

'Held in the Quiet Light' Exhibition: Teachers' notes

Held in the Quiet Light is a joint exhibition by Mike Thorpe, Briony Jenkins and Stephen Milner. It marks an artistic return to their area of birth, serving as a reflective journey on how one's origins shape identity. Delving into themes of homecoming, rediscovery, and memory; exploring sensory triggers that evoke memories good and bad; and how the concept of 'home' influences our lives.

Alongside these notes, you should have:

- A PDF of the exhibition booklet
- **Spot it!** booklet for the children's activity at the museum
- A completed **Spot it!** booklet for the teacher

These notes will give links to the curriculum as well as discussion points, at the gallery and in the classroom, around the exhibition's themes.

The children will need pencil, paper and printed booklet.

The exhibition has two strands to it – Toys and Memories.

Toys past and present

- PDF of **Spot it!** book provided

Growing up the three artists had 'I Spy' books each of a different subject such as birds, road trips, animals etc. Often used as entertainment on journeys as there were no phones or iPads to watch.

The **Spot it!** book is based on children's observations with further open ended questions to prompt them to reflect and respond about the toys they see and the toys they have.

- Print and fold one **Spot it!** book for each child to use at the exhibition.

Prompts:

- What are toys for? What toys do you have? How do toys change?
- At the exhibition look for a toy that you have at home – how is it different to the toys in the big toy box in the exhibition? The box is a replica of Mike's toy box – it is made of cardboard and he could draw and paint on it. Where did he live? – written on the side of the box.
- Make comparisons of toys in the exhibition and the toys that the children are familiar with.
Toy cars, planes, tractors, Barbie/Sindy, sets of dolls, teddy bears.
Books – why do you think they are different from the books today?
- The large cut-outs of toys are flat but can stand up – what makes them stand up? *They have slotted feet.*

Which toys need to be plugged in or have batteries? *None!* There were no screen games when the artists grew up. Mike used football 'Subbuteo' figures in the box to make up football games with his brother. Compare this to a football game on a screen.

Wallpaper: copy, extend and create repeating patterns

There is wallpaper on a number of the walls in the exhibition. Mike created this using drawings of the artists' toys in a grid, making a repeated pattern.

- Prompt the children to look how many repeats there are by finding one toy and then seeing when it is repeated in the grid.
- Encourage children to draw the grid and label each section with the toy they can see to make the repeated pattern.
- At school children use the grid to make their own wallpaper repeat pattern. Photocopy each child's version so they can make their own repeated pattern wall paper.

Toy cut-outs: card sculpture and construction techniques

There are four large cut-out toys in the exhibition. Encourage the children to look at how they stand up.

- At school, children use cardboard and art equipment to make a picture of a toy that they like. This could be on A5 card or a large cardboard box size, with art resources as applicable. eg felt pens or crayons for small version, or paint on a large version.
- Cut out the shape of the image (if needs be a paper version could then be stuck on to card such as thin corrugated card or the back of a cereal box).
- Remind children how the cut-outs in the exhibition stood up - how can you make your toy stand up?

PHSC Wellbeing and mindfulness

Briony used her paintings to reflect on the difference in light, from when she was girl to now.

Steve talks about the difficulties he had due to a club foot and how he was bullied and felt different. He couldn't take part in PE and only joined in a three-legged race on sports day.

- Create a book or box to use as a journal or memory box

A journal does not need to be a diary and a memory box can have small pieces of paper to reduce the stress about writing correctly.

Emotional literacy

- Discuss memory and the creation of memories.
- Use memory games to increase observation eg put 5 things in the memory box at the start of the day – what can you remember at the end of the day.
- Talk about memories and emotions, making some obvious and some subtle, depending on the group or age of children. eg happy or sad, memories that can make you cross or angry or anxious and nervous. Use visual aids to match words with faces or make a matching memory game.

Memory, stress and mindfulness

- Lead discussions about memory and how the brain needs prompts to make memories as we forget good things and can focus too much on bad things or feelings.
- Design some pages in a hand-made journal or box while talking and discussing in a group. It can help to discuss emotions while occupied with decorating or colouring in.
- Use the journal or box to note ideas after discussions about calming techniques eg: 'I will try to breathe five deep breaths when I feel stressed, and will think of one good thing before going to sleep'.

Further research for teachers: Finnish style of parenting and mindfulness techniques.