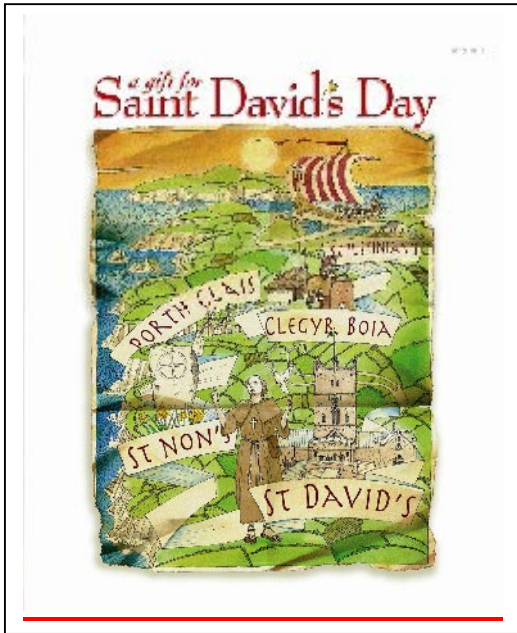


A Gift for Saint David's Day

Guest edited by Neil Nuttall



Try Neil's exciting new teaching and learning activities linked to the stories, poems and non-fiction pieces in this stunning anthology.

1. The Saint, the Druid and the Witch by Malachy Doyle

Teachers who wish to ensure that their pupils hear how Saint David settled in Wales have the perfect story to read with Malachy's retelling of the Saint David legend. Older pupils may be encouraged to discuss how the peaceful message of Saint David has outlasted the conflict and hatred expressed through Satrapa.

2. The Dress Rehearsal by Jenny Sullivan

The full playscript with Jenny's performance notes can be downloaded you're your school to perform. *We would be delighted if you would like to share the results of your performance by emailing the editor (editor@pontbooks.co.uk) or by sending photographs or pictures.*

3. Heralds of Spring by Francesca Kay

The four verses of Francesca's poem 'Heralds of Change' (page 33 in the anthology) are written in haiku form. Francesca has included another pattern within the poem which she explains in her note on page 96. She also suggests that readers might try to write their own poems with similar patterns.

Ideas for poems might include:

- the changing seasons; identifying and commenting on traditional natural markers - lambs, migratory birds, flowers, harvest, snow, ice, etc.
- comment on the seasonal rhythms of urban life - dark journeys to and from school, Easter and Whitsun holidays, warm summer evenings, Trick or Treats, bonfires, fireworks and Christmas.
- haiku based on the articles in the anthology. St Davids - the cathedral; St David's - the city; Saint David - the missionary; Saint David - today's patron saint.

Planting and growing daffodils in school is a great practical project. A look in an autumn bulb catalogues from one of the major suppliers will quickly show the range of daffodils and narcissi that can be grown. The variety 'Paperwhite Narcissi' are specially bred to flower 6 - 8 weeks from planting indoors in pots. (Plant them the first week back after Christmas and you should have pots of scented flowers ready to display or give as presents by Saint David's Day!) In its autumn catalogue for 2006, one supplier offered 45 'Paperwhite' bulbs for £12.90, less than 30p per bulb.

Schools that are fortunate to have a school garden or planting space might try to grow a range of the many coloured and unusual daffodils and narcissi. Some even have red/orange trumpets or pink petals. Could these be related to the daffagons in Neil Nuttall's story?

4. Saint David and his Cathedral by Nona Rees

Schools who wish to develop a project based on St Davids Cathedral may download a plan of the cathedral from this site.

(We might also include a picture/photograph of the cathedral and possibly a map showing St David's and other mentioned places relative to Pembrokeshire and the rest of Wales.)

