

# Mai and the Magical Blackbird

ART WORKSHOP WITH EMILY



## NOTES FOR TEACHERS

Welcome to this creative workshop, part of your Mai and the Magical Blackbird project with Arts Connection, Mid Wales Music Trust and Sinfonia Cymru. These notes contain simple instructions to accompany the art workshop video, and suggestions for working with older and younger children.

The aim of the workshop is to create artworks which will form the visual element of the project. Emily will be using the art created by your pupils and all the children involved in the project (five schools across Powys) to design a digital artwork to be projected as part of the final musical performance with your pupils. This guide contains a materials list and teaching notes. Use them alongside the tutorial video, the photo worksheet for students and the audio/music tracks provided.

### **Suggested time for workshop:**

1/2 day to a whole day (or 2-3 shorter sessions).

*Please ensure your artworks are completed and sent to Arts Connection by Wednesday 28 April. Details on submitting the artworks are included below.*

# Materials List

## For the Walk

- A small bag for gathering things on a walk
- Optional: secateurs or scissors (younger children may need an adult to take cuttings)
- Optional: gloves for collecting objects
- Optional: some birdseed

## For Art Making

- A bundle of objects gathered from a walk in nature such as sticks, feathers, grasses, weeds, sheep's wool and seed heads. Try to include a few sticks of different lengths and thicknesses. Instructions for the walk are in stage one of these notes.
- String and Scissors, or rubber bands
- A selection of paints (poster paints or tester pots are fine)
- A paint palette or plate (paper plates work well)
- Optional: black ink (water based)
- Large paper (minimum size A2). A roll of lining paper can be cut up for the class if sheets are not available
- Masking tape to secure paper to floor
- A plastic sheet or tablecloth to protect the floor
- Optional: a cushion to sit on
- The audio version of Mai & the Magical Blackbird and harp music tracks, performed by Chloe Powell-Davies (see [www.mwmt.org.uk/our-projects/mai-and-the-blackbird](http://www.mwmt.org.uk/our-projects/mai-and-the-blackbird)).
- A speaker or something to play the music and audio on

## **Workshop Themes:**

Abundance & creativity in nature, relationship with nature, giving/receiving.

## **Stage 1: The Walk**

Before making their own natural paintbrushes and art, students need to go for a walk lasting up to an hour somewhere in nature. Try to fill a small bag with objects such as sticks, feathers, grasses, weeds, sheep's wool and seed heads. Try to include a few sticks of different lengths and thicknesses.

**Things to emphasise:** this workshop is centred around the themes in Mai and the Magical Blackbird, especially nature as a source of creativity and abundance. To help children think about this, they could take some birdseed on the walk to leave for the birds, as a reciprocal gift for what nature has given in return. In the video, Emily puts forward the idea that if we take something from nature it's nice to put something back.

**Safety:** stress that children must not pick up anything sharp or dangerous, and that they could wear gloves if they like.

## **Stage 2: Making Natural Paintbrushes**

Back in the classroom or at home, students can now make their paintbrushes by binding natural objects to sticks using string or rubber bands (see photo guide).

**For younger children:** Rubber bands are ideal for young children or those who struggle with knots, although learning binding and knotting is a useful skill.

**For older children:** Older children could make a wider range of paintbrushes.

**Aim:** Each student should try to make 4-5 natural paintbrushes, and also leave some sticks of different thicknesses to use on their own.

**Idea:** this stage could conclude with students showing each other the brushes and tools they've made.

## **Stage 3: Making art inspired by the story**

Prepare for this stage by protecting the floor with the plastic sheet or tablecloth and taping a large sheet of paper for each student (or length taken from a roll) to the floor. If you're using water

based paints. Each student will need their natural paintbrushes and sticks from stage 2, some paints (and black ink if using) and a palette or plate for their paints.

Ask students to explore the different kinds of marks they can make by dipping their paintbrushes in paint and making large, expressive marks across their paper. They can drag, roll, tap, write or dance their brushes across the paper. Play the included audio version of the story or harp music while they are working, and encourage children to move to the music or story while they are making marks.

It is fine to simply complete the previous stage, so that children create a piece of abstract art. If they would like to relate further to the story and take their work further, they can use black ink to draw symbols and images from Mai and the Magical Blackbird.

Note: younger children or those who like to copy something can use the images included in these resources.

**Collaborative option:** an option is to get groups of children working together on a long roll of paper to produce a shared piece of art.

**For younger children:** Focus on the fun of making marks whilst listening to music or the story. The ink drawing stage is optional if too advanced though images can be copied (assistance from teacher or parent may be needed).

**For older children:** Encourage older children to interpret the story in their own way. If going onto the ink drawing stage, older children may not need images to draw from if they are comfortable doing this from their imagination.

## Stage 4: Photographing Artwork

Each piece of work needs to be photographed so we can produce digital backdrops for final performances. Using a good camera, cameraphone or tablet, please take a high resolution photo of the piece of work, in good light and in focus! These can be sent to Arts Connection on a USB drive or sent via wetransfer (<https://wetransfer.com>), as the files are likely to be quite large.

Please send your final artworks BY 28 APRIL on a USB drive to Sian Walters, Arts Connection, Youth & Community Centre, High St, Llanfyllin SY22 5DR. Or send them electronically via wetransfer (<https://wetransfer.com>) to [sian@artsconnection.org.uk](mailto:sian@artsconnection.org.uk), as the files are likely to be quite large.