

South West by South

An t-Eilean Fada, The Long Island: A Poetic Cartography

An exhibition by Gill Russell

An Lanntair is currently showing the exhibition *South West by South, An t-Eilean Fada, The Long Island: A Poetic Cartography* by Gill Russell.

Gill Russell is an artist interested in places of 'significance' (mythological, geographical, poetic, historical, cosmic, sonic, technological, ancient) and how they resonate in the landscape. She works across a range of forms and media, including installation, audio-visual, mapping, drawing, poems and texts. Walking is often key to her exploration.

In 'South West by South' Gill explores the dynamic relationship between sea and land. Along the extent of the liminal shore the interplay of tidal currents and weather is complex and, from a human perspective, fickle, authoring dramatic, sometimes destructive, events. In this exhibition these are expressed through poetic cartography, in an installation of large-scale prints, vinyl wall drawings, audio recordings, and maps.

This gallery pack is made to accompany the exhibition and has suggested activities and tasks that you may wish to complete with your class.

We hope that these activities will assist you and your pupils to engage in looking and thinking about the artworks Gill has made. Where possible, join in on the activity yourself and allow the pupils to see how you engage with the tasks.

An Lanntair is happy to supply your school with materials should you require them.

Curriculum for excellence areas

Expressive Arts

I have the opportunity to choose and explore a range of media and technologies to create images and objects, discovering their effects and suitability for specific tasks. **EXA 1-02a**

I have the opportunity to choose and explore an extended range of media and technologies to create images and objects, comparing and combining them for specific tasks. **EXA 2-02a**

Inspired by a range of stimuli, I can express and communicate my ideas, thoughts and feelings through activities within art and design. **EXA 1-05a / EXA 2-05a**

I can respond to the work of artists and designers by discussing my thoughts and feelings. I can give and accept constructive comment on my own and others' work. **EXA 1-07a / EXA 2-07a**

Inspired by a range of stimuli, I can express and communicate my ideas, thoughts and feelings through drama. **EXA 1-13a / EXA 2-13a**

Health and Wellbeing : Mental and emotional wellbeing

I know that we all experience a variety of thoughts and emotions that affect how we feel and behave and I am learning ways of managing them. **HWB 1-02a / HWB 2-02a**

I understand that my feelings and reactions can change depending upon what is happening within and around me. This helps me to understand my own behaviour and the way others behave.

HWB 1-04a / HWB 2-04a

I understand that people can feel alone and can be misunderstood and left out by others. I am learning how to give appropriate support. **HWB 1-08a / HWB 2-08a**

Literacy : Listening and Talking

When I engage with others, I know when and how to listen, when to talk, how much to say, when to ask questions and how to respond with respect. **LIT 1-02a**

When I engage with others, I can respond in ways appropriate to my role, show that I value others' contributions and use these to build on thinking. **LIT 2-02a**

Literacy : Writing

I can describe and share my experiences and how they made me feel. **ENG 1-30a / GAI 1-30a**

As I write for different purposes and readers, I can describe and share my experiences, expressing what they made me think about and how they made me feel. **ENG 2-30a / GAI 2-30a**

Religious and Moral education

I can show my understanding of values such as caring, sharing, fairness, equality and love. **RME 1-09b**

I can explain why different people think that values such as honesty, respect and compassion are important, and I show respect for others. **RME 2-09c**

