

#### Turner at the National Gallery of Ireland

#### **Post-Primary Notes**



In 1900 the National Gallery of Ireland was bequeathed 31 watercolours by Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851) from Henry Vaughan.

The condition of the gift, accepted by the NGI, was that the watercolours be kept in darkness and displayed only in January of every year.

## 1. The Display

Watercolours are very susceptible to light damage and they must be kept in a dark storage place.

This custom-made oak cabinet, designed to store Turner's watercolours, came to the NGI as part of the Vaughan bequest and it is the only Vaughan cabinet that survives.

The Turner watercolours are stored in this cabinet for the remaining 11 months of the year.



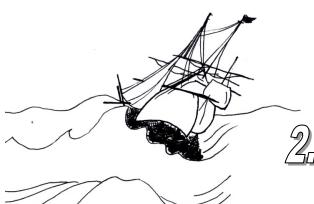
#### Questions and Facts....

- 1) Why did Vaughan insist on January being the only month that the works could be displayed? Why not June or July?
- 2) Turner is often referred to as the *Painter of Light*. Name and describe one watercolour that shows he was a painter of light.
- 1) Non-visible light and ultraviolet light produce photochemical reactions in paint, which cause colours to fade. This reaction is accelerated by the presence of oxygen in the atmosphere. What precautions are taken to prevent this from happening to Turner's watercolours on display?
- 4) Not all the watercolours are part of the Vaughan bequest and in good condition. Describe the Turner watercolour that has not been well preserved.

### Scientific Experiment:

Leave newsprint paper in the sun and observe the photochemical reaction that occurs

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The Watercolours
and Prints

#### Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851), Key Points:

- English, romantic landscape painter, watercolourist and print maker.
- His technical skill raised the status of watercolour to match oil paint.
- British romantic painters were interested in the power and drama of nature.
- Turner was fascinated by the science of light and colour.
- Turner studied the sun and the effect it has on the environment, inspired by scientist of the period.
- Turner believed in the ability of colour to conjure up an emotion in the viewer; distinguishing between warm and cool colours.
- Turner developed a very unique way of painting with watercolour He used stopping out varnish, to leave areas of white paper shining out, and he scratched highlights on to the surface using an eagle-claw of a thumbnail.
- Turner moved the colour around the page, adding and subtracting, until he achieved the desired effect.
- His work inspired the French Impressionists.

Turner travelled a lot, making many sketches and watercolours of the different landscapes he observed - storms beating around the Scottish hills, water gushing down the Swiss Alps and the hazy sun, glistening on the water in Venice.

A revolutionary artist who was fascinated by the natural world and known as a dramatic painter of the elements.

#### The Liber Studiorum

A series of engravings which were published by Turner in parts between 1807 and 1819.

Each part consisted of 5 plates, printed in brown ink and sewn in a paper wrapper.

Turner recognised the importance of prints to make his work well known, to provide affordable art to the middle classes, and as a source of income.

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#### The Exhibition Space

Recreate the basic layout of the Turner exhibition in the drawing below.

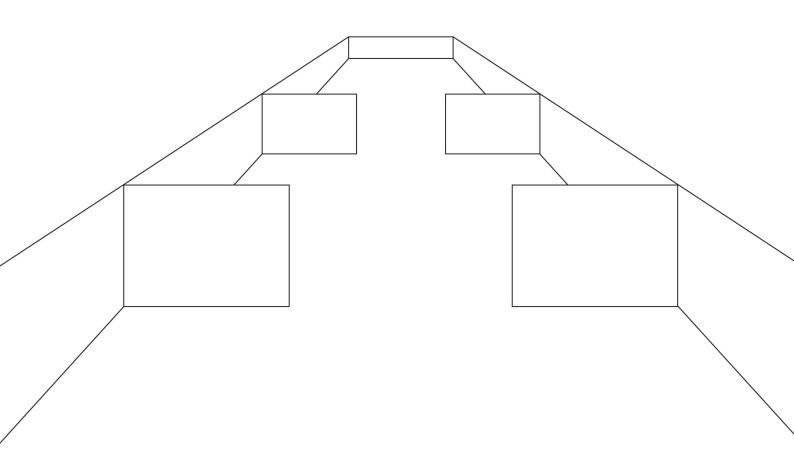
#### **Identify:**

- 1) Entrance/exits
- 2) Lighting
- 3) The Vaughan Cabinet
- 4) The Liber Studiorum prints
- 5) The damaged watercolour
- 6) Your 2 favourite watercolours

## 3. The Exhibition

#### Find out:

- a. How many rooms there are?
- b. How many watercolours are on display?
- c. How many prints there are?
- d. How have the art works been organised or grouped?
- e. Are the works arranged chronologically or thematically?



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Turner often painted the landscape on a sheet of coloured paper. An example is, *Le Pont du Chateau, Luxembourg*, c.1839 - watercolour, gouache, graphite and details added using a pen dipped in watercolour on blue wove paper.



Take a sheet of coloured paper and use chalk pastels to create an atmospheric landscape like Turner's.

Try using dark colours on light paper or light colour on dark paper. Create a variety of different marks; contrasting strong lines with blurred/smudged backgrounds.



Create a wash background for your landscape painting. A wash is a thin layer of paint, created by mixing paint with water. It should be pale in colour and applied using a large paint brush. Once dry you can paint on top of the wash.

Create a landscape or seascape inspired by Turner. Pay close attention to the colours used and the time of day represented.



Experiment with a variety of materials and mark making techniques. Draw with twigs, toothbrushes, forks etc. dipped in ink. Create a mixed media landscape; using at least three different materials (chalk, paint, crayon, ink, graphite, marker etc.)