

Curious Creatures – Frans Post & Brazil

Ask an Expert tour – Fantastic Animals

Teachers' Notes

Session duration	1 hour
Summary	<p>This workshop will provide opportunities for students to explore the exhibition of extraordinary animal drawings and paintings made by 17th century Dutch artist Frans Post during his time in Brazil and when he returned to Holland.</p> <p>Engagement with the animals in Post's work will be enhanced by a selection of mounted Brazilian animal specimens that are being lent to the exhibition by the National Museum of Ireland, Natural History.</p> <p>The workshop will be led by an Art Historian/Artist and a Zoologist and will include a combination of interactive discussion and object-handling.</p>
Year groups suitable for	Primary & Post-Primary (discussion to be tailored to the age of the group)
Session itinerary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet the Experts • Introduction to the exhibition space • Story of the artist and his time in Brazil • Description of the different artworks on display • Meet the different animals • Object handling
Objectives	This workshop aims to provide creative and meaningful access to the animal drawings and paintings of Frans Post in an age-appropriate and participatory way by using a combination of art historical and scientific approaches.
Themes explored	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frans Post and his work • why animals have been collected • how animals have adapted to their habitats • threats affecting the particular animals in Post's drawings • endangered species • animal conservation • animals in captivity/zoos • the difference between animals in Ireland and Brazil
Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tour of the exhibition with an art historian • animal-focussed information session with a zoologist, to include an

	<p>object-handling session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> expert-led Q&A's session to gauge students' reactions/responses to the workshop experience
<p>Curriculum links</p>	<p>Primary</p> <p><u>Visual Arts</u> - Drawing: Making drawings; looking and responding</p> <p><u>History</u> - Eras of change and conflict: Traders, explorers and colonisers from Europe (fifth and sixth class)</p> <p><u>Geography</u> - People and other lands; Environmental awareness</p> <p><u>Science</u> - Plants and animals; Environmental awareness</p> <p>Junior cycle</p> <p><u>Visual Art</u></p> <p>1.1 analyse their work, or that of another, using appropriate vocabulary and knowledge</p> <p>1.2 respond to an artwork using critical and visual language</p> <p>1.3 critique an artwork using critical and visual language</p> <p>1.7 examine the method of a number of artists and the artwork they created</p> <p>1.8 discuss examples of historical and contemporary visual art</p> <p>1.9 debate the value that they and society place on an artwork</p> <p>1.10 identify the use of art elements and design principles within an artwork</p> <p>1.13 identify media which are used to create artwork</p> <p><u>Science</u></p> <p>Strand one: The nature of science</p> <p>Science in society</p> <p>9. research and present information on the contribution that scientists make to scientific discovery and invention, and its impact on society</p> <p>10. appreciate the role of science in society; and its personal, social and global importance; and how society influences scientific research.</p> <p>Strand two: Earth and space</p> <p>Sustainability</p> <p>7. illustrate how earth processes and human factors influence Earth's climate, evaluate effects of climate change and initiatives that attempt to address those effects</p> <p>Strand five: Biological world</p> <p>Systems and interactions</p> <p>5. research and investigate the adaptation, competition and interdependence of organisms within specific habitats and communities</p> <p>Sustainability</p> <p>10. evaluate how humans can successfully conserve ecological biodiversity and contribute to global food production; appreciate the benefits that people obtain from ecosystems.</p>

	<p><u>Environmental and Social Studies (ESS)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • issues relating to the world's natural resources and to conservation • patterns and examples of human settlement, past and present, rural and urban; • contemporary social, cultural, environmental and economic issues. • Using Information Sources - drawings (illustrations, cartoons, etc); artefacts (buildings, archaeological finds, memorabilia, etc); • Impact of settlement on the environment - positive and negative • Land ownership in Brazil and its impact on the global environment <p><u>History</u></p> <p>Working with evidence</p> <p>1.6 debate the usefulness and limitations of different types of primary and secondary sources of historical evidence, such as written, visual, aural, oral and tactile evidence; and appreciate the contribution of archaeology and new technology to historical enquiry</p> <p>1.8 investigate a repository of historical evidence such as a museum, library, heritage centre, digital or other archive or exhibition</p>
<p>Learning outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gain an understanding of the historical period of Frans Post and his artwork • be able to identify the media Post used to create his artwork • be able to respond to the artwork using critical and visual language • be able to identify the adaptations of the animal species in Post's drawings in terms of their habitats and critical threats • demonstrate critical thinking skills by being able to distinguishing the artwork from the mounted specimens (and live animals)
<p>Background information to share with students before your visit</p>	<p>Frans Post 1612-1680</p> <p>Who was he? A Dutch artist of the 17th century. He had a famous brother called Pieter Post who was an architect and who possibly taught him to draw and paint. While Frans was in Brazil, Pieter was supervising the construction of Mauritshuis in the Hague, now an important museum (<i>Girl with a Pearl Earring</i> by Vermeer is there). Frans Post was a wonderful draughtsman (good at drawing) and painter. He wasn't famous before he went to Brazil. His paintings were unique because he painted things no one in Holland had ever seen before.</p> <p>What was he doing in Brazil? He was invited there by a man called Johan Maurits</p> <p>Who was Johan Maurits? He was Governor-general of the Dutch colony in Brazil from 1637 to 1644.</p>