Make your own misericord

In her report about the cathedral, Nona describes the wooden seats and their hidden supports that the choir members are able to rest on whilst they are standing for long periods during the services. Each misericord has a carved underside that is on display when the seats are raised. The carving is below a narrow five-sided ledge that provides support for the 'standing' monks

Pupils might like to make their own models of these in card and papier-mâché. The relief carving on the underside of each misericord can first be modelled in plasticine and then covered with papier-mâché. As well as copies of the scenes from the Middle Ages it would be fun to make 21st century images. Sporting figures, electronic gadgetry, forms of transport, entertainment figures spring to mind.

Please remember to follow all health and safety guidelines when using craft materials and tools such as scissors and glue guns.

You will need: a piece of stiff card or strawboard, approximately 30cm x 15cm; plasticine, torn newspaper strips, approximately 8cm x 2 cm; PVA glue and water mix, 3 parts PVA to one part water; clingfilm to cover the card and petroleum jelly to smear over the plasticine relief.

Step 1

Cover the card with clingfilm and then use the plasticine to model a narrow five-sided ledge, just below the top of the card. The chosen image should then be modelled in plasticine to fit beneath this ledge. (Strong bold shapes will look most effective when covered with the layers of papier-mâché.)

Step 2

Smear the plasticine with petroleum jelly. (This stops the papier-mâché sticking to the plasticine.) Now paste on the newspaper strips using the 3 parts PVA glue and 1 part water mixture. Make sure the paper is smoothed into every part of the plasticine relief. Approximately 6 - 8 layers of paper strips will be needed. Set aside to dry.

Step 3

When completely dry, carefully ease the papier-mâché off the plasticine and card backing. With the plasticine and clingfilm removed, trim the rough edges off the papier-mâché relief and re-attach to the card backing using further strips of newspaper and PVA/water mix.

You now have a 21st century misericord seat! This should be painted - brown with dark highlights for the smooth wooden upper part of the seat, appropriate colours for the relief modelling on the underside. The actual misericords are all plain polished wood but much of the early wood in the cathedral was painted. (Better results can be obtained by priming the papier-mâché with a first coat of white/grey ready-mix paint before applying the top coats. The paint can be sealed by covering with a coat of the PVA/water mix.)

To display the misericords you might consider attaching a thin garden cane (packs of green ones approximately 40 cm long are available from garden centres) to the back edge of the seat. Rings of modelling wire should be fitted over each end and fastened to a further piece of card or the display board so that the seat will hinge up and down. Use strings at each side to hold the seat horizontal when folded down. The relief 'carving' will only be visible when the seat is folded up and not in use.

5. Owain and the Dragon by Phil Carradice

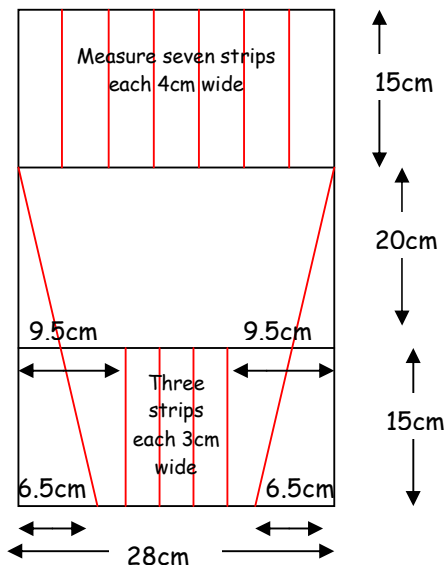
Phil's story provides another great opportunity for some craft work, especially when pupils are shown Jac's full page illustration of the 'dragon warrior'. There are excellent art and craft books that show the many ways pupils could make a dragon mask out of a multitude of materials. Here's one way using two pieces of thin card.

Please remember to follow all health and safety guidelines when using craft materials and tools such as scissors and glue guns.

You will need: Two pieces of thin card, 28cm x 50cm and 28cm x 33cm, glue gun (remember to follow all Health and Safety guidelines) scissors, two brass paper fasteners, card off-cuts and paint to decorate.

Step 1

Mark out the larger piece of card as the diagram shows.



