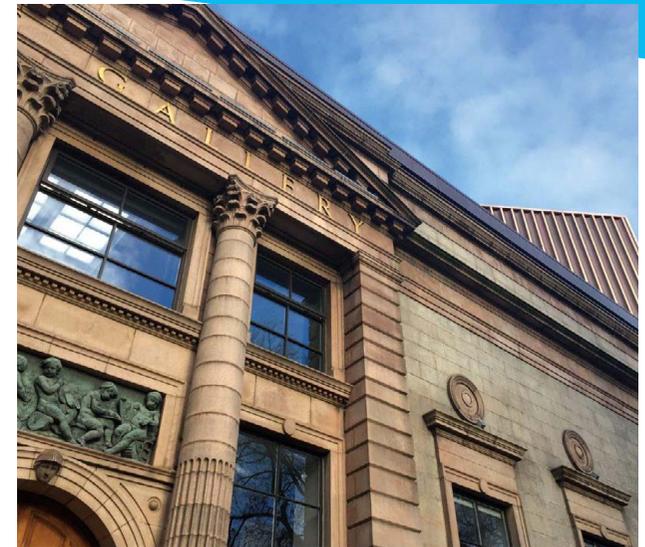
The Explorathon programme is funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions grant agreement 955376.

## ABERDEEN ART GALLERY

Aberdeen Art Gallery first opened to the public in 1885. Local businessmen paid for the building and donated many of the artworks. Their aim was to provide a leisure activity that was both inspirational and educational. A particular focus was collecting and displaying contemporary works of art.

With its most recent refurbishment completed in 2019, the building now has 21 gallery spaces with more than 1,000 works on show, free of charge to the public.

This resource features a selection of artworks and objects that are on permanent display in Aberdeen Art Gallery. You can arrange a visit to see them and explore more of our collection. Book free tickets at <https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/AAGM/plan-your-visit/aberdeen-art-gallery>



Aberdeen Art Gallery ©Aberdeen Art Gallery

### The value of art to society

It has long been taken for granted that anyone and everyone can create and enjoy wonderful art. Over the past few decades research has been undertaken that examines the impact the arts can have on our physical and mental health and our sense of personal and national identity. The conclusion being that the arts are powerful tools that allow for self-expression and growth.

Beyond the individual, it is recognised that art can also act as a tool for change as it raises public awareness and inspires action in communities. It creates a platform to share stories, address issues, seek solutions and build the community. In reviewing the research one word that is frequently used is **empowerment**.

### What is empowerment?

Empowerment can have different meanings to different people depending on their circumstances, experiences, beliefs, and aspirations. In general, it refers to the degree of self-determination for individuals and communities, so they can best represent their interests. It includes self-empowerment (becoming stronger and more confident) and leaning on others (professionals, family, and community) to overcome powerlessness and lack of influence. This resource introduces artworks and objects that are part of the collection held by Aberdeen Archives, Gallery and Museums.

## THE FIGHT FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

In 1903 Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters Christabel and Sylvia Pankhurst formed the Women's Social and Political Union. They took direct, militant action to get women the right to vote in elections. Supporters become known as Suffragettes. If only men's interests were represented in the Houses of Parliament, women's freedoms, safety, and access to justice would not be protected by the law. Voting in elections meant women would have a say in which politicians would get into parliament and best represent their interests.

This tea set, on display in Gallery 14 at Aberdeen Art Gallery, was made for the 1909 Women's Exhibition, a two week-long fundraising event held in London to support the Suffragette cause. Attendees could drink Suffragette branded tea from Suffragette tea sets in the exhibition's tearoom.

The Suffragette colours of purple for loyalty and dignity, white for purity, and green for hope, are used on the tea set. Printed onto each of the 19 pieces is the angel of freedom logo with chains on either side of her that references the women who endured imprisonment due to their militant actions.

Sylvia Pankhurst was an activist and a talented artist. She designed the winged female figure motif and it appeared on banners, badges, and rosettes to promote the Suffragette cause.



Suffragette tea set (19 Pieces), 1909, H.M. Williamson & Sons



### Activity:

Watch a tutorial on how to create a Suffragette rosette. Be inspired to create your own version <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S55YEJCevSE>

## WOMEN AS CULTURE PRODUCERS

It is only recently that women's participation in the arts has begun to gain recognition as an important barometer to measure female empowerment. The cultural field provides a vital platform for women to express their views about their identity and their rights within society.