He was quite a character. He created South America's first museum, first observatory, first botanical gardens. His motto was *Qua patet orbis* meaning 'as far as the world extends'. He was endlessly curious and enthusiastic. He brought scientists and artists with him to Brazil so they could record, learn and share their knowledge of the 'New world', that is to say a world that was new to them. Some of this knowledge was shared by the publication of books and also by works of art, such as Post's paintings.

But what were the Dutch doing far away in Brazil at that time?

The Dutch had colonised a part of Brazil. They left their own country in ships, travelled as far away as possible and landed in Brazil. They had more powerful weapons than the people who lived there already and they took over part of the country by force. Portuguese ships had already landed there too and taken other parts by force. They wanted to own the country so they would have power and money which they made from taking the land and using it to grow crops or take out minerals from the ground. They also took things from the people there and enslaved them. This made the Dutch people very rich. Nowadays colonisation is of course morally wrong.

What are these drawings?

These drawings were found in a place called Haarlem in Holland. There is a special library there called the Noord-Hollands Archief. A folder was found in 2010 with 34 drawings. There were no signatures on the drawings. A man called Alexander de Bruin decided he would find out who they were done by. He recognised the animals from Frans Post's paintings. He was a kind of art detective.

How did Frans Post do the drawings?

Since it was such a long time ago we cannot be sure, but we can look closely at the drawings and make some good guesses. We know what materials he used, for example gouache, watercolour and graphite. Gouache and watercolour are types of paint which dry quickly, graphite is more or less pencil. As for how he went about drawing the animals, again we can guess; some of the animals were dead, we can see that in the drawings, some were in captivity. Some were possibly stuffed.

How do you know?

Well two reasons. Firstly we can see a rope around the neck of the capybara for example. And secondly, in the case of an animal like a jaguar it would be too dangerous and impossible to draw it unless it was in a cage, it would eat you or run away.

But in the watercolour of the capybara there is no rope

The artist decided not to put that in in some pictures. He used the animals in paintings of the landscape so it wouldn't look natural if the animal had a rope around its neck in the painting.

So he drew some animals more than once?

Well we think he did one drawing and used it a number of times because the drawings and paintings are identical. Sometimes the drawings are reversed so the animal can look upside down.

What about the writing on top of the drawings? What does it say? Why did he put it there?

Well the writing is in Dutch because he was a Dutch artist of course. Apparently he wrote some information about the animals on the drawings so that the information and the image stay together. We can put that information into a few categories;

- **Size** (to give us the size he compared the animal to other animals that people in his country would recognise eg. It's bigger than dog but smaller than a pig);
- **Friendliness/cuddliness**
- **Dangers**
- **Edibility** (if you can eat this animal or not!)

How did Frans Post work as an artist?

"He took in and depicted what he saw"

"Someone who looked and painted with such infinite care. .."

So Frans Post looked with great care at what he was drawing.

"A characteristic of Post's sketching style is the combination of different techniques-pencil, pen, brush- to describe the object exactly"

Discovering Brazil

FAST FACTS

OFFICIAL NAME: Federal Republic of Brazil

FORM OF GOVERNMENT: Democratic federal republic

CAPITAL: Brasilia

POPULATION: 183,888,841

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE: Portuguese

MONEY: Real

AREA: 3,286,470 square miles (8,511,965 square kilometers)

MAJOR MOUNTAIN RANGES: Serra do Mar, Serra do Espinhaço

MAJOR RIVERS: Amazon, São Francisco, Paraná, Tocantins

NATURE

Brazil has the greatest variety of animals of any country in the world. It is home to 600 **mammal** species, 1,500 **fish** species, 1,600 **bird** species, and an amazing 100,000 different types of **insects**. Brazil's jungles are home to most of its animal life, but many unique species also live in the pampas and semidesert regions. In the central-western part of Brazil sits a flat, swampy area called the Pantanal. This patchwork of flooded lagoons and small islands is the world's largest wetland. Here live giant **anacondas**, huge

guinea pig relatives called capybaras, and fierce South American alligators called [caimans](#).

