

The Big Picture

In this activity you will begin to explore a big topic by focussing on small details.

Taking inspiration from the work of Toby Morison, children will create individual watercolour tiles which together will form a class display that can act as a starting point for discussion.

You may wish to use the [Getting It Right For Your Class teachers' notes](#) to think about how emotive objects and imagery might be received by children with different lived experiences.



Contents

[Introduction](#) 3

[Selected images from the exhibition](#) 4

[Materials list](#) 9

[Watercolour tips](#) 10

[Activity instructions \(step by step\)](#) 14

[Extension ideas](#) 19

[Click on each item to go directly to the page](#)

Introduction

Zooming in on lots of different small details can help us to begin to understand a big topic.





Toby Morison **Yousef in Hamelin, 2015**

Watercolour and coloured pencil
on paper

Yousef (ten years old), had travelled from Syria with his eighteen-year-old brother. They had become separated on the journey but were later reunited in a refugee camp, and are now living in Germany.



- What can we learn about Yousef and his experience of being a refugee from this picture?
- What do the small snapshot tiles around the edge tell us about his journey?
- Read the text that goes with the image. What more does that tell you about how else the images and stories fit together?
- What mediums have been used to create the picture?

Reflection

Can you think of any other ways an illustrator could show the inner thoughts or history of a person in an illustration?

Activity



Materials:

- Watercolour paints plus the tin lids for mixing
- Water
- Brushes ideally soft ones and one large and one small
- Paper towel for dabbing brushes dry and for removing paint from the paper's surface
- Pencil crayons
- Paper/card squares approx. 15cm^2 watercolour paper is lovely to use but can also be expensive so card is a good alternative
- Scrap paper for experimenting
- Prompts printed and cut into individual strips and scattered on tables (or pulled out of a hat)



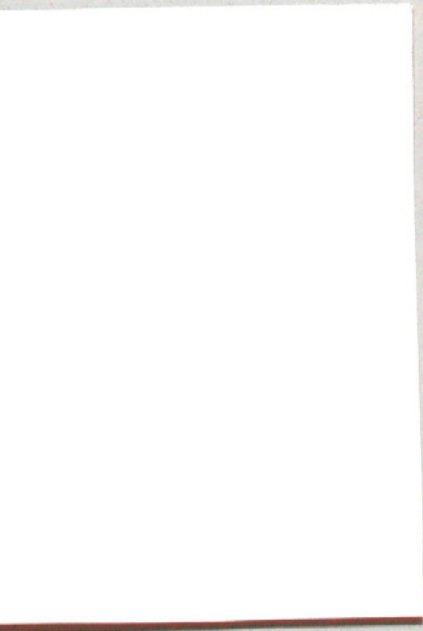


About watercolours:

Whatever your previous experience with watercolour, it is always worth refreshing your memory on the best way to use them before beginning your work.

The clue about how best to use watercolours is in the name - so remember to use lots of water!

The finished look should be washes of colour not thick vibrant colours (it is better to use poster paints when you want that effect). In this technique, lines will be drawn in pencil or pencil crayon which need to be seen after painting so a light wash is all that is needed.



