

Literature through Art – Commemoration

Reading: 'Commemorating George Elliott Benson' – Prof Michael Cawood Green

Commemorate: 'to remember officially and give respect to a great person or event, especially by a public ceremony or by making a statue or special building'

(celebrate, pay tribute to, pay homage to, honour, remember, recognize, acknowledge, observe, mark, memorialize, immortalize' keep alive the memory of)

- 1) Choose a work of art from anywhere in the Laing gallery that seems to you **to be 'commemorating' something** – this may be a painting, sculpture, object (china, glass, silver, etc.)
- 2) Look at the work of art you've chosen. **What is being remembered, and why?** Take your time. Allow your mind to wander around it. Speculate. Imagine. Describe. Freewrite the thoughts that come to you, jotting notes in the box below.

First thoughts about the work you've chosen:

- 3) Try and put the subject of your commemoration **into words**. In what tone, style and register or form should this be done (think of other commemorations you are aware of: war, religion, a famous person, event, achievement, etc.)?

Notes about tone, style and register or form:



- 4) Now think about how you would retell this as a **story**. Try to bring the subject being commemorated **alive** for your reader. Feel free to be as **imaginative** as you like, and adapt tone, style, register and **point of view** for expressing this through creative writing. NB: remember this is fiction, so you can make up any story you like about the object!
- 5) **Show, not tell**. Do this by appealing to all the senses: what will your reader see, feel, hear, taste, smell – and more – about your subject? Use all your narrative and descriptive skills to do this. What key writing techniques will you use to do this?

Sketch a plan for bringing your subject alive in a story:

- 6) Can you imagine a **darker side** to your subject? Should this person, event, group of people etc. be commemorated? What would be **another way** of seeing their story, one that challenges the respect shown to them? This might be from some facts you know about them, or find out, or make up – this is **creative writing**! Of course, this might make the commemoration **ironic** for your reader.

Ideas about a darker side to your subject:



- 7) Now write **the first few sentences of a story** inspired by your thoughts on commemoration.





Statue of Lieut. Col. G.E. Benson at southern end of Beaumont Street.
Circa 1910.



Prof Michael Cawood Green, Northumbria University



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