

# We Made Ships

## English Resources

There are many ways that **oral history** and the topic of **shipbuilding** can be used successfully in English.

Students can practice their creative writing skills and undertake non-fiction research and writing, preparing them for both strands of GCSE Language.

Our resources could also be used to teach about the importance of historical, social and cultural context.

## Non-fiction research tasks

### Why are non-fiction skills important?

Not only do non-fiction reading and writing skills play a huge part of any English GCSE, but they are also transferable skills that will benefit students in their post-school careers. Having the ability to use online resources to undertake research is one method, but it is also worthwhile giving students print resources and asking them to **reduce**, **classify** or **change** the information from one format to another.

### HMS Illustrious

One example of how the [We Made Ships](#) site could be linked to non-fiction research is to ask students to research a specific ship or shipyard. You could specify that students generate *at least ten bullet points* or else create a factsheet, poster or leaflet. Students could write in a contemporary fashion, for example imagining that HMS Illustrious has just been launched, or perhaps creating a newspaper article from the time when it was decommissioned.

**HMS Illustrious**

**Facts:**

- Built by Swan Hunter
- Building began 7th October 1976
- Launched 14th December 1978
- Commissioned 20th June 1982
- Decommissioned 28th August 2014
- Home-Port Portsmouth
- Nicknamed Lusty
- Scrapped after decommissioning

HMS Illustrious was designed to carry aircraft for the armed service that commissioned it, and also to protect the aircraft from the possible significant damage while they are dormant. Her sibling ships HMS Invincible and HMS Ark Royal were also similarly designed to transport aircraft. Illustrious' design was developed from the previous two, having an armoured hangar in addition to the majority of the deck also being built with this armour. The remainder was heavily reinforced with steel as the armouring was very heavy.

When Illustrious was built, it was promised that after serving her time she would go into a heritage museum instead of following Ark Royal and Invincible into scrapping. However, she was sold to a Turkish scrapping company for £2 million. Her last 4 days before sailing off to the scrapping yard were spent at Tyneside, where she was first built.

Builder:	Swan Hunter, Tyne and Wear, United Kingdom
Laid down:	7 October 1976
Launched:	14 December 1978
Sponsored by:	Princess Margaret, Countess of Snowdon
Commissioned:	20 June 1982
Decommissioned:	28 August 2014

She was a light aircraft carrier of the Royal Navy and the three Invincible-class ships constructed in the late 1970s and 1980s. She was the fifth warship and second aircraft carrier named Illustrious, and was affectionately known to her crew as Lusty.

Her name links to the north east because she was built in Newcastle.

**2002**

In the 1990s, the main task of the aircraft carrier was helping to maintain the no-fly zone over Iraq. In 1998 she operated in the Persian Gulf as part of Operation Southern Watch.

Along with HMS Gloucester helped to evacuate 100,000 Iraqi citizens. Later that year, as part of the Royal Navy's Operation Day activities, Illustrious sailed up the River Tyne on 20 November 2006.

She was known to her crew as Lusty.

**HMS Illustrious**

The HMS Illustrious was constructed in the late 1970s and the early 1980s. It was the second of three Invincible-class ships.

During the 1930s the Royal Navy strived to build an aircraft carrier that was not only strong enough to withstand air raids, but also to withstand continuous attacks after taking a measure of damage. This design for a considerable amount of time was too secret. The weight saving on this innovation were sizeable for such a heavily armoured structure.

The ship was built in Walston by Swan Hunter; it was ordered on May 14th 1976. In 33 years of service, between 1982 and 2014, HMS Illustrious covered over 500,000 nautical miles. HMS Illustrious is 210m long. The ship's motto (which is written in Latin) reads "Vox Non Inerta" which means "No Uncertain Sound". She is nicknamed "Lusty" by her crewmates. Operations ranged from stabilisation efforts in the immediate aftermath of the first Gulf War and delivering humanitarian aid after Typhoon Haiyan devastated the Philippines in 2013.

People wanted to save the HMS Illustrious for the nation as a heritage attraction. Despite numerous ideas and proposals, no viable plan was reached. There was a £3m bid to turn it into a hotel and museum that was rejected.

<http://www.illustrious.com>  
<http://www.illustrious.com/home-60th-birth-1976-1978>  
[www.illustrious.com/armoured-aircraft-carrier-design](http://www.illustrious.com/armoured-aircraft-carrier-design)  
[business@hms-illustrious.com](mailto:business@hms-illustrious.com)  
<http://www.illustrious.com/11671026>  
[http://www.wikiwand.com/wiki/HMS\\_Illustrious\\_\(R06\)](http://www.wikiwand.com/wiki/HMS_Illustrious_(R06))

## Descriptive writing

### Why is descriptive writing important?

At GCSE descriptive writing is an essential skill and it is something we try to nurture in English students from a young age.

