

Cadw Creators: Comic Art

Activity Resource for Story Writing

#cadwcreators



Brief: Create a comic strip that tells a story inspired by a local heritage site.

This resource uses built heritage to inspire story writing through comic art. The activity supports learners to understand story structure, narrative, speech and precis, while advocating good written communication alongside visual representation.

Comic art is an incredibly accessible and versatile way of engaging learners, and works with a range of different learning styles. As an artform, it crosses many disciplines, using both visual imagery and language to tell stories and explore a wide range of subjects. This makes it ideal for cross-curricular work. For example, in this context, local history and geography can be explored through a combination of storytelling, story writing, visual arts and digital design.

The new Welsh Curriculum advocates the use of local resources for learning purposes, and the activities in this resource suggest ways of using the local built environment to inspire new creative work. This resource is designed to facilitate the Welsh Curriculum and Arts Awards.

How to use this resource

This resource is designed to be used as part of a project that explores the local built environment around your school, community or learning space. The activities are most productive for learning when used within our whole project framework, *Cadw Creators: Comics Core Learning Resource*, which suggests best practice methods for engaging with and learning from the local built environment.

Other comic art resources, including Cadw Comics, are available on the Cadw website. These are designed to be used alongside the story writing activities to enhance or extend the learning experience. However, many comic artists across the world use heritage and the built environment as inspiration for their work and there are endless publications that will also be fun and interesting to explore.

Prepare and Plan

- a. Use the Cadw Creators: Comics Core Learning Resource to familiarise yourself with the framework for exploring built heritage as a source of inspiration.
- b. Lead a session with your learners to select a site of interest.
- c. Present this brief on using sound in comics to your learners.

Understand the Brief

Introduce the idea of writing comic art stories that are inspired by local heritage sites. To illustrate this, share one or two of the Cadw Comics with learners to present ideas of how comic artists have used heritage to inform their work.

Discuss the comics and their stories with the learners. Here are some suggested discussion questions:

- ⇒ What do you like about the comics?
- ⇒ How might you describe the style of the artwork?
- ⇒ How do the comics use buildings or the environment?
- ⇒ What kinds of characters are featured in the comics?
- ⇒ Which aspects of the comic form the **narrative**?
- ⇒ Is the narrative written in the **first or third person**?
- ⇒ Which aspects of the comic form the **dialogue / speech**?
- ⇒ What does this image (choose image) tell us about a specific character?
- ⇒ How are the emotions of the characters being represented?

Explore the structure of the story. Break it up into:

- ⇒ Opening
- ⇒ Plot hook
- ⇒ Setting
- ⇒ Plot development
- ⇒ Climax
- ⇒ Resolution.

Which parts of the story are being communicated through text and which are being communicated through imagery?

Could more aspects of the story be communicated through speech?

Select some examples of the narrative text. Could these examples be made even shorter?

