

## **Windsongs of the Blessed Bay**

### **EDUCATION SUPPORT**

Windsongs of the Blessed Bay is suitable for age 8+ years and Key Stage 2/3.

Various topics and themes are touched on within the play which can be used to enhance classroom learning. Here are some subject areas and suggestions.

**Literacy and Drama/Oracy** – There are lots of colourful characters within the story. These can stimulate descriptive writing - about characters. Pupils could imagine their own 'adventure' at sea - where would they go? Who would they meet along the way? They can also act out their own scenes of real or imagined characters and experiences.

### **Literacy & History**

\*Windsongs of the Blessed Bay includes historical characters from Welsh, local, myth and legend.

The real and mythical characters within our story. These include St Bride, Brân the Blessed. Mythical Celtic Giant King, Grassholm Island, Moondyne Joe (Joseph Bolitho Johns), J.P. Morgan, Jenny Gruffydd (later Jenny Jones ) of Tallylyn, Annie Jones, and the cormorant (\*go to the end of the document for further details).

### **Music**

Live folk music has been created especially for the play and is performed live on various instruments. The actors also make the sounds of birds and use instruments for sound effects. Children could be encouraged to create their own music or sounds using voice and instruments to represent the rhythm of the sea, crashing waves, the cormorant etc.

### **PSE**

Betrys, our main character has been blind since birth. Early in the play she has to explain to 'Pinkie' the cormorant, what it is like to have never had sight at all. The story and its characters explore people's differing needs and abilities as well as different beliefs, opinions and values.

Betrys is a strong and determined character and must have courage to go on her journey. She demonstrates a love and respect for her grandfather in embarking on the journey to find his 'one last catch'.

Betrys encounters many colourful characters throughout the story. On her journey, she also learns that she can trust others and life can be easier if she does.

### **Science**

Betrys uses hearing to follow the cormorant and other characters. She also uses smell to detect the presence of other birds and characters and objects. In school you could explore ways of using different senses – (this could also link to literacy and descriptive writing using senses). What can you hear, smell, feel, out at sea and on the boat. What are the characters like? How do you know? Which senses can you use to determine how they are physically?

## **Creative/Art&Design and Design technology.**

Pupils can be inspired by the use of puppets and puppetry within the play, to create their own mythical characters, and build their own puppets or characters or mythical creatures with moving parts. They can design/invent characters and creatures either in 2D or 3D.

### **\* Literacy & History cont'd**

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#### **St Bride**

St Bride (San Fraidd in Welsh) is an early Celtic Christian Saint whose legend is built upon that of the pagan Celtic goddess who came before her. In the book *Gods and Fighting Men* (1904), Lady Augusta Gregory describes the goddess Bride as "a woman of poetry, and poets worshipped her, for her sway was very great and very noble....And the one side of her face was ugly, but the other side was very comely. And the meaning of her name was Breo-saighit, a fiery arrow."

She seems to have been the goddess of all things perceived to be of high dimensions such as high-rising flames, highlands and hill-forts and of all things lofty and elevated, such as wisdom, excellence, perfection, high intelligence, poetic eloquence, and craftsmanship (especially iron-working).

Saint Bride's Catholic feast day is February 1st, coinciding with the Celtic festival of Imbolc.

The tradition of St Bride is strong in Ireland (where she is known as St Brigid), and in Scotland where she is Brìghde/Bride. She is also known as Breo Saighead (the fiery arrow), Brigindū (in Gaul); Brigantia, Braga or Braganca (former Gallaecia, modern Northern Portugal), Brigantis (Great Britain) and Bregenz (Austria).

Her Welsh cult was founded in areas colonised by the Irish up to 8th century. Iorweth Fynglwyd (c. 1480-1527), the poet of St Bride's Major in Glamorgan, refers to her as 'morwyn wen', 'white' or 'blessed' maid and as 'morwyn ddedwydd', 'blessed or 'happy'. He wrote: "*When her father desired her to marry someone she did not like, one of her eyes fell out of its socket... she sailed on a piece of turf from Ireland and landed in the Dyfi; she made out of rushes in Gwynedd, the beautiful fish – without a single bone – called brwyniaid (smelts) which she threw out of her hand among the water-cress; she went to Rome to St Peter's; Jesus established her festival on Candlemas Eve and it was observed with as much solemnity as Sunday. "*

Places associated with St Bride in Wales include St. Bride's Bay in Pembrokeshire and a number of churches dedicated to St. Bride or San Ffraid. Many of these are in villages with names that begin with, "Llansanffraid" or "Llasantffraid".

