

# Learning Outside the Classroom

## Memories make a difference

Encountering experiences and memories of older people and reflecting creatively on beliefs and values.

Local community centre

### What were we trying to achieve?

- to gain knowledge of how we remember the past today
- to develop thinking skills through reflection on personal values and the beliefs of others
- to understand the values behind commemoration
- to develop their own beliefs and to have understanding and tolerance of others

### Cost:

The cost of using a community artist was £170. We did not have to pay for the community centre, which was the normal meeting point for the older people.

### Who went? How many?

Thirty Year 8 pupils with a teacher and classroom support assistant. The centre was within walking distance. Half a dozen pensioners, members of a local project 'Sharing Memories', joined us and we booked a community artist.

### Preparation:

Teachers from the art and RE departments discussed aims and possibilities. We also talked to a community artist with experience of building bridges between older and younger generations. From these discussions, we planned a joint activity and piloted this with a Year 8 class over a full day. Normal parental permission was obtained. Children were carefully prepared about the expectations.

### How did we organise the learning?

The start of the unit focused on a visual stimulus, using pictures by Dali and Chagall, to consider the symbolism of the last supper and crucifixion from Christian and Jewish perspectives. Pupils were asked to bring in a shoebox filled with symbolic items that represented important aspects of their lives. The older people also brought symbols or items that reflected important events, beliefs or moments in their lives. This process enabled pupils to see how identity and values can be expressed through symbol and picture as well as words. Pupils were then asked to imagine they were leaving the country to emigrate elsewhere; their task was to design a 'memories sheet' that showed how they want to be remembered. They could use pictures or words to represent their hopes for the future.

### What was the impact of the experience?

Pupils gained knowledge and understanding of how remembering the past informs values today. Many were struck by the memories of the older people and demonstrated a sense of empathy. 'The stories from the war made me think about what it must be like to live in terror and fear.' 'I have realised that although elderly people may look frail or incompetent they too have done great things.' Pupils also felt they could express their views and beliefs in different ways and they were able to express values and feelings more powerfully. 'I learned that it was better drawing what you think about yourself instead of just using words.'

### Follow up:

This work has had an impact on teachers and pupils. Working together and planning an event out of school was not as time consuming or difficult as we feared. Pupils enjoyed and valued the interface with older people and the chance to express themselves in a different way.

### Contacts and links:

Ideas and inspiration for linking RE with creativity: [www.natre.org.uk/spiritedarts](http://www.natre.org.uk/spiritedarts)