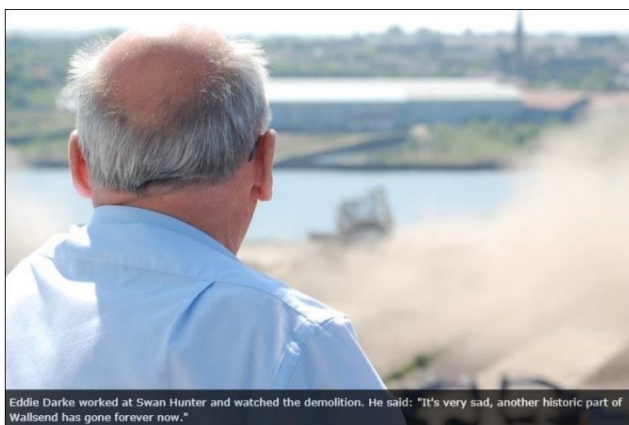
Asking students to write a story or description from an image or other stimulus (such as a profile of a real person) can be both enriching and also challenging for students who are used to writing more freely.

### A description inspired by still image

One method would be to give students an image from the [We Made Ships](#) site, such as the two below of the Swan Hunter Cranes being demolished, or perhaps of the Jarrow March or a ship being launched.



Just after 11am on Friday 4 June 2010, explosives were detonated to bring down the last two cranes at the old Swan Hunter shipyard in Wallsend.



Eddie Darke worked at Swan Hunter and watched the demolition. He said: "It's very sad, another historic part of Wallsend has gone forever now."

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/tyne/hi/people\\_and\\_places/history/newsid\\_8722000/8722475.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/tyne/hi/people_and_places/history/newsid_8722000/8722475.stm)

### Looking at other student work

Evaluation is a useful skill in encouraging students to reflect on their own work. Look at the two longer answers on the next two pages and ask students to mark them with a ★ EBI system, establishing what the best qualities or 'moments' are in the piece and what could be 'even better if...'

#### Top tip:

Younger or less able students may only be able to produce a short response, but even this can be well-crafted, as shown in this student example:

The crane stood tall, towering over the water below. Out of nowhere, a huge explosion of dust like a desert volcano, erupted out of the ground. The dust filled the air as the crane creaked and cracked. Slowly, the crane began to tremble and suddenly the crane began to tumble to the floor. In one huge bang, the crane plummeted to the ground, shooting dust all around, swallowing up the shattered crane whole.



Just after 11am on Friday 4 June 2010, explosives were detonated to bring down the last two cranes at the old Swan Hunter shipyard in Wallsend.

## The Crane

The crane tumbles from its position like a fallen king. He was once strong and fit to rule but now lays on his deathbed, waiting for something to take his place. Time's cruel ways have left him rusted and outdated. Although he once had many friends, he is now the last of his kind; near to extinction. He groans out his last creak as the explosions go off around him. He is the last soldier of his battalion refusing surrender and waiting for death, for happiness and company. He will no longer be lonely, as he has been for years. Buried in the yard, in his new home, with old friends.

People walk by, marvelling at the show. His colours show through the rust, fighting to be seen. They want to show off one last time. The large skeleton breathes his last breath and hears his last words, he will be at peace once again.

His death is something to be remembered; as he crashes to the ground, great clouds of dust swirl up towards the sky like a spirit leaving his body. He is saved from the water, from being carried away and lost forever. The scrapyards are his grave. Quite disrespectful for such a King but there is no one left that he loves. No one to attend his funeral, to mourn for him. The happy rain falls down to greet his wreckage, washing away the life that he once had. He looks down on the scene from the skies and is finally happy that he can rest.

### The Hunted Swan

I gazed out at the beams of light dancing over the early morning water, as if taking it in for the first time, but then i guess in a way i was. The moon was still visible in the early morning sky, which wasn't a distinctive colour, it was almost as if my grandson Brendan had painted it that colour that only small children can create. That mixture of all the colours of the rainbow that manages to come out a murky grey brown. He's only five, mind what a beautiful baby he was; he's got a mop of blonde hair, got his dad's grey eyes, but they're not grey like the concrete on roads, they're grey like ashes of the fire after its dies down, the grey of pebbles.

As i gazed into the Tyne, the water was so clear i could see the old worn away pebbles at the bottom, worn away from years of the world moving on without them. I think that it's fair to say, I knew how they felt. I knew that it was time, i had to turn around and watch eventually, but it was as if i was saying goodbye to a piece of me. Goodbye to my grandad and everyone before him; goodbye to my dad; goodbye to a piece of me and goodbye to my son. It was tradition that the Johnson family worked at the shipyard. A tradition that no longer could be carried out.

I hesitantly edged my way to the other side of the roof, despite what you may think, i want hesitant because of the height, that didn't bother me; if anything it thrilled me; reminded me of being up in the crane, working, being busy; before age barged its way in. No, it wasn't the height, it was the sight that i knew awaited me.

I heard it just before i saw the cloud of smoke go up in the air, I doubt that there was a soul in the Tyne and Wear district that didn't hear the noise. It would be a memory that never left me, like 83 canons representing each year of my life. It hardly made sense that my most fond memories were of working. It was the destruction of my family's livelihood. But more than that, it was the end of an era.