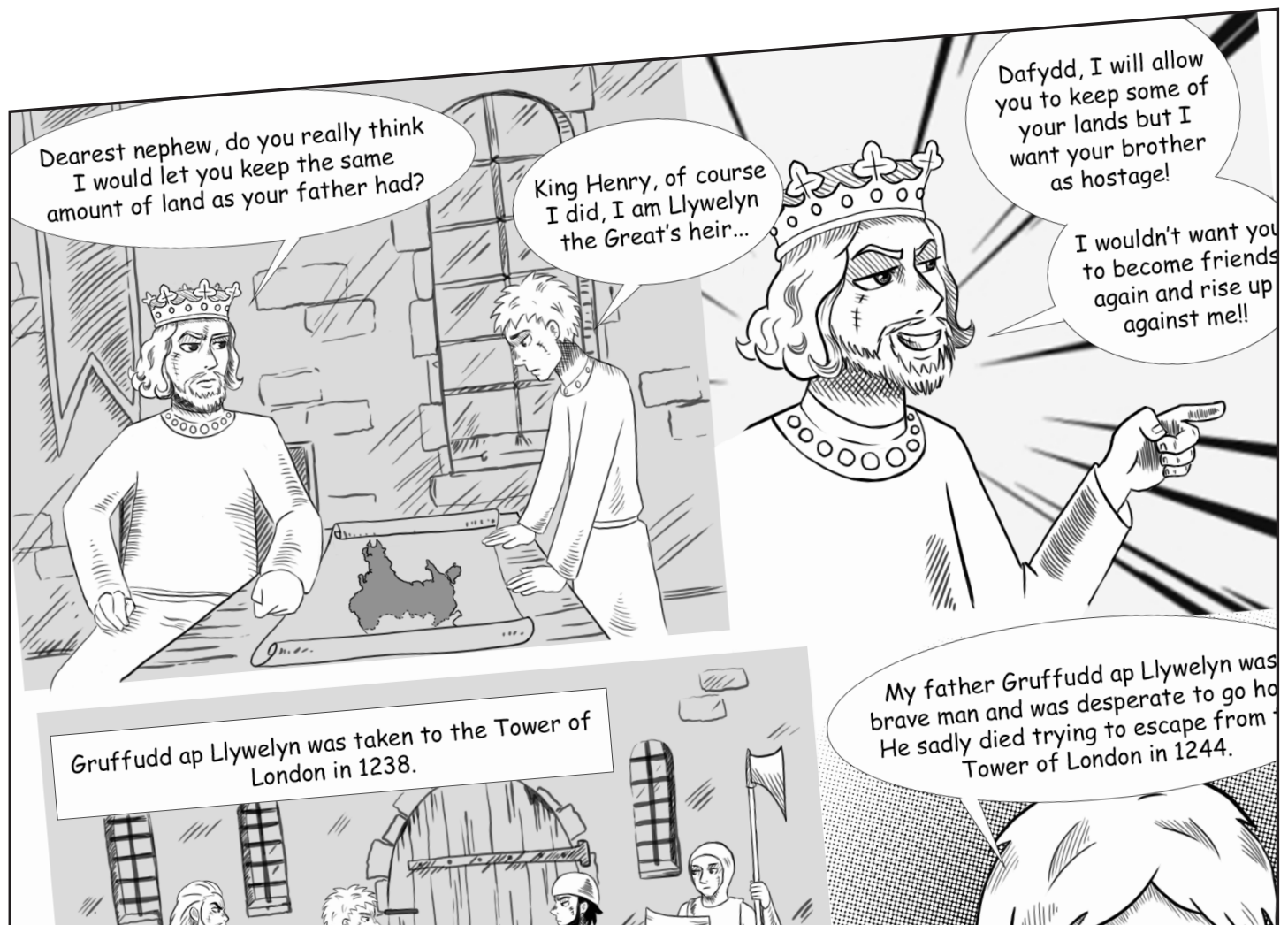
Now discuss the brief with the learners.

The Creative Discipline

Introduce the concept of comic art to the learners. This is described in more detail in our framework: *Cadw Creators: Comics Core Learning Resource*.

Use the Cadw Comics to explore the comic art discipline, and the work of contemporary artists from Wales.

Comic art uses the images as well as the words to tell the story. Discuss this with the learners and encourage them to think about the styles used, and how the images are helping to tell the story. You could also encourage learners to research the work of other comic artists on the internet.



