



COWPER & NEWTON MUSEUM

# *Orchard Side*

# *Poetry Inspiration*

Information for Guided and Self Guided  
School Visits

## *In The Kitchen*

### Introduction to William Cowper

- What made William Cowper a super star poet by the end of the 18th century
- How his life at Orchard side inspired his poems

- Opening of the Museum in 1900 because of the star status of William Cowper
- Poets Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Wordsworth and Jane Austen were fans
- Take a journey through the house and garden, sharing short extracts from William's poetry inspired by his life here from 1768—1786
- Put on 18th century clothing : write with a biro feather pen

## *In The Hall*

- Thanks for a gift (*Gratitude, Addressed to Lady Hesketh*)
- Age 14+ (*On The Receipt of My Mother's Picture Out of Norfolk*)

- Descriptive poetry: including personal emotional response to something that happens to you

William's mother died when he was 6 and he wrote about the first time he saw her portrait when he was in his 50s. A copy of this portrait is in the Hall.

His cousin, Lady Hesketh, made a cap for him to cover his head when he wasn't wearing his wig and he was writing. He was very pleased with this gift and wrote his thanks in a poem.

The cap is sited in the Hall; as well as a miniature portrait by William Blake after George Romney showing William wearing his Cap. A copy of the George Romney portrait is in William's bedroom.

## In The Parlour

- The Sofa challenge (*The Task: Book 1 The Sofa*)

- You can write a poem about anything
- Lady Austen challenged William to write about a sofa in the room. It became a 6 book poem. The actual sofa is here in the Parlour.



Description challenge - describe an object in the room in an interesting and lively way (adjectives and alliteration—changing word order for effect)

Share without saying what the object is— Can we tell what you are describing?

## In the John Newton Room

- Poetry against a wrong

- William Cowper was asked to write poems to support the work of the Anti-slavery committee
- Language used which is racist today
- Extracts from this poem used by Reverend Martin Luther-King jr in his speeches

For more information on this area, see websites on our Learning page under 'The British Slave Trade and Abolition Campaign' session.

The John Newton Room also has displays related to the Slave Trade and Abolition Campaign. John Newton's autobiographical '*Thoughts upon the African Slave Trade*' was also influential.

## In the William Cowper's Bedroom

- Narrative Poetry

- The story behind *'The Diverting History of John Gilpin'*
- Finding the right place to write that works for you. William wrote this poem here in his bedroom.



Write a narrative section of a poem about the group's day so far.

## The Viper Barn

- Narrative Poetry

- The story behind *'The Colubriad'* and why this building is called 'The Viper Barn'



Ideas for your own narrative poems

## In the Garden

- If animals could talk or 'It isn't my fault'

14+ (*Epitaph on a Hare*)

- Mr Cowper has a conversation with his dog, Beau, who is in trouble!
- Finding the right place to write, William got away from noise in the house to write in the garden

£3 per child    Adults free up to a ratio of 1: 6

Because the rooms are small, classes should be split into smaller groups of 10 - 12 children

House and Garden Risk Assessment available



If visits are organised for **Mondays**, the Museum is closed to the general public.



From May to September there is a gazebo in the Courtyard which can be used for group / individual writing, as well as eating

### **Self guided**

We highly recommend you make a preliminary visit to help you get the most out of your trip  
Pick up our suggested extracts from key poems for 7 - 11 year olds  
William Cowper's poems are available for free on the web

### **Guided**

Our guides can match their / activities talk to your desired outcomes if you talk to us prior to your visit

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