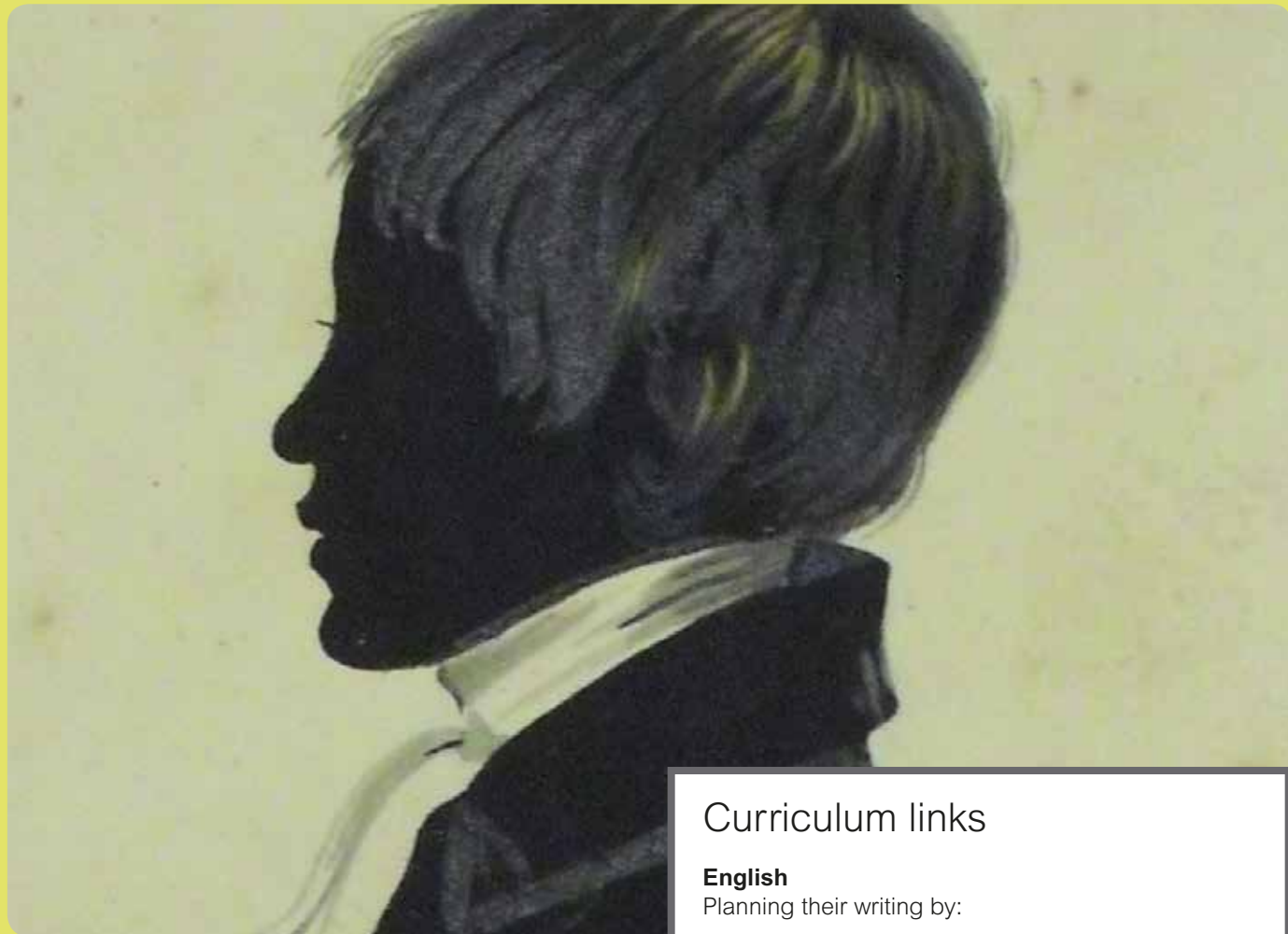


# Silhouettes



Collection of 31 miniature silhouette portraits of Blue Coat School boys. © Liverpool Record Office, Liverpool Libraries, 377.72 GER

## Curriculum links

### English

Planning their writing by:

Discussing writing similar to that which they are planning to write, in order to understand and learn from its structure, vocabulary and grammar

Discussing and recording ideas

Noting and developing initial ideas, drawing on reading and research where necessary

### History

A study of an aspect of history or a site dating from a period beyond 1066 that is significant in the locality

Changes in an aspect of social history

### PSHE and Citizenship

To think about the lives of people living in other places and times, and people with different values and customs

### Art

To improve their mastery of art and design techniques, including drawing, painting and sculpture with a range of materials

### Science

Recognise that shadows are formed when light from a light source is blocked by a solid object

## Summary

Pupils will learn about the lives of children in the past, using a book of silhouette portraits from 1822. Pupils will make their own silhouette portraits and learn more about the children who came to school at Bluecoat.

### Duration

Core activity: 1 x 1 hour session  
Extension activity: 1 x 1 hour session

### Aims and Outcomes

- Pupils will have learned about the lives of people from the past
- Pupils will have learned how photography has changed and consider the reasons people take photographs

## Background

The earliest records we have of silhouette portraiture are from Roman times, approximately 500 AD, where women would capture their partner's image using shadows and paint before they were sent into battle. Up until the invention and widespread use of photography in the mid 1800s silhouette portraiture was the most popular way to recreate an image of yourself or another person. Professional and amateur artists would create silhouette portraits by using paint or cutting out profiles of their subject, until the early 1800s, when machines were invented that could cast a person's shadow onto a wall or trace the shape of a face.

The Blue Coat School silhouette book is a collection of 31 miniature silhouette portraits of boys who attended the

school in 1822 by a local artist, E. Gerard. The book also contains reports of the boys' behaviour and ability, written by school masters. The portraits and reports give a real sense of the children who came to Bluecoat almost 200 years ago and provides an opportunity to consider the differences between the lives of children now and then.

The reports tell us about the lessons that the pupils at the school took and what was expected of their behaviour. They also give information about what the children's life might be like when they left the school, with some details about the jobs that they were expected to go on to.

## Activity

### Starter questions

These questions will assess the pupils' prior knowledge and also alert you to any possible difficulties or sensitive topics

*Why do we create images of people and special moments?*

*How have people done this over the years?*

*How are shadows formed?*

### Core activity

Challenge the children to make their own silhouette portrait, using material from our website as inspiration. There are a number of different ways to create silhouettes.

Method 1: Using light and shadow

Method 2: Using paint

Method 3: Cutting out

Details about how to do each of these methods is available to download on our website along with a template for the children to write a school report about themselves in the style of the Blue Coat School miniature book.

### End question

This question will ask the pupils to reflect on what they have learnt and ask them to apply this knowledge to the world today.

*How has photography changed and how do you use it in your day to day life?*

### Extension activity

Some of the boys who had their silhouette portraits made also had a report written about them and their behaviour.

Give the children a portrait and report of one boy who features in the book. Ask them to imagine and write about what happened to the boy after he left the School.

You can use the question sheet on our website to give the children some ideas.

### Think About

- Why do you think that the silhouette paintings of the Blue Coat School pupils were taken? What will they have been used for?

### Talk About

- How does a silhouette portrait compare to taking a photograph?
- How has photography changed the way people capture images?
- How does the silhouette portrait compare to the modern day selfie?

### Find Out About

- What kind of people would have had silhouette portraits taken?
- Can you find other examples of early silhouette portraits?

If you enjoyed this resource you might want to look at *Indentures and Apprenticeships* or *Child Labour*