Visit a site

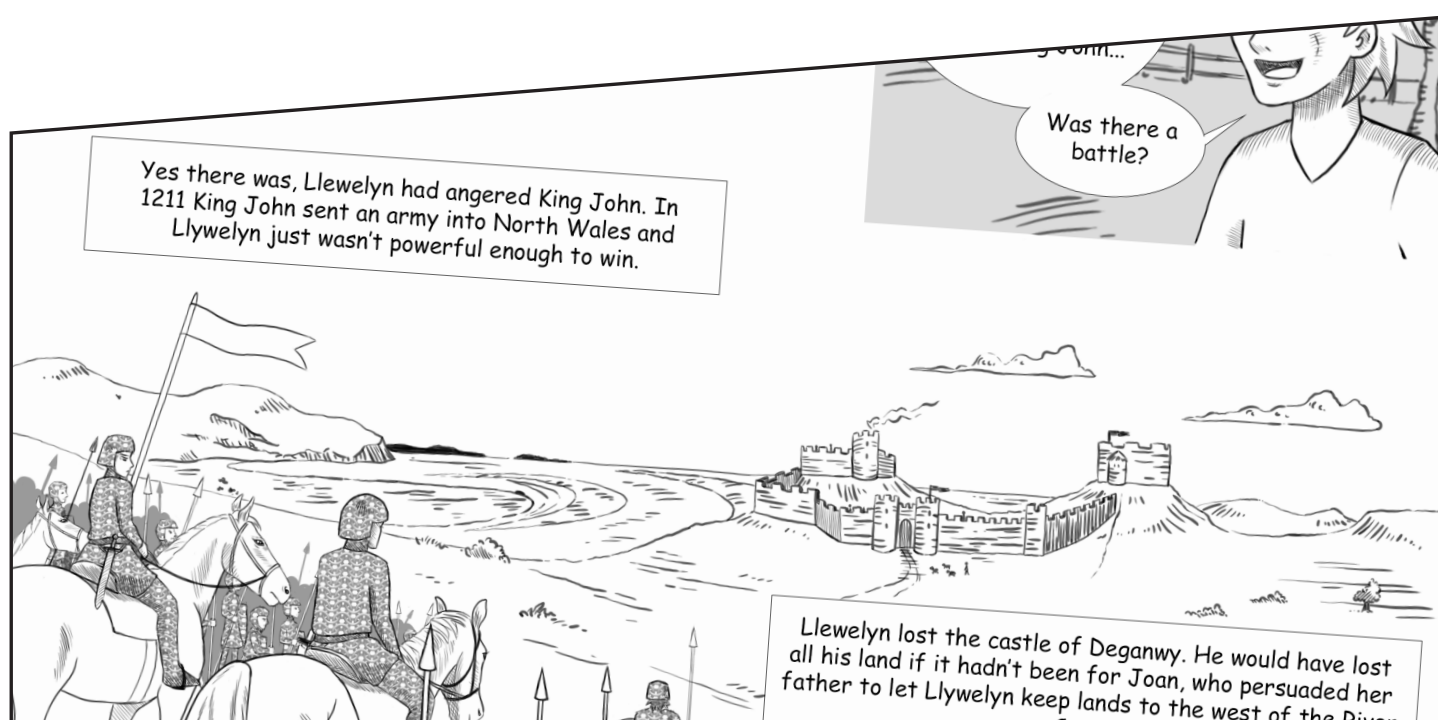
Visit a local site of interest (this could be independent learning as part of a blended learning activity).

Explore or research the stories of the site or building using the activities suggested in our *Cadw Creators: Comics Core Learning Resource*. This will help to create **source material** for a story. Learners can keep a research file or sketch book of their activities, images, sketches and drawings, interviews and so on.

The Cadw Creators: Arts Award Explore and *CADW Creators: Arts Award Discover* sketchbooks are a helpful resource to help collect source material on a visit to a heritage site.

Encourage learners to make drawings of the site, including the natural environment. These are important as inspiration for the visuals of the comic strip.

Referring to the source material collected, invite learners to choose a short story that they would like to explore for themselves. It's not necessary for all of the group to focus on the same story. Inviting learners to follow their own personal interest supports self-led learning, and by sharing ideas with peers, widens everyone's learning experience.



Create and Make

Once you've returned from your visit, invite learners to continue to develop and plan their story in the following ways:

A. Character Development

Develop the characters who feature in the story. This will be a visual exercise. Learners could consider:

- ⇒ Looks
- ⇒ Clothes
- ⇒ Facial expressions
- ⇒ Actions
- ⇒ Accessories that might signify the role of the character.

Write a description of the story's key characters to develop literacy skills in use of describing words. Also consider exploring **adjectives**, **adverbs**, **metaphors** and **similes** if appropriate to your learners and project objectives.



Create and Make

B. Story Writing

Use the internet to undertake further research into the heritage site or building.

Plan the **plot** of the story in a set number of frames (choose an appropriate number of frames for the learner's ability). Start to sketch out the story, featuring the key characters and thinking about the following:

- ⇒ Consider the **structure** of the story as explored in Section 4.
- ⇒ Identify the aspects of the story that require a **narrative**. How will the **narrative** be written? Will it be **first or third person**?
- ⇒ Identify the aspects of the story that can be told through a character's actions and speech. Think about what might be communicated using a speech bubble. The speech will be in the **first person**.
- ⇒ How will speech bubbles be arranged to ensure they are read in the right **order** for the story to make sense?
- ⇒ Are there specific sounds that are relevant to the story? Will these be included in the comic as **onomatopoeias**?
- ⇒ Revise and refine the language. Can it be made shorter, simpler and more succinct? This is an exercise in **precis**. In comic art, the pictures tell as much of the story as possible, so the aim is to use text that is short and concise.

