



Lesson Activities

Anne Acheson



Innovator

Read through the information and watch the film about Anne Acheson on www.our-artists.com. If the children have worked through the activities in www.ourinnovators.com, they may have already completed activities about innovators and you can refer them back to this work.

If appropriate, you may also wish to read through the educational comic 'For Valour' which features three local heroes of the Battle of the Somme, one of which is Anne Acheson. You can access a copy of the comic at: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-39195045 or find a PDF in the resources.

Ask the children what they think the term innovation means. Allow them to have some time discussing this with a partner. Encourage discussion on what innovation is by telling the children that innovation is all about finding new ways to do things. Ask the children if they can come up with some more ways to describe it. Responses (at the children's language level) may include:

- Taking on challenges normally seen as impossible;
- An ability to see connections between things;
- Being able to look at things in a different way.

Ask the children why Anne Acheson can be considered an innovator. During World War 1, she began making splints from papier-mâché and plaster of Paris. This was cheaper than the traditional way of making splints which was with cloth, wood and bandages. She realised that the best paper to use was from old sugar bags and so was able to cheaply recycle this waste material into something very useful and needed.

Comparing Materials

Anne Acheson began to use papier-mâché to create splints. She met a real need during the war and chose a material that was cheap, strong, easily available, durable and light. Ask the children what properties of materials they know of and



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make a list of these on the board. You may want to add more properties from the list below to the list the children have come up with (please note: this list is not exhaustive and you should highlight the ones that are appropriate to the age and ability of your pupils). Discuss the properties of materials with the pupils and ensure that they understand what each means:

- Absorbent
- Waterproof
- Porous
- Flame retardant
- Combustible
- Reflective
- Thermal
- Durable
- Smooth
- Rigid
- Strong
- Flexible
- Stretch
- Washable
- Transparent
- Translucent
- Opaque
- Expensive
- Cheap
- Heavy
- Light
- Easily available
- Not easily available

Anne Acheson is also famous for being a sculptor. Her main works were sculptures of children, which was fashionable amongst rich people of the time, and garden or fountain statues. In the early days she used wood but then moved on to use either



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stone, concrete or metal. Give the pupils a copy of Resource 1 and ask them to discuss in pairs or small groups and record the advantages and disadvantages of using each material for different purposes. They should consider all of the properties needed for the object to perform its functions. For example, a fountain statue would have to be waterproof and strong so that it could stand against wind and storms if it was outdoors.

Sculpt!

**Please note that the following activity should be adapted to suit the materials etc that you have available to you.*

Anne Acheson created and exhibited many sculptures and the majority of them were garden or fountain figures, which include the following titles:

- The Pixie
- The Imp
- Water Baby
- Watersprite
- Mischief
- Boy with Puppy

With the children working in groups, give each group the title of one of Acheson's sculptures and ask them to carry out some research about what a sculpture of that name would look like. They should be as creative as they want. They may need to use a search engine or use a dictionary to find out the definition of an 'imp' or a 'pixie' and what others have imagined them to look like in order to stimulate their imagination.

Explain to the children that they will make a statue using papier-mâché. You should demonstrate to them, perhaps by using images online, of how they can create the main structure of the sculpture first and then cover this in papier-mâché before painting and decorating. You may be able to provide some of the following materials for the children to use in the creation of their initial structures:



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- Yoghurt pots
- Egg boxes
- Cardboard tubes
- Boxes of various sizes
- Chicken wire (mould as needed)
- Scrunched-up tinfoil or newspaper (mould and stick with masking tape);
- Bottles
- Sticks
- Pieces of plywood
- Balloons

Ask the children to draw a design for a statue of the title they have been given (from the list above) and to consider how they will make the initial structure underneath.

When their plans are complete, allow the children time to create their sculpture before covering it in papier-mâché.

Making Papier-mâché

There are several ways to make a simple papier-mâché. You will need lots of newspaper (torn into strips) and one of the following:

- PVA glue mixed with water to a slightly runny consistency;
- Wallpaper paste mixed with water; or
- one part flour to one part water

You will also need buckets or basins to make the papier-mâché in.

Before carrying out this papier-mâché part of the project, it is worth going over the following tips and rules with the pupils:



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BEFORE

- Papier-mâché is very messy – cover all of the tables or work surfaces and wear an apron.
- Always tear the newspaper into strips rather than cutting them. The ripped paper works better.

DURING

- When they lay the newspaper strips onto their structure, place the strips in as many different directions as possible. It will make the finished sculpture strong.
- If they are working with a round object, such as a balloon, set it on top of a bowl or large-mouthed cup while they are working so it stays still.
- Some creations can take several days to finish as they may have to add more layers to make the sculpture strong and durable.

AFTER

- Make sure the sculpture is completely dry before trying to paint or decorate it.
- To remove the base/structure from inside their dried project, (with adult help), make a slit at the back and take out the material. (If it's a balloon, they can simply pop it). Cover the slit with another layer of papier-mâché and let it dry.
- To help their sculpture last longer, seal it with varnish or a thick coating of PVA glue when they have finished painting it.