The date was 4th June 2010 and it was around about 11 am, just before the midday sun baked everything in its grasp, from my rickety rooftop there was an amazing view of Swan Hunter. I held my breath. The crane furthest on the right started to shake and then the top swayed like a drunken man in a pub, and little by little, the force of gravity became stronger and the crane fell to the ground with a sickening thud, it was MY crane. Within moments, the ground was awash with the debris of people's lives. As if a tsunami had forced its way up the tyne and swallowed the last 145 years. The "demolition" was controlled as to not hit the water but it hit me, in the heart like an arrow. The Swan Hunters had become the hunted swan.

## Creating poetry

### Why is poetry important?

Throughout school we encourage children to engage with reading and writing poetry, and at GCSE students are expected to analyse familiar and unseen poems. It makes sense, therefore, that student practice their written poetry skills in order to become familiar with poetic techniques, structures and forms.

### Stimulus

Students can use images, stories and historical facts from the [We Made Ships](#) site to give ideas for poetic content. Anyone who feels a little unsure could take verbatim words from one of the interviews and convert them into poetic form.

### Poetic techniques

**Metaphor and simile:** some of the interviewees share memories that are **hyperbolised** or told through figurative language. Students could borrow these images or, for more confident writers, take concrete information and retell it through their own metaphors or similes.

**Personification:** often the workers spoke of ships with female pronouns, as if they had their own characters. It would be feasible to discuss a region or shipyard as an animate thing, each yard having its own personality and identity.

**Pathetic fallacy:** the weather in the North East has a reputation for being cold, windy and rainy. It's not always like that, but there could be plenty of fuel for an emotive poem about the closure of the shipyards set on a dreary, drizzly morning. Similarly, a warm evening glow could be the perfect unexpected backdrop to a shipyard at its height.

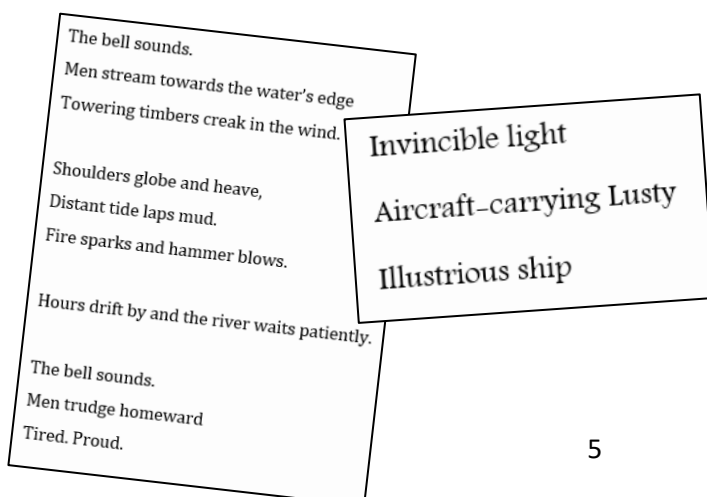
**Repetition:** An image, motif, word or phrase could be repeated throughout a poem. For example, sounds of machinery would ring out regularly, as would the voices of men greeting one another or of women in the offices.

**Sensory language:** students would do well to move beyond what the shipyards would have looked like, and the oral history interviews make reference to the smells in the shipyards - not always pleasant. **Onomatopoeia** could help students to explore some of the sounds of the industry, also referenced in a number of the interviews on the site.

### Types of poem

Any form of poem could lend itself to the topic and history of the shipbuilding industry. However, some forms to begin with include:

haiku, shape poems, sonnet, free verse



## Writing in first and third person

### Why is writing in first person important?

Writing in first person is an important skill for students when approaching both fiction and non-fiction. It can allow students to use historical research in a creative way and will also encourage empathy in understanding how another human may think and feel.

### Opportunities to write in first person

**Diary:** students listen to the testimony of one individual, making notes on what a typical day would have been like. This information is then translated into a first person diary entry. The writing will be a combination of relayed information and imagined reactions, feelings, thoughts. Some students will rely more heavily on research than others.

**Speech:** following a study of the website and topic, students compose a speech *in character* as someone connected to the shipbuilding industry, entitled ***My life in the Shipyard*** or similar. Alternatively, they could write as themselves speaking about their learning. Titles that may encourage a personal reaction include:

***Should Britain be proud of the North East shipbuilding industry?***

***How has the closure of the shipyards changed the North East?***

These titles could also be used for a class discussion or debate.

### Why is writing in third person important?

Third person writing is used very commonly in novels, journalism and business. It is easy for students to imagine being a narrator or being separate from what they are writing and it relies less on having a connection than writing in first person.

### Opportunities to write in third person

**Article:** a good way to encourage students to take research on board and expand it, writing an article involves a lot of crafting. Students should be told (or choose) their audience (e.g. a specific newspaper or magazine), their purpose (e.g. to celebrate or criticise), and the format (e.g. an online article or print-based piece).

Looking at some of the articles linked to on the [We Made Ships](#) site will give students a good understanding of what they are aiming to achieve.

**Blog:** students will be much more familiar with blogs than most of their teachers, and some blogs do have an informal and conversational tone. However, encourage students to think of their blog entry as a sort of online report or discussion of their topic or focus. Some bloggers move between first and third person, but this is something only very confident students should attempt.