Create and Make

Once the plan has been made, give learners the task of developing the visuals to represent their story. Consider the following:

- ⇒ Use the background artwork to set the scene, consider the time of day, the place, the environment. Reflect on the site visit to inspire this.
- ⇒ When is the story set? Is the site or building new or old at this time?
- ⇒ How are the weather, the seasons, and the environment represented visually?
- ⇒ Use clothing and accessories to enhance the characters and show actions or movement. Is there historical context to the clothing?
- ⇒ Use facial expressions and the character's posture and position to help communicate emotion and represent actions.
- ⇒ Position the characters so that the speech bubbles are in the right order.
- ⇒ Use colour to represent meaning, for example, warriors from different sides of a battle, or bold colours for the clothes of the wealthy.

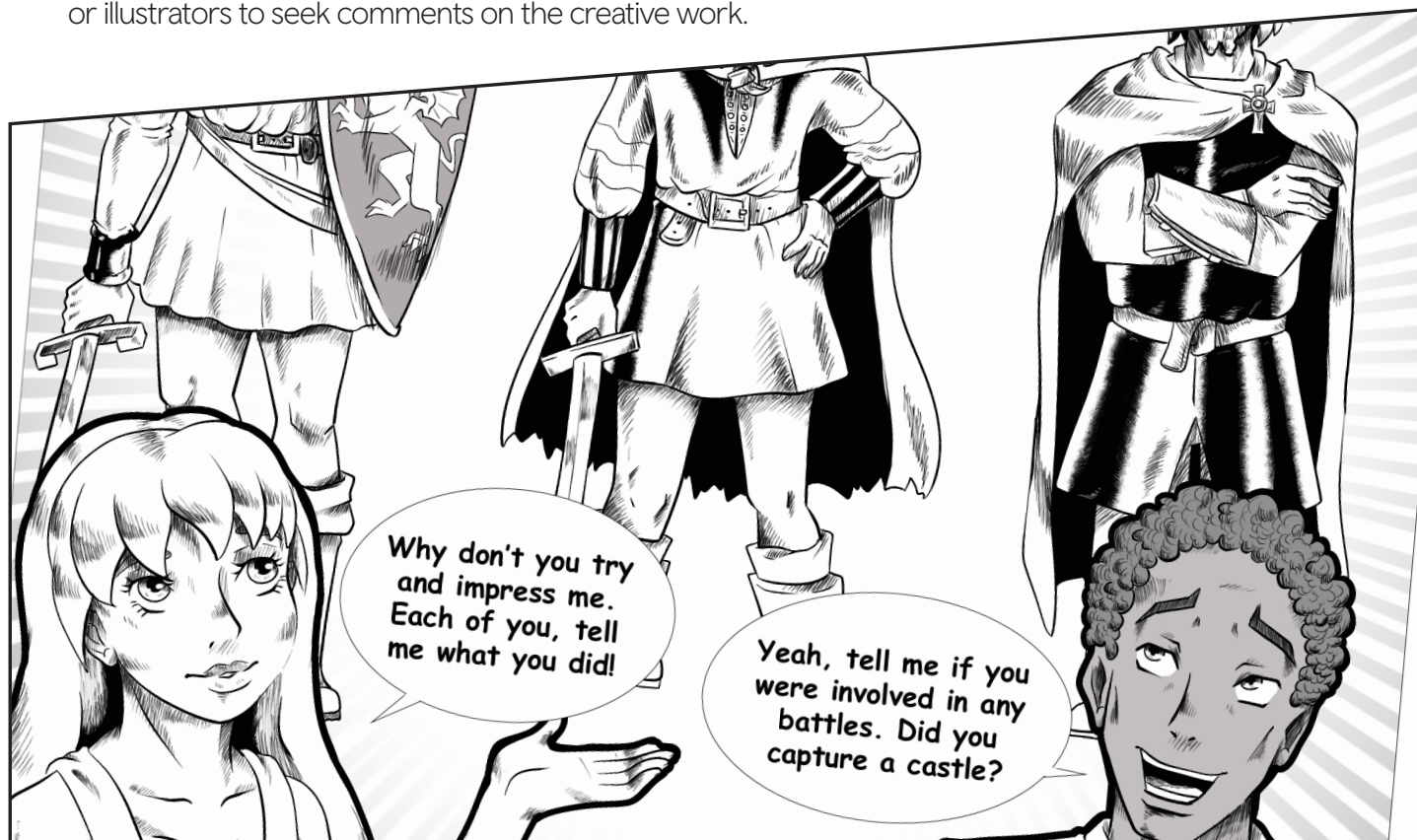
C. Add Text

Once the comic art visuals have been developed and drawn out, add the text to complete the comic strip.