St. Bride's Bay stretches from St. David's in the north to Wooltack Point in the south. Near the southern end of the bay is the hamlet of St. Bride's. According to local legend St. Bride established a nunnery here. The church at St. Bride's is mentioned in 1291. It was restored in 1863 and again in 2003. To the north of the church on the beach of St. Bride's Haven there used to be the remains of a small chapel which has been lost to the sea. The old graveyard contained burials which have been carbon dated to the 10th century.

Fishermen prayed to Bridget for a good catch and protection at sea. Sometime between the 12th and 14th centuries this small chapel fell into decay and was used as a salt house for curing herring. In anger Bridget is said to have withdrawn her protection and there is an old rhyme that says,

When St. Bride's chapel a salt house was made,

St. Bride's lost the herring trade.

#### **Brân the Blessed. Mythical Celtic Giant King.**

Brân the Blessed (Bendigeidfran or Brân Fendigaid, meaning 'Blessed Raven') is a giant and king of Welsh mythology, the son of the Sea God, Llyr and Penarddun, the grandson of Belenos, the Sun God. His name means Raven, and this bird was his symbol. He appears in several of the Welsh Triads, but his most significant role is in the Second Branch of the Mabinogi, Branwen ferch Llŷr. He is the brother of Brânwen, Manawydan, Nisien and Efnysien.

<http://www.britannia.com/celtic/gods/bran.html>

#### **Grassholm Island**

On clear days people looking out over St Brides Bay can see the shark-fin shape of Grassholm to the west with its pied appearance: one side dark rock, the other white from bird droppings where the island's huge colony of gannets are nesting. It is home to nearly 40,000 pairs of these large diving seabirds. Boats approaching Grassholm upwind can smell it before they see it because of the gannet poo. About eight miles off the Pembrokeshire coast, it is the westernmost point of Wales and has been owned since 1947 by the RSPB. Grassholm has been identified with Gwales, the island featured in the Mabinogion where the severed head of Bran the Blessed was kept miraculously alive for 80 years.

#### **Moondyne Joe (Joseph Bolitho Johns)**

Moondyne Joe (1826 – 1900), real name Joseph Bolitho Johns, is the most famous bushranger from Western Australia. He became famous, not for his crimes, but for his many escapes from jail.

You can read his story in more detail here: <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/johns-joseph-bolitho-3859>

#### **J.P. Morgan**

John Pierpont Morgan was born into a distinguished New England family on April 17, 1837, in Hartford, Connecticut. After graduating from high school in Boston in 1854, Pierpont, as he was known, studied in Europe, where he learned French and German, then returned to New York in 1857 to begin his finance career.

One of the most powerful bankers of his era, J P Morgan financed railroads and helped organize U.S. Steel, General Electric and other major corporations. He followed his wealthy father into banking in the late 1850s. In 1895, he formed J.P. Morgan & Company, a predecessor of the modern-day financial giant JPMorgan Chase. Morgan used his influence to help stabilize American financial markets during several economic crises, including the panic of 1907. However, he faced criticism that he had too much power and was accused of manipulating the nation's financial system for his own gain.

Morgan spent a significant portion of his wealth amassing a vast art collection, and donated many works of art to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York

The famous financier of Welsh descent died aged 75 in 1913, in Rome. On the day of his funeral, the New York Stock Exchange closed until noon in his honour.

### **Jenny Gruffydd (later Jenny Jones ) of Talyllyn**

Early in the 19th century, when Britain was among the nations ranged against the French dictator Napoleon Bonaparte, the king made a plea for more troops.

Talyllyn Parish, which sits under the Southern slopes of Cadair Idris in Snowdonia, was asked for one conscript. Lewis Gruffydd volunteered. He went to Dublin to train as a soldier, and one Sunday morning he met a young girl named Jenny Brown.

