

English Main Lesson: The Power of the Story

A 9-Week Unit on Biography, Poetry, and Literature for H (Age 13)

Materials Needed:

- A high-quality, large, unlined artist's sketchbook (A3 size is ideal) for the Main Lesson Book
- Good quality drawing pencils, colored pencils (artist grade, e.g., Prismacolor or Faber-Castell)
- Charcoal sticks and soft pastels
- Watercolor paints and thick watercolor paper
- Modeling clay or plasticine
- A dedicated writing journal or notebook for drafts and practice
- Access to a library and/or the internet for research
- **Texts:**
 - A biography of Leonardo da Vinci (e.g., "Leonardo da Vinci" by Walter Isaacson for reference, or a youth-focused version)
 - Selected poems by Banjo Paterson (e.g., "The Man from Snowy River," "Clancy of the Overflow")
 - Selected poems by Oodgeroo Noonuccal (e.g., "We Are Going," "Aboriginal Charter of Rights")
 - Novel: "Storm Boy" by Colin Thiele

Block 1: The Explorer's Journal - A Biography of Leonardo da Vinci (Weeks 1-3)

Focus: This block explores the life of a true "Renaissance person." We will connect with the spirit of discovery, blending art, science, and imagination. The goal is to understand a person's life not as a list of facts, but as a story of challenges, passions, and innovations. The culminating project is creating a journal from Leonardo's perspective.

Week 1: The Apprentice Artist

- **Day 1 (Head):** Introduction to the Renaissance and Florence. Read about Leonardo's childhood and apprenticeship with Verrocchio. Begin the first Main Lesson Book page with a title page for this block, perhaps inspired by Renaissance art.
- **Day 2 (Heart):** Study Leonardo's early artworks, like "The Annunciation." Discuss the use of light, shadow (chiaroscuro), and perspective. Try to replicate a small section of one of his paintings using soft pastels or charcoal, focusing on the play of light.
- **Day 3 (Hands):** Begin the "Leonardo's Journal" project. Write the first entry from the perspective of a young Leonardo, describing his hopes, his observations of nature, and what he is learning in Verrocchio's workshop.
- **Day 4 (Practice):** Practice observational drawing. Go outside and sketch a plant, a bird, or a cloud formation in the style of Leonardo's notebooks. Pay close attention to detail. Add these sketches to the journal.

Week 2: The Inventor and Scientist

- **Day 1 (Head):** Research Leonardo's scientific notebooks. Focus on his studies of anatomy, botany, and geology. Discuss: How did his artistic eye help his scientific work?
- **Day 2 (Heart & Hands):** Design your own invention in Leonardo's style. It could be a flying

machine, a water-walking device, or something completely new. Draw it in detail in the Main Lesson Book, with labels and notes explaining how it works. Use ink and a light watercolor wash to give it an aged look.

- **Day 3 (Hands):** Write a journal entry from Leonardo's perspective describing the inspiration for your invention. What problem does it solve? What challenges are you facing in its design?
- **Day 4 (Practice):** Study mirror writing. Practice writing a short paragraph backward, just as Leonardo did. Add a secret message in mirror writing to your journal.

Week 3: The Master and His Legacy

- **Day 1 (Head):** Study Leonardo's two most famous masterpieces: the "Mona Lisa" and "The Last Supper." Discuss the stories, controversies, and artistic techniques behind them.
- **Day 2 (Heart):** Write a reflective journal entry from an older Leonardo's point of view. What is he most proud of? What are his regrets? What does he hope his legacy will be?
- **Day 3 (Hands):** Finalize the "Leonardo's Journal." Add finishing touches, sketches, and a decorative cover. Compile the pages into a beautiful, handmade book.
- **Day 4 (Presentation):** Present the journal. Read a few key entries aloud and explain the thinking behind your drawings and inventions. Reflect on what you learned about Leonardo's character.

Block 2: Voices of the Land - Australian Poetry (Weeks 4-6)

Focus: This block moves from the story of one person to the stories of a nation, told through rhythm and verse. We will feel the pulse of the Australian landscape through the narrative ballads of Banjo Paterson and the powerful, lyrical voice of Oodgeroo Noonuccal. The goal is to write and perform poetry, not just analyze it.

Week 4: The Roving Rhythms of the Bush Ballad

- **Day 1 (Head & Heart):** Introduce the ballad form. Read "The Man from Snowy River" by Banjo Paterson aloud. Feel the driving rhythm (gallop!). Discuss the story, the hero, and the imagery of the Australian high country. Map the journey of the rider in your Main Lesson Book.
- **Day 2 (Hands):** Write your own short narrative ballad. It can be about a personal adventure, a family story, or a fictional event. Focus on strong rhythm, rhyme, and telling a clear story.
- **Day 3 (Heart & Hands):** Illustrate a scene from "The Man from Snowy River" or your own ballad using charcoal to capture the drama and movement.
- **Day 4 (Practice):** Practice reciting a section of "The Man from Snowy River" from memory. Focus on clear, powerful speech and conveying the excitement of the story. Perform it for family.