Tributrees

Water cycle, creative writing or drawing activity

Materials required

Writing paper (lined or not) or the pupil activity sheet, pencils and rubbers

Task

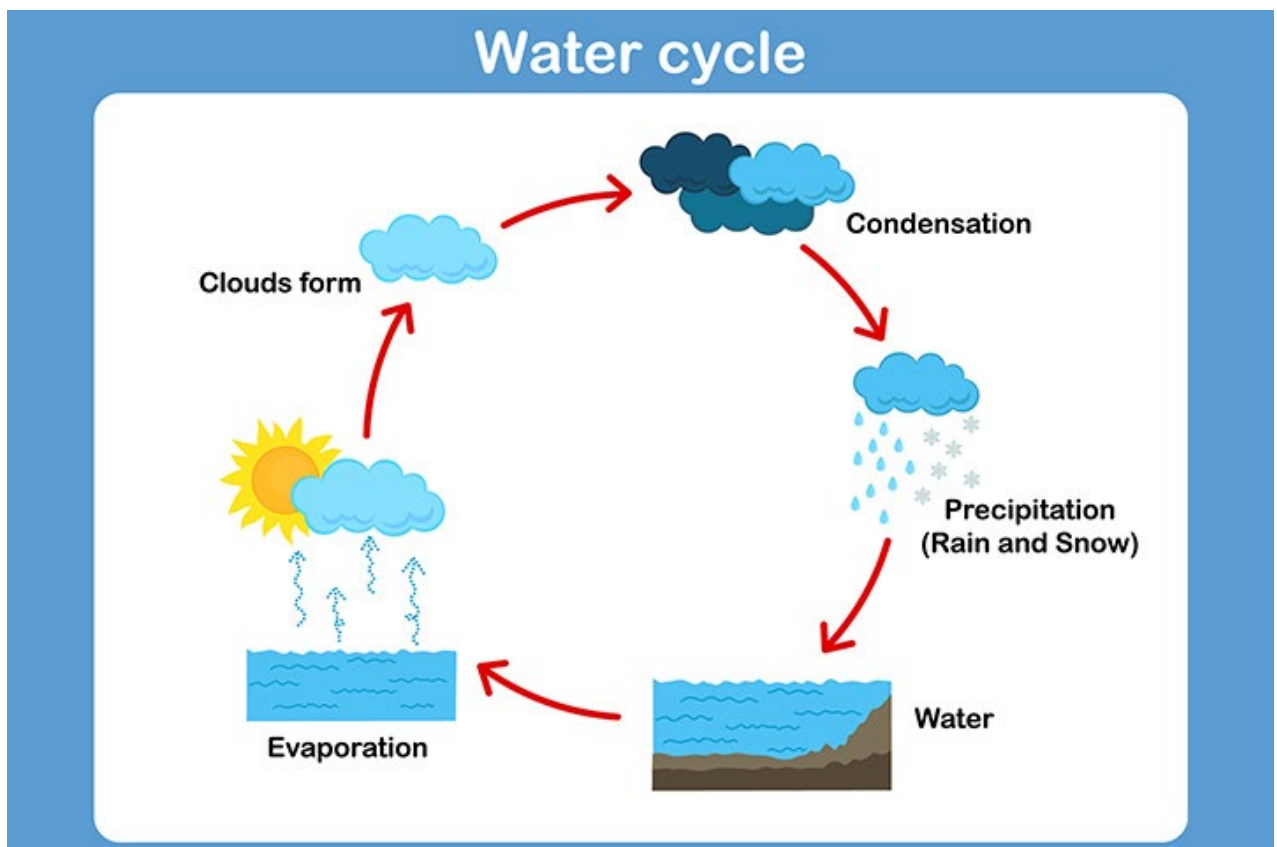
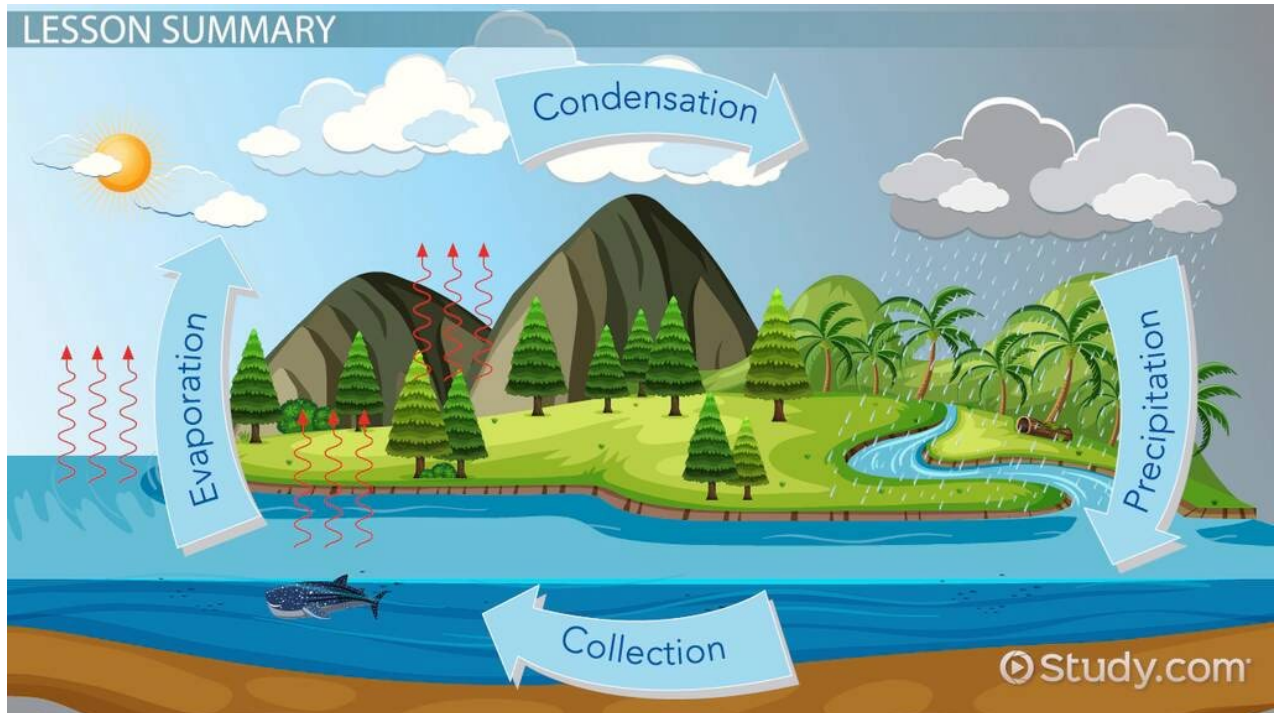
Show your class the artwork 'tributrees' in the exhibition. These are artworks made by Gill that explore watersheds- from the burn to the sea. She has explored and walked by these, following the movement of water and observing how the it shapes the land and how the weather can cause them to change in shape and size, swelling in spate and shrinking in drought.

