

## VIEWPOINTS THEME: CREATIVITY + PLAY

### ABOUT THE ARTIST

Niamh Sharkey is an award-winning author and illustrator of children's books who lives in Dublin. Her books have won numerous awards. Niamh's books have been translated into over twenty languages. She is the creator of Disney Junior's animated preschool series Henry Hugglemonster and was the Irish Laureate for Children's Literature 2012-2014. Niamh is a graduate of the College of Marketing and Design, Mountjoy Square Dublin. She published her first book in 1995, *The Trout in the Turnhole*. Before Niamh started to illustrate her own titles, she illustrated famous picture books, like *The Gigantic Turnip*, or *Jack and The Beanstalk*. *Tales from Old Ireland* was included in the International Board of Books for Young People Honour Book List in 2002. Her books include, *The Ravenous Beast* (2002), *Santasaurus* (2004), *I'm a Happy Hugglewug* (2006) and *On the Road with Mavis and Marge* (2010). Niamh's profession as an illustrator is very diverse, she exhibits her work in solo and group exhibitions, designs sets for theatre productions, runs workshops for children and adults, lectures seminars and at festivals and works on commissions

### ABOUT THE ARTWORK

Children have the right to rest and leisure, play and recreation, and to participate freely in cultural and artistic activities. It is important to celebrate and recognise this right as a crucial part of the child's development but also as important in itself. Wonder and creativity nurture understanding, empathy and appreciation of diversity, as well as enabling children to participate in society and prepare for adulthood. This image celebrates the right of all children to express themselves and through art to explore and create worlds larger than themselves.

### ABOUT THE RIGHT

Children can learn and express themselves through creativity and play. Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child outlines that every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts. Article 13 states that the child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.

## WORKSHEET

### **Exercise 1: Discussion (20 mins)**

This exercise invites students to look closely at Niamh Sharkey's artwork and to consider the importance of creativity and how it expresses our individuality.

Guiding questions –

Look at Niamh Sharkey's illustration. What is happening?

What do you notice about the way the young person is making the painting?

How is the young artist's painting of the squirrel different from the squirrel? Which do you prefer?

Why do you think the young artist made the painting so large?

What does this artwork say about our individual approach to creating?

Why is it important that we create differently?

### **Exercise 2: Research (weekend or overnight)**

Students should reflect on the different ways they express themselves. Is it through writing, drawing, painting, poetry, singing or is it through their hobbies, or through the games or sports that they play? Everyone has different ways of enjoying recreational activities and expressing themselves. Students should collect and document (write a paragraph, draw a picture or take a photo of activities) the different ways they express themselves. Students can share this with their class.

### **Exercise 3: Drawing (30 mins)**

This simple drawing exercise looks to celebrate everyone's unique style and focuses on individuality. The educator selects an animal and everyone draws their version of that animal. Use pencils and colouring pencils on an A4 or A3 page.

Once everyone is finished, compare the results. Look at size, colour, the focus on different features. How wonderful that everyone has produced an individual drawing.

You will need pencil, colouring pencils, and white paper.

## CREATIVE PROJECT

Explore the right to play in this creative project that invites students to create imaginative artworks. This project will encourage participants to take inspiration from Niamh Sharkey's illustration before creating unique drawings and collages that celebrate the importance of play.

### Three Stages

You will need –

Pencil

A4 or A3 white paper

Paint – selection of colours (optional)

Colouring pencils

Old newspapers/magazines

Glue – PVA or glue stick

Large roll of paper

Crayons

Ruler

Stage 1.

#### Let's Play!

Discussion (15mins)

This discussion introduces students to ideas of how play can encourage learning and development.

Are there games you played when you were younger that you don't play anymore?

What games do you play now?

What are the objectives of the game?

Are the games organised by adults?

What is the difference between organised and self-directed games? Which do you prefer? Why?

In your favourite game, what do you have to do physically?

What do you have to do mentally?

Have you got better at this game over time? How would you use the skills needed in this game in other aspects of your life?

Research (overnight or weekend)

Research different games that people play or played when they were children. Ask family members, parents, siblings, grandparents, neighbours. Students should take note of the rules of these games. What are the advantages/rewards or

challenges/obstacles in different games. How do you win? Make a list and share your research with the group.

Creative Activity (1 hour)

Working together in small groups, students should take snakes and ladders as their guide to create their own board game. Take a large roll of paper and divide it into numbered squares. The students should decide what playful pitfalls and advances players of their game might face. Use the research they have undertaken to help guide the decisions made. Students should use colouring pencils and markers to illustrate the features of their game.

Now let's play!

Stage 2.

**I am an artist!**

Discussion (20 mins)

This discussion should focus on developing students understanding of the different ways we can be creative. Our individuality should be celebrated and creativity in all its forms can help showcase and celebrate this individuality.

What does it mean to be creative?

What are some creative acts?

Are we all creative?

Discuss different ways we can be creative.

Are we all artists?

Research (overnight or weekend)

This research activity invites students to find three artist's self-portraits. Students should attempt to find non-traditional examples. Look at how artists communicate parts of their personality through their portrait. Look at the colours they use, the mood and if they use symbolism.

Students should share their examples with the group.

Creative Activity (1 hour)

When creating a self-portrait you do not need a mirror. Students should be encouraged to use their research examples to inspire their own unique take on self-portraiture. Students should look at colours, objects, shapes, symbols that represent something about themselves.

Draw, collage or paint your self-portrait on an A4 or A3 sheet of paper.

Stage 3.

### **This is who I am**

Writing (20 mins)

This stage of the projects looks at the importance of young people having the opportunity to pursue cultural and creative activities. Much more than just a way to relax, these activities can communicate something about who we are.

Students should consider their favourite pursuits, and write a short text that describes why they love that activity. Their text should include responses to –  
Why do you love spending time doing these activities?

What do these activities say about you?

Are the things you enjoy doing the same as your friends?

Who are your heroes?

What ways might your interests shape who you are or who you'd like to become?

Research (overnight or weekend)

This research exercise invites students to consider how their pastimes, creative pursuits or cultural interests might influence other aspects of their lives. Students should collect imagery, make note of important words, colours, symbols and shapes that relate to their interests. These items will help inform and be part of their artwork.

Creative Activity (1 hour)

Students will create a collage of the games, pastimes, interests, and creative expressions that represent who they are. Use your self-portrait as the central image. Stick the portrait to a large sheet. Now begin to populate the space around the portrait with words, images, photos, colours and other symbols of your pastimes, games and creative exploits.

### **DISCOVER MORE**

You can further the discussion on Creativity + Play by visiting some of the following resources -

<https://ipaworld.org/childs-right-to-play/uncrc-article-31/un-convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child-1/>

<https://archive.crin.org/en/home/rights/themes/education-and-cultural-rights.html>

<http://niamhsharkey.com/>