Gwendoline Mary John (1876 - 1939) was a talented artist who led an unconventional life. Her work had been overlooked as her brother, Augustus John, was a famous artist but her accomplishments are now receiving more attention.

Gwen John studied at the Slade School of Art in London, which at that time was the only art school in Britain that admitted female students. In 1903 she moved to Paris where she continued to live and paint many portraits of women. On display in Gallery 15 at Aberdeen Art Gallery is the artwork *Seated Girl Holding Sewing*. It is like a lot of Gwendoline John's portraits as it is set indoors. The colours she has used are not bright and vivid but are softer and gentler.

### Discuss:

When viewing the artwork are you looking at the sitter or the room she is sitting in? Why is this?

### Learn:

Find out more information on Gwen John's extraordinary life and work here:

<https://www.tate.org.uk/kids/explore/who-is/who-gwen-john>

### Create:

Make your own version of this portrait but use only bright colours. Does this colour change make a difference in how you respond to the artwork?



*Seated Girl Holding a Piece of Sewing*, 1915-1925 by Gwendoline Mary John

## CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Aberdeen-born artist Alexander Mackenzie created the painting *A Frugal Meal*, which is on display in Gallery 10 at Aberdeen Art Gallery. It features a young girl who gently blows over a spoonful of her sparse dinner to cool it down. The realities of poverty are made clear in the painting's title but also in the girl's clothing and the crumbling plaster and torn reproduction of a painting on the wall behind her.

On display in Gallery 18 at Aberdeen Art Gallery is Joan Eardley's painting *Brother and Sister*. It features two children, who appear to be very poor, in a rundown area of Glasgow with a graffiti-covered building behind them. The brother, the elder child, protectively grasps his sister's arm with one hand while cradling a bottle of milk with the other. He shyly avoids eye contact, while she, in her ill-fitting dress is innocently confrontational.

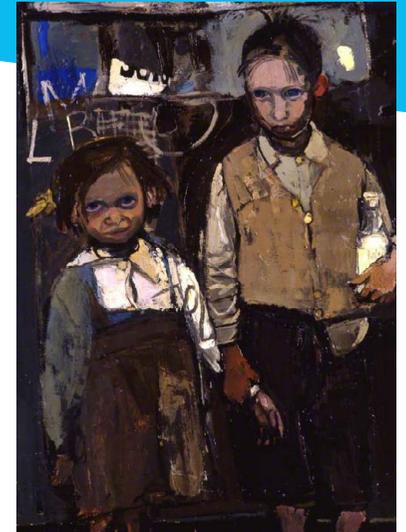
*A Frugal Meal* was painted in 1888 and *Brother and Sister* in 1955, but the issues of child poverty and the effect it has on young people is still a problem in many countries. Almost one in four (230,000) of Scotland's children are officially recognised as living in poverty.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child applies to everyone under the age of 18. The United Kingdom ratified the charter and its 40 specific rights in 1991. In September 2020, the First Minister of Scotland announced the creation of a Bill to incorporate the UNCRC into Scots Law. There is clearly still a long way to go before every child in Scotland can say that their rights are respected, protected and fulfilled. Real change for children can only happen when they are given the opportunity to be heard and adults act on this.



### Watch:

- Learn about the charity Together, which is an alliance of Scottish children's charities that works to improve the awareness, understanding and implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).  
<https://youtu.be/7zk4RoWgR5g>
- The girl who featured in the painting *Brother and Sister* is now grown-up with children of her own. Meet her in this video as she sees the artwork for the first time: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-north-east-orkney-shetland-45879856>

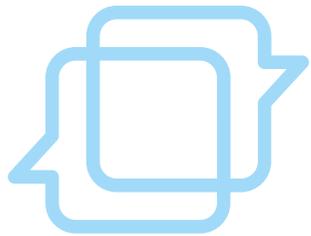


*Brother and Sister*, 1955, Joan Eardley



*A Frugal Meal*, 1888, Alexander Mackenzie

# EXTENSION ACTIVITY



## Discuss:

Think about groups in society who may never have had the opportunity to display their talents in an art gallery because their voice was not as valued as others.

- How do you think that makes them feel?
- Is it important to see artworks featuring people of your age and ethnicity in a public space?
- What would you like to see displayed in Aberdeen Art Gallery?
- You can browse our collections here: <https://emuseum.aberdeencity.gov.uk/collections>