She was far above Lewis in social standing being born to a wealthy family and well educated whilst Lewis was poor and illiterate. Love overcame the differences and finally they were married. There was great opposition from both families and her family cut off all relationship with her. Jenny followed Lewis to the battlefields of the Napoleonic Wars. At Waterloo on the June 19th 1815 a roll call was made of all the troops, but Lewis did not answer to his name, Jenny feared the worst and searched all the tents where the wounded lay, with her young child in her arms. Suddenly, the child called out "Daddy" and to Jenny's joy she found Lewis, who had been shot in the shoulder.

In time they returned to Tal y llyn. Lewis found work at one of the quarries where he died in an accident in 1837. Jenny remarried, but it was an unhappy relationship. She died in poverty at Talyllyn on April 11th 1884, aged 94.

Her gravestone reads 'Sacred to the memory of Jenny Jones. Born in Scotland 1784. She was with her husband of the 23rd Royal Welch Fusiliers at the Battle of Waterloo and was on the field three days.'

### **Annie Jones**

Donetsk – which lies in the territory currently disputed between Russia and Ukraine -- was once called Yuzovka (or Hughesovka), named after John Hughes, a Welshman who was born in 1814 in Merthyr Tydfil. Hughes was invited by the Russian Czar to develop the mining and metallurgy

industry, and founded an ironworks and a railway. The Hughes factory gave its name to the town, which grew rapidly and subsequently became one of the biggest industrial centres of the Russian Empire. Hughes is credited with having personally provided a hospital, schools, bath houses, tea rooms, and fire brigade to serve the workers at his complex. For a while the governess to Hughes's grandchildren was a Welsh woman called Annie. She returned to Wales, and married a schoolteacher.

As a child in the early nineteenth century, Gareth Jones heard many tales from his mother, Mrs Annie Gwen Jones about her experiences in Donetsk. This instilled in Gareth Jones a desire to visit the country where his mother had spent three memorable years.

He had a brilliant academic career at University, both in Aberystwyth and Cambridge where he gained first-class honours in French, German and Russian. Graduating in 1930, he became Foreign Affairs Adviser to David Lloyd George and it was during the summer of this year he made his first 'pilgrimage' to Hughesovka. In March 1933 he took a train to Ukraine from Moscow, got out at a railway station and, notebook in hand, started to walk through the villages of a land being devastated by the Soviet-made famine now known as the Holodomor.

### **The cormorant**

Long-necked, long-beaked and black, cormorants are among the most easily recognised coastal birds in Britain, often seen drying their outstretched wings. Globally, cormorants are both loved and hated. Many fishermen see the deep-diving cormorant as a competitor for fish. Because of this the Great Black Cormorant was hunted nearly to extinction before it became a protected species. Yet some cultures consider cormorants a symbol of nobility. In North Norway, they are seen as semi-sacred; a traditional story says that people who are lost at sea spend eternity on the mythical island of Utrøst and can only visit their homes in the shape of cormorants. In China and Japan, fishermen tie a line around the throats of cormorants, tight enough to prevent swallowing, and cast them from small boats. The cormorants catch fish without being able to fully swallow them, and the fishermen are able to retrieve the fish by forcing open the cormorants' mouths.

There are now about 1.2 million cormorants in Europe but increasing populations have brought problems. In Britain, inland fish farms and fisheries claim to be suffering high losses and licences are issued to cull specified numbers of birds.

In the U.S.A. Department of Agriculture sharpshooters shot about 2,500 double-crested cormorants last year at Leech Lake, in north central Minnesota. Despite shaky evidence, fishermen there remain convinced that the cormorant's skills as a predator are wreaking havoc on fisheries.

"I don't know if there's any other bird that people have such a visceral hate for," observed Dr. Linda Wires of the University of Minnesota. She suspects this is partly a matter of appearance; cormorants are large, black, and resemble an ungainly cross between a crow and a goose. "In fishing communities, there is just such a low tolerance, almost zero tolerance, for cormorants. It doesn't seem to matter much what the data says."