Step 2

Cut along the lines marked in red. (Save the two long thin card triangles that are cut off the card - they can be used for horns etc.)

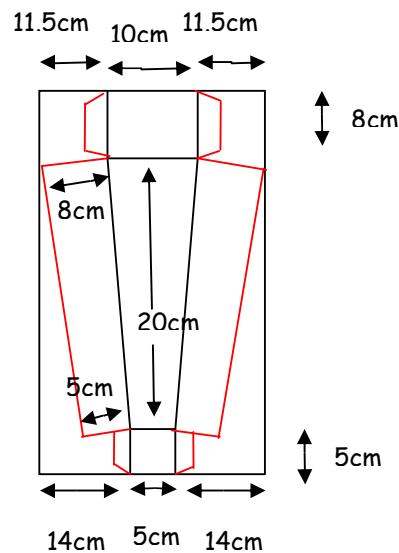
Step 3

Push one of the brass paper fasteners through the middle strip at the top of the mask, about 2 cm from the end. Gather in each pair of the outer strips, overlapping them with the centre strip and carefully push the paper fastener through each pair in turn. (If the card is too stiff make a guide-hole through the card with a knitting needle or similar.) As the pairs of strips are gathered the flat mask will become three-dimensional. Repeat this process with the three strips and the two outer shaped pieces at the bottom of the mask, fastening them together with the second paper fastener.

(Note that by holding the mask shape together with the brass paper fasteners it is possible to undo them and lay the mask flat for painting, decorating and attaching the 'dragon's snout'.)

Step 4

The dragon's snout can be made by marking out the second, smaller, piece of card as shown.



Note the two flaps for gluing at each end of the snout. These flaps should be 2cm wide. Cut along the red lines then score along the black lines, fold and glue.

Step 5

Glue the snout on to the front of the face mask and decorate to create a fearsome dragon mask. (Horns, teeth, tongue, etc may be applied using off-cuts of the card. These can be strengthened by folding on their long axis or curled by pulling across a ruler.)

A 5cm wide card headband should be attached if the pupils are to wear the masks. Alternatively the masks may be mounted on a display board to produce a stunning display.

6. Lost for Words by Suzanne Carpenter

Suzanne's lively and amusing piece offers both language and craft opportunities.

Language Prompts

- Pupils may recall (verbally and/or in writing) their own 'nerves' and 'fears' when they had to do something that they weren't used to in front of an audience. (This doesn't have to be basic narrative recall - perhaps letter/interview or diary genre may enable 'stronger' pieces to be produced.)
- Pupils may discuss ways in which Suzanne might conquer her nerves. These could be written as an 'agony aunt' column of advice and suggestions.

Craft Prompts

Suzanne uses torn paper collages to create many of her wonderful illustrations. In the image of Saint David on page 54 in *A Gift for Saint David's Day* she has cleverly used the daffodil and the leek to add to the strength of the image. Torn paper collages are great fun to do, either as individual pieces or as a group project. Many of our modern Welsh celebrities in sport and entertainment have their own individual symbols linked to them - rugby and footballs, musical instruments and musical notation, bicycle and wheelchair wheels, golf clubs, high-hurdles and running shoes - the list is endless. The torn paper collage of the chosen celebrity could have their particular symbol(s) 'woven' into their image.

7. The Sighing Moving Statue by Mary Medlicott

Language Prompts

Is Mary's piece a collection of fictional stories about the statue and its book or is it a collection of modern-day fables that we think may be true?

Encourage pupils to consider their local environment. Are there statues, sculptures, pictures, shop displays, advertising hoardings, etc. that may have their own story, fable or legend that could be told. Are there modern-day fables and legends that pupils already know that could be told? How? Newspaper reports, TV documentaries, letters, diaries or narratives - the same story could be told in many differing genres.

8. Visiting Grandpa by Nicola Davies

Language Prompts - 'Two for the price of one.'

