

Richard Moynan (1856 – 1906) *Military Manoeuvres 1891*

Linkage & Integration in the Primary Curriculum:

Visual Art	Strands: All <i>Concept & skills development in each level: Line, Shape, Form, Colour & Tone, Texture, Pattern & Rhythm, Space</i>
Drama	Strand: explore feelings, knowledge & ideas, leading to understanding <i>Unit: Exploring and making drama</i>
Music	Strand: Listening and responding / Performing / Composing
English	Strand: Oral language, reading and writing
Gaeilge	Strand: éisteacht, labhairt, léitheoireacht & scríbhneoireacht
History	Strand: Continuity and Change over time <i>Unit: Literature, art, crafts and culture</i> Strand: Life, society, work and culture in the past <i>Unit: Life in the 19th century</i> <i>Unit: Language and culture in late 19th and early 20th-century Ireland</i>

About the artist:

Richard Thomas Moynan (27 April 1856 – 10 April 1906) was an Irish painter. Born in Dublin, he first studied medicine but changed his mind when he was 23 and switched instead to art, studying drawing, figure drawing and fine art painting at the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art (now the National College of Art & Design) in the autumn of 1879. Here, he won awards in both the Taylor and Cowper competitions, then in 1882 he moved to the Royal Hibernian Academy, where he scooped both silver and bronze medals for his artwork. He followed this achievement by winning the Albert Scholarship for the best history painting (*The Last of the 24th at Isandula*, 1883) displayed in the RHA by a student.

In 1883, like other Irish artists Walter Osborne and Roderic O'Connor, Moynan went to study art at the Academie Royale des Beaux Arts in Antwerp. The following year he became the first Irishman to win the coveted annual Concours - the Academy's top competition in the category of human figure-painting. He remained in Antwerp for another year - before returning to Ireland in 1884 where he married his cousin, Suzanna Moynan. Examples of genre painting which he completed around this time include: *The Reading Lesson* (1884) and *The Laundress* (1885), all executed in the highly academic art style of the Dutch seventeenth-century.

By the late 1880s Moynan had returned to his native Dublin to exhibit his paintings, becoming a member of the Royal Hibernian Academy in 1890. He became an organizer of the Dublin Art Club as well as President of the Dublin Sketching Club, and continued to exhibit in the Royal Hibernian Academy. Artworks from this period include: *Taking Measurements* (1887) and *Military Manoeuvres* (1891).

Some background information on Genre Painting:

Genre works, also called genre scenes or genre views, are pictorial representations that represent scenes or events from everyday life, such as markets, domestic settings, interiors, parties, inn scenes, and street scenes. Such representations may be realistic, imagined, or romanticized by the artist. Some variations of the term genre works specify the medium or type of visual work, as in genre painting, genre prints, genre photographs, and so on. One common definition of a genre scene is that it shows figures to whom no identity can be attached either individually or collectively - thus distinguishing them from history paintings and portraits.

As religious and historical painting declined during the 19th century, more and more artists sought inspiration from the everyday lives of ordinary people. Realists, especially in France, went further by placing their everyday genre scenes on large scale canvases - previously reserved for more highbrow or refined history works everyday life of ordinary people. These artists would have been an influence on Moynan and his choice of subject matter.

Note: Rather confusingly, the term 'genre' when used on its own, refers to any homogeneous category of painting, such as history painting, portrait art, landscape painting, still life or indeed genre-scenes.

About the painting:

This wittily observed scene is a consummate example of a subject picture, that is, a type of painting that focuses on the telling of a story. Its laconic title is *Military Manoeuvres* and it was painted by Dublin-born artist Richard Moynan in 1891.

A scruffy band of ragged children marches through a village street playing at being a regimental band. Their musical instruments have been improvised and include pots and pans, saucepan lids as cymbals, a biscuit tin, penny-whistles and a paper trumpet.

A bigger boy acts as their leader. Standing to the right, in a cheekily defiant pose, he carries a broom and wears a shiny brass helmet, which he has clearly acquired by dubious means. If you look at the smart soldier in red at the left of the picture, you can see that he has spotted this impudence and is not amused. He is wearing the uniform of a 'real' regiment – the Fourth Royal Irish Dragoon Guards. His stiff propriety is offset by the teasing gestures of the children and by his female companion who seems to be encouraging him to see the funny side of the urchins' manoeuvres, while a flower-girl in the foreground has noticed the tension and looks on, with some concern.

The painting's apparent spontaneity belies the work that went into its production. It is the result of a long process of the artist making many detailed sketches and studies. Look, for example, at how each of the children has a distinct individuality and how the artist evokes a whole range of glances, responses, actions and interactions between the thirty or so figures in the scene. The artist considered and tried out a number of different arrangements before arriving at this, the final version.