For thousands of years, people have been exploiting the jungles of Brazil. But since Europeans arrived about five centuries ago, forest destruction has been rampant. Most of Brazil's Atlantic rainforest is now gone, and huge tracts of the Amazon are disappearing every year. The government has established many national parks and refuges, but they only cover about 7 percent of the country.

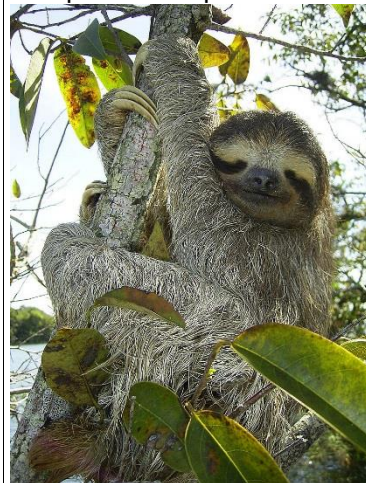
For more information and images go to National Geographic Kids-Brazil

<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/explore/countries/brazil/#brazil-soccer.jpg>

BRAZILIAN WILDLIFE

Three-toed sloth

What? These slooow, furry, long-limbed mammals spend 80% of their time snoozing; when they do move it's at a heady two metres a minute. They sleep curled up in trees or hanging from branches.



How to spot it: The two three-toed species are the types most frequently seen; they are well camouflaged (algae grows in their fur) and largely stationary; they favour trees of the Cecropia genus. Sometimes they're seen crossing rivers (they're good swimmers).

Jaguar

What? Resplendent rosette-spotted cat, the largest member of the panthera family on the continent – males weigh up to around 110kg. The name comes from the indigenous Guaraní word jaguar – 'he who kills with one leap'.



How to spot it: Be very, very lucky.

Watch this Video about jaguars in Brazil

National Geographic Episode 1

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGOCxMUBg_k&t=

For more information about animals in Brazil

go to this site National Geographic Kids Mammals

<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/animals/hubs/mammals/>

Before your visit - activities

- Look at photographic images of animals native to Brazil such as the Giant Anteater and the Capybara
- Brief introduction to terms such as Biodiversity and Sustainability

Learning outcomes:

- be familiar with the name of the artist and his work
- have basic knowledge about some of the animals
- be able to demonstrate a basic understanding of biodiversity and animal conservation

Links:

- www.nationalgallery.ie
- www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/437323
- <https://www.wedrawanimals.com/rainforest-animals/>
- www.ecofriendlykids.co.uk/biodiversitynature

After your visit

Suggested activities for Primary Students:

- visit to a zoo and seek out the Brazilian animal species
- write a story/poem about the adventures of your favourite animal from the exhibition
- collect information/data on local wildlife and apply methods and techniques learned in the workshop
- setup a class/group membership of a reputable wildlife conservation agency such as: Wildlife Conservation Network; Irish Wildlife Trust

Suggested activities for Post-Primary Students:

- research current Brazilian landscape and animal painters/sculptors
- design a poster advertising holidays in Brazil
- make a 3-D model of your favourite animal from the exhibition
- design a cartoon character based on one of the animals from the exhibition
- visit to a zoo and seek out the Brazilian animal species
- carry out a habitat study using invertebrates as the focal species
- make a presentation to your class outlining the role and function of your favourite wildlife conservation agency

Learning outcomes:

- be able to communicate their personal experience of the exhibition
- have an understanding of how an artist can use drawing to observe, record and analyse the world around them
- be able to use different media to create their own artwork
- be able to apply the knowledge gained in the workshop to the animals in the national and local environment
- be able demonstrate scientific methods of how to collect and analyse information/data about animals

Links

- www.nationalgallery.ie
- www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/437323
- www.exploringnature.org/graphics/drawing/drawing_rainforest_amazon.pdf
- <https://www.thebrazilianlandscape.com/about>
- www.pinterest.com/luigilui/painters-from-brazil/
- www.lonelyplanet.com/brazil/wildlife/endangered-species
- www.aquaexpeditions.com/live-from-the-river/wildlife/endangered-animals-amazon/
- www.brazil.org.za/brazil-fauna.html