Below is an excerpt from Nicola's story where she describes the lake dragon.

Suddenly the surface of the water lifted up like a lid and a huge water dragon emerged, tall as rowan, transparent as ice. The splendid creature was fashioned from running water. In the moonlight, his teeth flashed like silver icicles.

'Children,' he said in a crystal voice, 'what can I do for you?'

'We've come to invite you to Grandpa Noggard's birthday.'

Small fountains of water spurted everywhere as the lake dragon laughed.

'Has he put you up to this? Does he want to make friends at last?'

Delyth looked into the sparkling eyes of the lake dragon and had to tell the truth. 'No, he doesn't. But it is his 1,500th birthday on Saint David's Day. No-one's coming. Just us.'

Bubbles of water rippled across the lake dragon's face. 'Your grandfather's upset everyone, hasn't he? He wasn't always like that. We used to have picnics here, in Saint David's time. Your grandfather, Saint David and me.'

'Of course. He often used to walk in this lake. Dewi Dyfrwr, we called him.' The lake dragon's eyes glinted in the moonlight. 'Nothing like old times. All right, children, I'll come... for old times' sake.'

Task 1 The excerpt is packed with strong descriptive phrases that paint a wonderful word-picture of the lake dragon. After careful reading(s), individuals, groups or even the whole class should identify and high-light these descriptive phrases. The task is then to fashion a short descriptive poem 'The Lake Dragon' using predominantly these phrases.

This will be mainly a cutting/editing task; few, if any, words will need to be added. The exercise is particularly useful to enable pupils to discover the effect of editing a line for strength rather than rhyme or rhythm. Word order may need to be changed. Groups may wish to discuss the merits of particular versions - there will be no right or wrong final version - just a personal preference.

[This task does not have to be pencil and paper. If the text is provided electronically, as a Word Document, the cutting, pasting and arranging can be done on screen; saved and printed.]

Task 2 is for pupils to produce their own strong piece of descriptive prose. This may be 'stand-alone' or form part of an already written narrative or other piece of writing. 'Stand-alone' subjects might range from: the school garden, a den, a bedroom, a library to real/imaginary animals or people. Stress should be placed on the strength of the prose and the focused/organised approach of the writer.

Following the method used to edit Nicola's prose in to a poem; this may be done with the pupil's descriptive prose. With minimal additions and maximum cutting and editing, can the pupil (or more bravely a second pupil or group) cut a strong descriptive poem from the prose? The opportunity is also here to use IT skills rather than pencil and paper.

[It is often helpful to edit someone else's piece. Writers often benefit from working with someone else's prose because every writer will be approaching the work from a different angle.]

9. Saint David's Day by Lisa Daniels

Lisa's award winning poem crosses the barrier of time to link Saint David in his age and our 21st century world firmly together.

In the PONT poetry anthology *Second Thoughts*, the poem '*Just a Minute*' also illustrates the spirit of Saint David that is mirrored in modern and historical welsh men, women and events.

Language Prompts After reading and discussing Lisa's poem and '*Just a Minute*', if available, pupils should be encourage to produce a 'wordstorm' of their own ideas that place the spirit/message/values of Saint David as a model for our own behaviour in the 21st century. 'Wordstorms' are often best noted down in haphazard order on board or flipchart. These thoughts and ideas can then

form the raw material to develop a poem or prose piece about the spirit of Saint David and our own lives.

Attention should be drawn to the strength of line and control in Lisa's poem that effectively conveys the image without the weakening that contrived rhyme would have produced.

10. **The Boat by Christine Evans**

Here is a gentle and subtle celebration of self-esteem. An individual discovers their own talents and then uses them to enhance the quality of life in their community and through so doing, enhances their own.