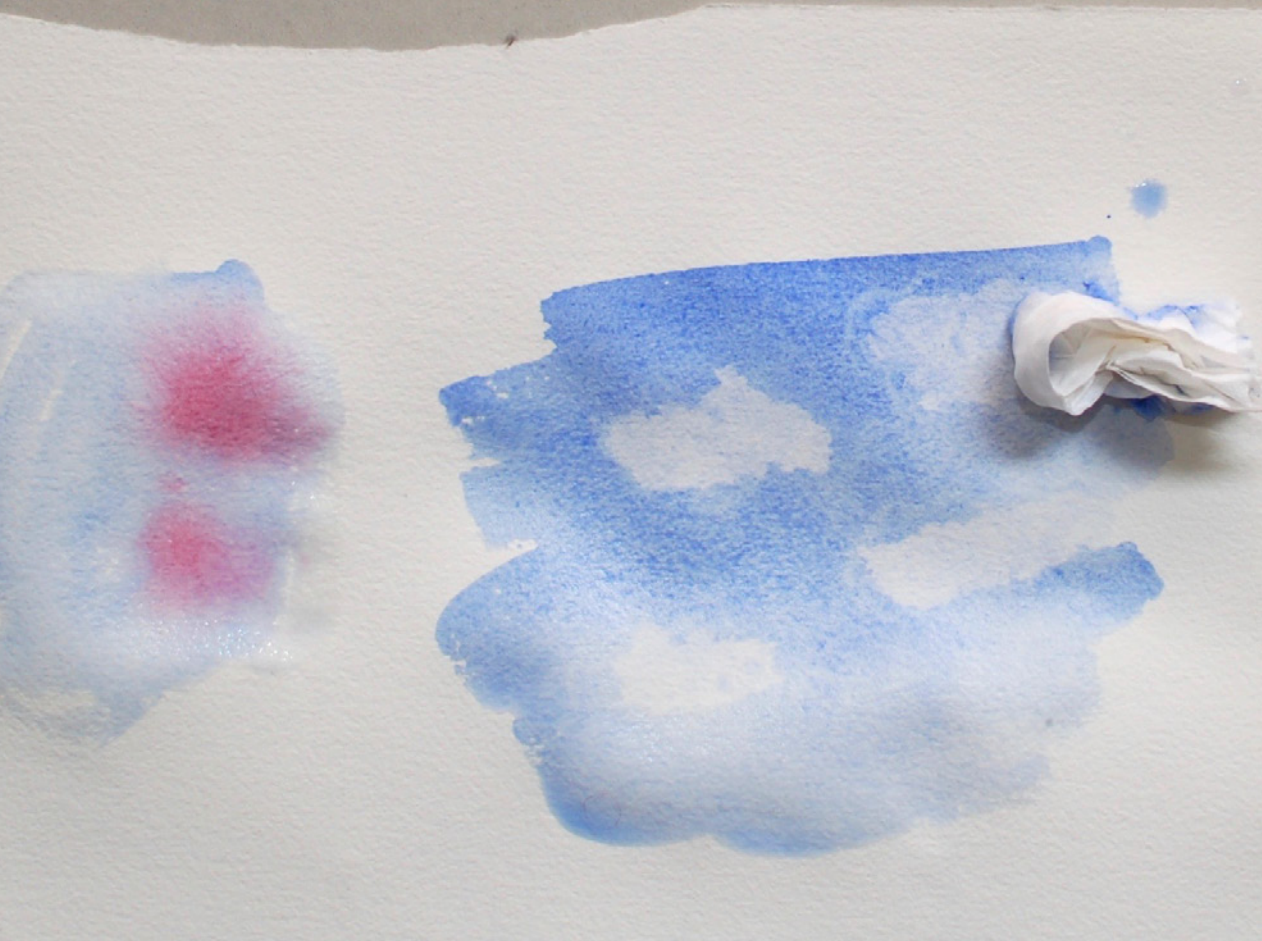
Everyone should have access to a tin of paints, a lid of the paint tin, a pot of water and have a brush (or two), paper towel and some scrap paper to test colours on.

Looking after the equipment is important. Try practicing softly using the brushes to brush the back of your hand - when using lots of water you should never have to scrape or scrunch the brush and this in turn helps to keep the brushes in good condition. Equally, making sure that watercolours that get muddy (all the colours mixed and dirty in the tin) are rinsed under the tap at the end of the session will ensure that everyone starts the next session with an appealing set of colours.