Digital Competency

Here are some suggestions to help embed digital competency into the project.

- ⇒ Use reliable digital sources for research into the place of investigation.
- ⇒ Use a comic art app to design characters and comic book layout.
- ⇒ Use digital tools to type out the narrative and speech bubbles for a hand drawn design. Select an appropriate font and size, then stick them on.
- ⇒ Create a mini website to chart the research process of the whole project, and to showcase the completed comic art. Share this with friends, family and the community.
- ⇒ Start a Wikipedia page with information about the site (or update with information that isn't already included).
- ⇒ Use social media to share the process of the project at the end of each lesson, as well as any completed work. Remember to tag local heritage organisations, comic artists or illustrators to seek comments on the creative work.

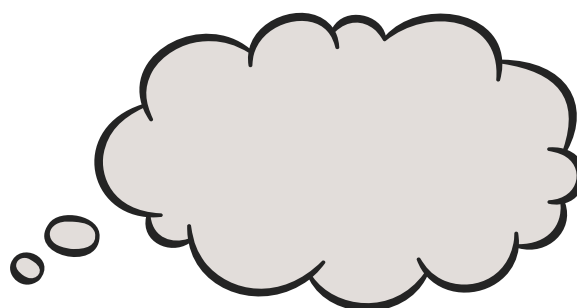


Reflect and Refine

Reflection is an important part of learning, and artists and creative practitioners often reflect on and refine their work many times before they feel it is complete. Professional artists also tend to share and discuss work-in-progress with their peers to help with this process. Applying this method to learning enables learners to be disciplined in the art of refining their work, and also supports them to deal with criticism, whether that be constructive or not.

Here are some ideas to help with this part of the artistic process:

- ⇒ Invite learners to comment on their own work, explaining what they like about it, what they are proud of, what they might do differently next time.
- ⇒ Invite learners to comment on each other's work by looking for effective signifiers, good examples of dialogue, amusing stories, good research, impressive drawing skills, and well written narratives.
- ⇒ Invite learners to comment on a learner's work that tells a different story to their own – what have they learnt from that story?
- ⇒ Play the game *I like, I learnt, Next time...*: Stand in a circle and as a group look at the comic of one learner. Then invite the group to one at a time, stand forward and offer comments. For example, 'I like... (the manga style drawing); I learnt... (that the castle was built by stonemasons who were peasants); Next time... (try colouring the sky in dark blue to suggest night-time). Carry on around the circle so that each learner has their work looked at and commented upon by the whole group.
- ⇒ For more advanced learners, lead a session to critique the comics produced. Look for good use of language, grammar, structure, artwork and execution of the original brief.



Share and Celebrate

Both the Welsh Curriculum and Arts Awards advocate community involvement in learning. Part of this is sharing and celebrating creativity with the community.