Richard Moynan, *Military Manoeuvres 1891*

Tá an radharc seo atá breathnaithe go tráthúil mar shampla críochnúil de phictiúr ábhair, sé sin, cineál péinteáil a dhíríonn ar insint scéil. Is é a teideal gannbhriathrach ná *Military Manoeuvres* agus rinne an t-ealaíontóir Baile Átha Cliathach Richard Moynan a phéinteáil in 1891.

Máirseálann banna scrábach de leanaí gioblacha trí sráidbhaile ag ligeann orthu gur bhanna reisiminte iad. Tá a n-uirlisí ceoil tar éis a bheith seiftithe agus ina measc tá potaí agus pannaí, clúdaigh corcáin mar chiombail, stán brioscaí, feadóga stáin agus triompa páipéir.

Feidhmíonn buachaill níos mó mar a gceannaire. Ag seasamh ar dheis, i staidiúir dúshlánach tiarnúil, iompraíonn sé scuab agus caitheann sé clogad práis gléineach, atá faighte go soiléir aige i mbealach amhrasach. Má fhéachann tú ar shaighdiúir gasta i ndearg ar an dtaobh chlé den phictiúr, is féidir leat a fheiceáil go bhfuil an deiliús seo feicthe aige agus nach bhfuil siamsa á dhéanamh aige dó. Tá an éide á chaitheamh aige de reisimint 'cheart' – an Ceathrú Gardaí Dragúin Ríoga na hÉireann Tá a chuibheas docht taobhrianta ag geáitsí griogadh na leanaí agus ag a chompánach baineann atá á spreagadh chun an taobh greannmhar d'imeachtaí na ngarlach a fheiceáil, tá cailín an bhlátha sa tulra tar éis aird a thabhairt ar an dteannas agus féachann ar aghaidh, le roinnt imní.

Sáraíonn spontáineacht dealraitheach na péinteála an obair a chuaigh isteach ina táirgeadh. Tá sí mar thoradh ar phróiseas fada den ealaíontóir ag déanamh go leor sceitsí agus staidéar sonraithe. Féach, mar shampla, ar conas mar atá indibhidiúlacht ar leith ag gach leanbh agus an tslí a dhúisíonn an t-ealaíontóir réimse iomlán de súilfhéachaintí, freagraí, gníomhaíochtaí agus idirghníomhaíochtaí idir an tríocha figiúr nó mar sin sa radharc. Bhreathnaigh agus thriail an t-ealaíontóir roinnt socruithe difriúla roimh í seo, an leagan deiridh a bhaint amach.

Talking about this painting with children:

Children respond well to this painting as they can immediately relate to the story and the main characters. We encourage them to explore the different characters and storylines, and to look beyond the central figures to the bystanders and setting.

Ask open questions – what’s happening? Where are they? What else can you see? Encourage imaginative and empathetic responses – what would it sound like to be there on the street in the painting? What other noises might you hear? What would it feel like? Are the children rich or poor? How can you tell? What is the soldier thinking? What about his girlfriend?

Suggested projects:

Visual Art

- Draw or paint a parade taking place in your town or village

Language

- Discuss the story from the point of view of the different characters
- Choose one of the characters and write their diary entry for that day
- Make a list of descriptive ‘noisy’ words and use them in a piece of poetry or prose

Drama

- Moynan has captured one moment in a larger event. Discuss with the class what might have happened before (did the children have it planned? Were they waiting for the soldier or did he just come along when they were playing?). Discuss what might happen next (does the soldier lose his temper? Do the children get into trouble?). What about the bystanders? What’s happening in the shop? Use these ideas to come up with a short play. Encourage the children to write their own lines and act it out.

Music

- Make a list of the different instruments shown in the painting
- Distinguish between real and pretend instruments
- What do the real instruments sound like?
- What would the pretend instruments sound like?
- Make some instruments in the classroom from everyday objects and use them to create a marching band

- Listen to some marching band music, try to identify the different instruments

SESE Project Work

- In the 19th century many Irish towns had army garrisons – research what life was like in an army barracks. Find out where your nearest army garrison was stationed. Is the building still there? Are there any old photographs? What is it used for today?
- The Irish Defence Forces has a military band – you can listen to some recordings of them playing the national anthem and other military music. Why do armies have bands? What sort of music do they play? Why? What occasions might military music be played?

Web Resources

The Reel Thing (Resource website for Irish Traditional music)

<http://www.teachnet.ie/ddonnelly/index.htm>

The Royal Dragoon Guards:

<http://www.rdgmuseum.org.uk/history.htm>

<http://www.britishempire.co.uk/forces/armyunits/britishcavalry/4dg.htm>

Irish Defence Forces – mp3 downloads from the Army Band:

<http://www.military.ie/army/specialists/music/download.htm>

Soldiers and Chiefs exhibition:

<http://www.museum.ie/en/exhibition/soldiers-and-chiefs.aspx>