Week 5: The Powerful Voice of Identity and Country

- **Day 1 (Head & Heart):** Introduce Oodgeroo Noonuccal. Read her poem "We Are Going." Discuss its tone, message, and themes of loss, memory, and connection to the land. Contrast its feeling and rhythm with Paterson's ballad.
- **Day 2 (Hands):** Create a "found poem." Take words and phrases from an article about nature or history and arrange them into a poem that expresses a strong feeling or idea. Write the final version in your Main Lesson Book.
- **Day 3 (Heart & Hands):** Respond to one of Oodgeroo's poems through watercolor. Don't paint the literal images; instead, paint the feelings, colors, and mood the poem evokes using the "wet-on-wet" watercolor technique.
- **Day 4 (Practice):** Write a lyrical poem about a place that is special to you. Use sensory details (sight, sound, smell, touch, taste) to bring the place to life for the reader.

Week 6: The Poet's Cafe

- **Day 1 (Head):** Explore poetic devices like metaphor, simile, and personification. Find examples in the poems we've studied and in other works.
- **Day 2 (Hands):** Create a small, personal anthology. Choose your two favorite poems from our study and your two best original poems. Neatly write or type them, and add illustrations. This will be a special section in your Main Lesson Book.
- **Day 3 (Hands):** Prepare for performance. Select one of your original poems to share. Practice reading it aloud, thinking about pace, volume, and emotion.
- **Day 4 (Presentation):** Host a "Poet's Cafe." Set up a cozy space, maybe with some snacks. Present your anthology and perform your chosen poem with feeling and confidence.

Block 3: The Storyteller's World - Literature Study of "Storm Boy" (Weeks 7-9)

Focus: In this final block, we dive deep into a single story. We'll explore how an author builds a world, creates unforgettable characters, and explores deep themes about life, death, friendship, and our connection to the natural world. The goal is to experience the story from the inside out through creative projects.

Week 7: Entering the World of the Coorong

- **Day 1 (Head):** Begin reading "Storm Boy" by Colin Thiele. As you read the first few chapters, create a map of the setting—the Coorong—in your Main Lesson Book. Label Storm Boy's humpy, the ocean, the dunes, and the sanctuary.
- **Day 2 (Heart):** Create character portraits. For Storm Boy, Hide-Away Tom, and Fingerbone Bill, draw a picture and write down key personality traits, quotes, and your first impressions.
- **Day 3 (Hands):** Focus on Mr. Percival! Create a small model of the pelican using modeling clay. As you work, think about his role in the story and his bond with Storm Boy.
- **Day 4 (Reading):** Continue reading the novel, pausing to discuss key events.

Week 8: The Heart of the Story

- **Day 1 (Head):** Discuss the major themes emerging in the book: friendship (between Storm Boy, Fingerbone, and Mr. Percival), conflict (nature vs. "civilization," hunters), and responsibility.
- **Day 2 (Heart & Hands):** Write a letter from the perspective of one character to another (e.g., from Hide-Away Tom to his late wife, explaining his life with Storm Boy, or from Storm Boy to a friend in the city, describing his life in the Coorong).
- **Day 3 (Heart):** Read to the climax of the story. Discuss the powerful emotions of joy, fear, and sadness. How does the author make us feel so strongly for a pelican?
- **Day 4 (Reading):** Finish the book. Discuss the ending and its message of hope and memory.

Week 9: Creating and Concluding

- **Day 1 (Head & Hands):** Choose a final project. The options are:
 1. **Diorama:** Build a shoebox diorama of your favorite scene from the book.
 2. **New Chapter:** Write an extra chapter for the book, perhaps about Storm Boy visiting Fingerbone Bill years later.
 3. **Short Film Scene:** Script, film, and edit a 1-2 minute scene from the book. You can use toys or puppets for characters.
- **Day 2 (Hands):** Work day. Dedicate this entire lesson to building, writing, or filming your chosen project.

- **Day 3 (Hands):** Work day. Add final touches and prepare your project for presentation.
- **Day 4 (Presentation):** Present your final project. Explain why you chose it and what you wanted to capture about the story of "Storm Boy." We will then look back through the entire Main Lesson Book, from Leonardo to "Storm Boy," and reflect on the amazing power of stories.