Show your class one of the images below (whichever you feel is more appropriate) and explain how the water cycle works. (Additional information here:

<https://www.natgeokids.com/uk/discover/science/nature/water-cycle/>)

Next invite pupils to imagine they are a single drop of water and get them to map, draw or write their imagined journey using the pupil sheet or paper/jotter etc.

Allow time to complete the task then as a class share droplet stories or images and go through the questions and observations list.



Questions.

A tributary is a stream that runs into a larger body of water like a river, a loch or the sea.

Why do you think Gill has called these artworks Tribut**rees**?

Which way do you think the water is running?

Have you ever seen shapes like these before? Maybe on the beach? On the side of a glass with a cold drink in it?

Why do you think these shapes are similar?

Did you know the earth has been recycling water for over 4 billion years – that means that no new water is made, it's always the same water moving around us (and through us!).

Think where these drops of water have been!

Have you ever made dragons breath on a cold and frosty morning? What happens when we breath on a window? Where does that mist show us?

Observations.

Well done little droplets! What a wealth of stories, ideas, imaginings and what's amazing is that they are probably ALL TRUE!

Water is all around us and moves all the time. Sometimes you can see it, like in burns and the sea. Other times you can't see it so easily- like in our breath, but we still know it's there.

We are lucky that we have water that runs from our taps. In other parts of the world they don't have easy access to water. Not so long ago in Lewis, most people didn't have taps in their houses and had to fetch their water from springs in the ground where clean, fresh water bubbles up from underground.

We have to continue to care for our water because we know we will use it again.

Tributrees pupil activity sheet.

Imagine you are a single droplet of water. Your body is made up from about 60% of water so this shouldn't be too hard!

Give your droplet a name.

The earth has been recycling water for over 4 billion years – that means that no new water is made, it's always the same water covering the earth, moving around us and even through us.

Where has your droplet been before now? Has it rained on dinosaurs? Has it floated as a snowflake onto the top of Mount Everest? Has it been swallowed by a whale? Has it been splashed out of a puddle by you? Did the artist Gill watch you going by in a river?

Maybe it is a funny droplet or maybe it is a sad droplet? Does it make friends along the way?

In the space below or in your jotter, write or draw a story of where your droplet has been in its cycle from the clouds to the earth, how it found its way back to the sea and then became a cloud again.

Landmark making

Construction and building in three dimensions and conversation skills around community matters

Materials required

Recycling materials, colouring materials, paper, glue, tape, natural materials like pebbles, moss and grasses.



Task

Listening to the interviews in the exhibition with Donald MacLean the ferryboatman, he talks about using landmarks to steer his boat. He used things like the gable-ends of houses, hills and telegraph poles. He also talks about moving cattle for his community from one island to another.

As a class, invite pupils to build a new landscape. They can do this together like working on the landscape – is it mountainous, or flat? Is there a beach or a harbour?

Or they can work alone to build a personal landmark like a house, or a den, a tree or a school building.

Then bring the finished landmarks together to build a community landscape – whatever they want to put in, they can. See if pupils can discuss where bridges, roads or churches should go and why.