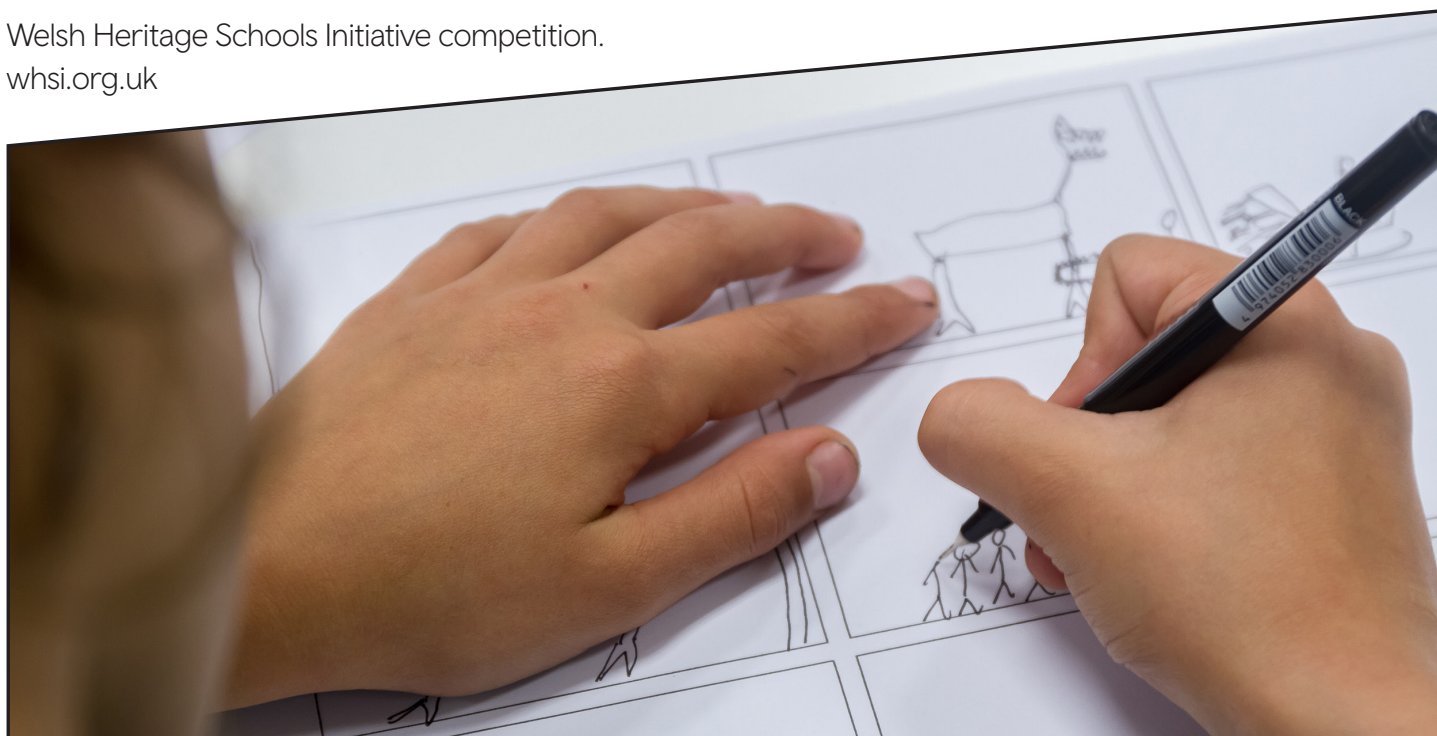
The creative work that the learners have developed is their own, very valued, interpretation of the building or place that has been visited. Sharing work publicly adds an element of authentic purpose to its creation and can improve the quality of what learners produce.

Cadw welcomes the opportunity for all members of our community to share their interpretations and artworks that are created in response to built heritage. Share work with us on social media using the tag @cadwwales and hashtag #cadwcreators.

Some Cadw sites may be keen to display work by young people as part of their exhibition programme. Contact your local sites to ask.

You could also approach local museums, galleries, libraries or even shops to see if they would consider displaying your learners' artwork to the wider community.

Welsh Heritage Schools Initiative competition.
whsi.org.uk



Further learning for everyone

Further educational resources, digital tours, 15 minute heritage films and ideas for learning projects, including a whole host of comics and comic art activities, are available on our website:

[Cadw.gov.wales/learn](https://cadw.gov.wales/learn)

Find a place to visit

[Cadw.gov.wales/visit](https://cadw.gov.wales/visit)

Cof Cymru

National Historic Assets of Wales.

cadw.gov.wales/advice-support/cof-cymru

Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical
Monuments of Wales

List of historic place names in Wales

rcahmw.gov.uk/discover/list-of-historic-place-names

Coflein - The online catalogue of archaeology, buildings,
industrial and maritime heritage in Wales

[Coflein.gov.uk](https://coflein.gov.uk)

Archwilio

The Historic Environment Records of Wales

[Archwilio.org.uk](https://archwilio.org.uk)

Find learning resources from Cadw and many other arts,
heritage and cultural organisations on Hwb

[Hwb.cymru](https://hwb.cymru)

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