The story is a gem, a must to be read aloud to a class or group! This might lead to a discussion of our own talents. How might we use them to the benefit of our own society - in the home, at school or beyond? Sometimes our talents are not discovered for many years; sometimes they are discovered when we are very young. What is a 'child prodigy'? Are all our talents exciting or amazing? Is being patient, caring, understanding a talent that we can use to benefit others? What if we have a sporting or musical talent that earns us huge amounts of money? How can this talent be used to benefit others? The opportunities for discussion are endless!

11. **Castle Nevermore by Ruth Morgan**

The full playscript with Ruth's performance notes can be downloaded you're your school to perform. *We would be delighted if you would like to share the results of your performance by emailing the editor (editor@pontbooks.co.uk) or by sending photographs or pictures.*

12. **Dragons and Daffodils by Neil Nuttall**

Neil's story began as daffodil and dragon doodles one Saint David's Day. Suddenly a daffodil's trumpet began to look like a dragon's snout and then vice versa. Magic! Perhaps it helped that he was sucking mint imperials at the time. Ieuan's vase of yellow (or red!) daffodils is easy to make out of a cardboard tube, thin card, one or two egg boxes and some thin green garden sticks.

Please remember to follow all health and safety guidelines when using craft materials and tools such as scissors and glue guns.

(Packs of new cardboard tubes are available from craft material suppliers and new/unused egg boxes and trays could be purchased from a farm shop or commercial egg producer.)

Ieuan's Daffodils

Step 1

The vase is made by sticking a 10 x 10 cm piece of cardboard on to the end of the tube. (Toilet roll tubes are ideal, being about 11 cm long. Kitchen roll tubes, etc. should be cut to this length.) The vase can now be painted and decorated. A small piece of bluetack fastened under the base will help the vase to stay upright when the daffodils are added.

Step 2

Make the daffodils by cutting out the 'cups' from egg boxes or trays. Each cardboard cup will now become a daffodil's trumpet. The frill of petals behind the cup should be cut from a 20 x 20 cm piece of thin card. Younger pupils might draw around a thicker cardboard template but older pupils should be encouraged to draw their own five or six petalled frill to be cut from the card. All that remains now is to use a glue gun to stick the eggcup trumpet on to the centre of the card frill and glue them both to the top of one of the thin garden sticks. Paint yellow for daffodils. (Three daffodils for each vase.)

Daffagons

If your daffodils are painted red, it's amazing how quickly they turn into daffagons! Simply cut out a pointed dragon's tongue from a thin card off-cut and stick it so that it curls out of the trumpet. Make two eyes out of screwed-up paper, or playdough, or even use mint imperials with felt-tipped black pupils and stick them on to the frill of petals above the trumpet.

Sioned's Dragon

You'll need a cardboard tube about as long as a toilet roll tube, 4 or 5 egg boxes (or some clean egg trays if you can find some), thin card, a piece of string about 50 cm long, paint and glue.

Step 1

Make the body of the dragon by cutting a strip of cardboard 'spikes' from an egg box or tray and stick it along the cardboard tube so that the spikes overhang the tube at each end. You'll probably have to use the strips from two egg boxes if they are the six egg size.

Step 2

Make the dragon's tail by cutting 10 or 12 of the cardboard cups from egg boxes or an egg tray (more if you want a very long tail). Make a small hole in the end of each one and thread these onto the string. Tie the end of the string

around a small piece of card to stop the cups falling off. This string of cups will be the articulated tail of the dragon. Join the tail to the body by feeding the string through the cardboard tube, pulling the tail up to the body (make sure you leave the string loose enough to allow the tail to move from side to side) and gluing the string at the open end. Cut off any spare string.

Step 3

Cut wings out of the thin card and stick on either side of the body.

Step 4

Pinch or make a dragon's head like Ieuan made and stick it onto the 'neck' of dragon spikes overhanging the body.

Step 5

Add dragon's feet if you want to. These can be cut from cardboard cups. Cut out claws round the cup rims and stick the feet underneath the body.

Step 6

Paint and decorate.

Sioned tied some thin black cotton to the head and tail of her dragon to hang it from the ceiling.