What is important to them to have in their community – maybe a river or a duck pond or a play park. Maybe it's a wood or crofts or animals.

It's up to them to make sure there's space for everyone's ideas and landmarks.

Questions:

Look what we built together!

What's your favourite bit and why?

Can anyone share a story about a place in the community we built?

Where do you think you would spend a summers afternoon?

Where do you think you would want to go on a winters evening?

What is the most obvious landmark that Donald would be able to see from far away at sea if he was sailing past?

What bits do you think Gill the artist would like to walk around?

Now we have computers and equipment to navigate boats and airplanes and there are even cars that can drive themselves... do you think it is still important that we still have landmarks in our community?

Observations:

A community is a group of people living in the same place. When we build new places for people to live and come together it's important that everyone's voice is heard and everyone has a space.

In the community you built there are landmarks you would be able to see from far away that would help people recognise the landscape.

There might also be some things that make communities recognisable that you can't see at all. Like who lives there and how they live – do you have to arrive by helicopter or only by boat? Maybe there's only a few houses and lots of shops or the other way around.

Every landscape and its community is unique and it's our job as members of the community to take care of our landmarks and the things that make our community special.

Bodycode

Expressive arts, code making activity

Materials required

Morse code (see below) on whiteboard or printed out. Space to move, writing paper pencils and rubbers, if access to musical percussive instruments, then those too, if not, body percussion by singing, humming, clapping etc is fine.

Task

Look at the artworks 'Loch Portain ferry crossing' in the exhibition.

The black background with white writing shows the night time navigational code for the ferry to use between Harris and North Uist. They use navigational buoys with lights on them that flash so that they know where to steer the boat. The outside wring of writing shows one direction of travel, the inside wring shows the reverse journey.

The white background with black writing shows the navigational code for during daylight hours.

With the morse code (image below) on the whiteboard or printed out, start by demonstrating to the class how to morse code the word 'SOUTH'. Start letter by letter and use your fingers to help count long or short 'beeps'. Once they have the hang of that, they can work in pairs or small groups to transmit and receive coded words.

For early years you can ask them to spell in code their names or to work together to spell a word you give them.

For older years, you can set out the class in a hall.

Some pupils will be 'navigational dangers' (ie places to avoid) and get spaced out around the room with a word from the navigational dangers list and some will be two-pupil teams of a boat and a navigator.

The 'boat' moves through the hall (with the navigator) when they come close to a landmark, they navigator will need to identify what the danger is by deciphering the code. The landmark will sound their code as their warning. The boats and navigators can only pass when they have correctly worked out what the danger is.

The dangers can choose how they wish to communicate the code – it might be by blinks, beeps, hand gestures, jumps or moving their body in another way to represent ling and short dashes.

Some pupils might like to make up their own dangers and work out what the code should be for them.

Some 'boat' pupils might like to record their journey by drawing a map of the room with the dangers put in the correct location.

Learn Morse Code

You can write Morse code, or send it via sounds or lights.
Dots represent a short sound or light, and dashes a long sound or light.

A	B	C	D	E	F
..-	-....	-.-.-	-...-
G	H	I	J	K	L
-.-.--.-	-.-	..-..
M	N	O	P	Q	R
--	-.	-.-.-	..-.-	-.-.-	..-.
S	T	U	V	W	X
...-	-	...--	..-.-	-.-.-
Y	Z	0	1	2	3
..-.-	-.-.-	-.-.-	..-.-	..-.--
4	5	6	7	8	9
....-	-.....	-.-.-	-.-.-	-.-.-

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Navigational dangers examples

R I P T I D E

R O C K

S H I P W R E C K

S H A L L O W

L A N D

To conclude the activity, look at the artwork 'Lost ships wind rose'. Each line of text is a shipwreck and the words show the prevailing wind direction. The further from the centre the text is, the stronger the winds were at the time of the wreckage.

Observations

We have lots of ways to communicate with each other.

Sometimes we need to be able to communicate without making a noise. Just like at night when boats are crossing dangerous waters – they look for lights to direct them.

Can your mum or teacher or friend give you signals without using words? Maybe a frown! Maybe a nudge or 'that look' your teacher has to let you know they mean business!

These are all ways of communicating – telling each other important information.

Gill's artwork tells us to look at the land we are in, or the sea we are crossing. Gill uses artworks with words and images that tell us about the landscape or what has happened in it.

The next time you are moving through the landscape, on the school bus home, or out for a walk or on your bike, maybe you can also think of ways to communicate that journey in a piece of art like Gill does.