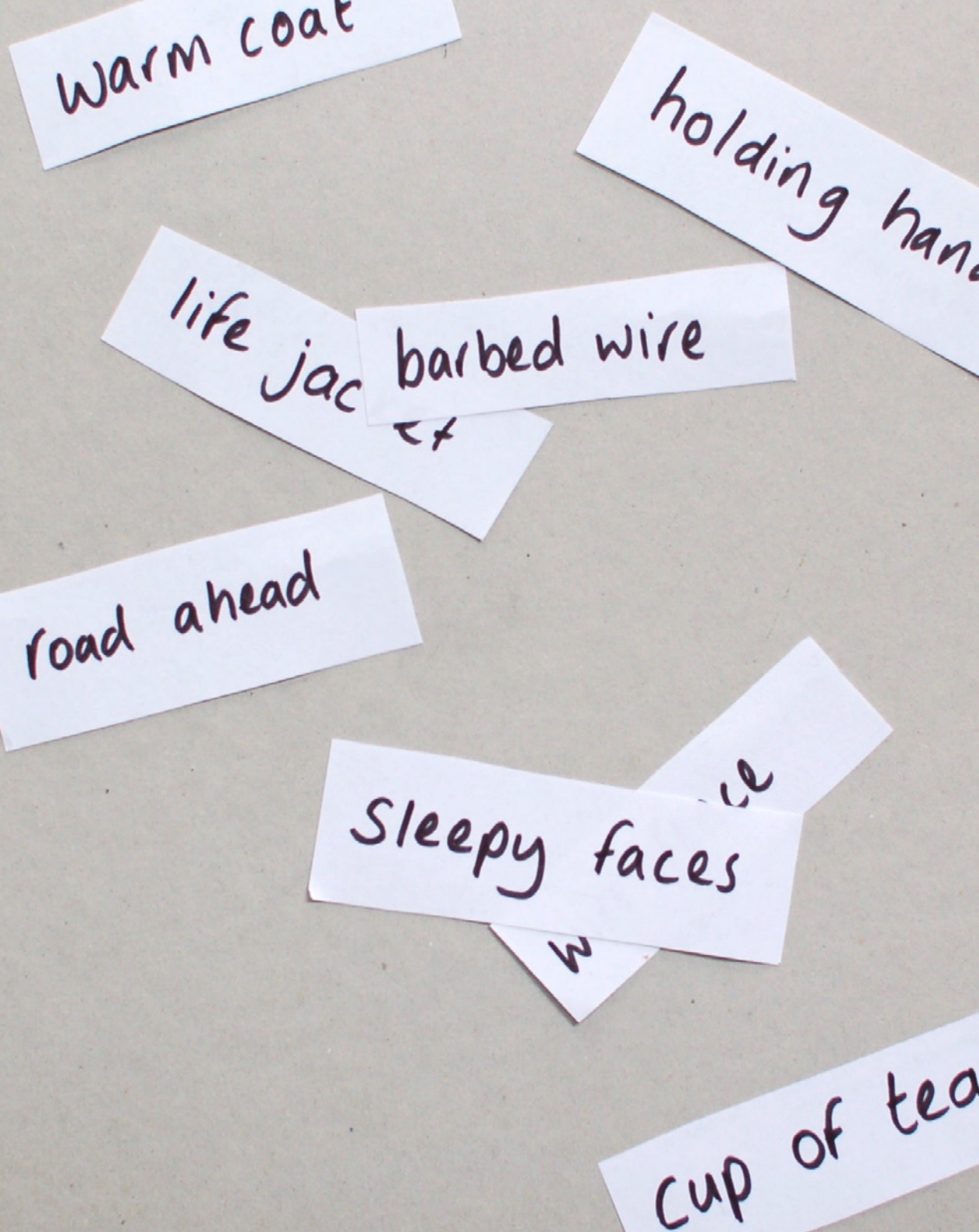
Most tins of school watercolours will contain black and white paints. It is great to try not to use these colours at all. The best way to create white in watercolour painting is to leave the paper uncoloured so the white of the paper is the lightest shade. To make other colours paler simply use more water/less paint. To create dark colours close to black try mixing colours (eg dark brown and dark blue).

All paint whether it is being mixed with another colour or just having water added should be transferred to the paint tin lid before putting on the paper as this gives better control of how light or dark the paint is.



The other really important thing to remember about watercolours is that when the paper is wet (with water or wet paint) other colours placed on it or near it will run (or 'bleed') into the other colour. This can be a really fun effect to play with, but if you do not want colours next to each other to 'run' you just need to let them dry before painting the next colour.

Finally, once paint has dried it's really hard to change it other than to add more layers of paint, but while paint is wet it is easy to take it off the paper with a paper towel. Try painting blue paint over an area then using scrunched up paper towel to remove it and make 'clouds'.



Prompts:

These are some suggestions but you and your class can add to this list as you wish...look through the whole exhibition for more ideas or for visual reference.

- Holding hands
- Hand holding phone
- Cups of tea
- Sleepy faces
- Laughing
- Warm coat
- Life jacket
- Barbed wire
- Wire fence
- Hole in the road
- Road ahead
- Broken shoes walking
- Playing
- Pot being stirred



Method:

Everyone needs to be given a prompt - this could be done by choosing from a selection on your table or picking one from a hat.

Draw something that best represents your prompt using a dark coloured pencil crayon on the square of card/paper. The pencil crayon drawing should focus on line only.

Apply a layer of colour to the picture using watercolours.

See the section [About Using Watercolour](#) for more tips.





When the layer of colour has dried use another watery layer of blue (or blue and brown mixed together to create grey) to add areas of shadow or darker areas. Toby Morison uses this method in his picture.



When everyone has finished their images they can be tiled together to create a class display which can form a great starting point for discussions.

Extension ideas

Ink and stick drawing works really well with watercolours. You could try drawing the images using indian ink and stick before adding watercolour.

Consider displaying the work in a way that other classes could use it as an introduction to the topic.