



Framework Objectives

W7: Recognise layers of meaning in the writer's choice of words, e.g. connotation, implied meaning, different types or multiple meanings.

TLR11: Analyse how an author's standpoint can affect meaning in non-literary as well as literary texts.

Resources

- **Resource 1:** Copy of 'View of a Pig' by Ted Hughes
- **Resource 2:** Card sort task (cut up and laminated is best)
- **Resource 3:** Framework for writing sheet (enlarged on to A3 paper)
- **Factsheets 1 and 2:** It's a pig's life (and death) and The truth about pigs

Starter

- Write the word 'Pig' in large letters on the board and ask students to write down words they associate with pigs. *Depending on the class, teacher guidance may be needed to explain that nothing rude is allowed and to suggest the type of words sought if students cannot think of any – 'cute', 'pink', etc.*
- Take feedback from students and write their ideas up on the board.
- Now ask them to choose a 'pig top ten words' from this list or place the collection in rank order.

Introduction

- Explore the view of pigs revealed by the starter. *Often our ideas or emotions tend to fall into two categories – we either romanticise them or use anthropomorphism (such as pink, cute, Piglet from Winnie the Pooh, Wibbley Pig etc.) in order not to think about the second category which is to view them in terms of food. In other words we block out the process of turning them from living creatures into food on our plates. Introduce the purpose of this and the next lesson – to look at writing about pigs.*
- Distribute the cards from [Resource 2](#) and ask pairs to place the words and phrases in rank order, with words they most associate with pigs at the top and words they least associate with pigs at the bottom. An IWB version of [Resource 2](#) is available on the Animal Aid website.
- Ask students for the order of their words and if one or two words always come at the top or the bottom, make a note of them on the board.

Development

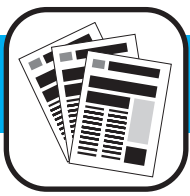
- Introduce the poem 'View of a Pig' ([Resource 1](#)) and read it to the class.
- Initially, get students to identify where the words and phrases are that they had on their cards. Is this what they expected? IWB versions of [Resource 1](#) is available on the Animal Aid website.
- The pig is referred to as 'it' rather than 'he' or 'she'. What is the effect of this?
- Go through [Resource 3](#) with students, encouraging them to write down their own ideas.

Plenary

- Bring students back together as a class to share their answers on the writing frame.
- What do they think about this poem and the poet's portrayal of the pig?
- What are their reactions to it? Are they shocked or surprised? Do they feel moved by the plight of the pig? How is the writer trying to manipulate our feelings about the pig?
- Do students feel this poem is more about a pig or about a poet's feelings towards animals? Why?

Homework/Extension Class

- Although this lesson, along with lesson 2, builds towards writing an essay about the presentation of pigs in literature, you may want to hand out [Factsheets 1 and 2](#) and ask students to identify 4 facts about pigs that they discover from reading the information.
- More able students could be asked to decide if any of the facts they find in the factsheets have been hinted at in Hughes's poem and if so, where.



‘View of a Pig’ by Ted Hughes

The pig lay on a barrow dead.
It weighed, they said, as much as three men.
Its eyes closed, pink white eyelashes.
Its trotters stuck straight out.

Such weight and thick pink bulk
Set in death seemed not just dead.
It was less than lifeless, further off.
It was like a sack of wheat.

I thumped it without feeling remorse.
One feels guilty insulting the dead,
Walking on graves. But this pig
Did not seem able to accuse.

It was too dead. Just so much
A poundage of lard and pork.
Its last dignity had entirely gone.
It was not a figure of fun.

Too dead now to pity.
To remember its life, din, stronghold
Of earthly pleasure, as it had been,
Seemed a false effort, and off the point.

Too deadly factual. Its weight
Oppressed me – how could it be moved?
And the trouble of cutting it up!
The gash in its throat was shocking,
but not pathetic.

Once I ran at a fair in the noise
To catch a greased piglet
That was faster and nimbler than a cat,
Its squeal was the rending of metal.

Pigs must have hot blood, they feel like ovens.
Their bite is worse than a horse's –
They chop a half-moon clean out.
They eat cinders, dead cats.

Distinctions and admirations such
As this one was long finished with.
I stared at it a long time. They were going
to scald it,
Scald it and scour it like a doorstep.

We gratefully acknowledge permission to reproduce 'View of a Pig' poem from Lupercal by Ted Hughes, published by Faber and Faber Ltd.

**Card sort task** (cut up and laminated is best)

Dead	Gash in its throat
Pink white eyelashes	Shocking
Trotters	Not pathetic
Thick pink bulk	Greased piglet
Sack of wheat	Faster and nimbler than a cat
Thumped it	Squeal
Guilty	Hot blood
Graves	Bite
A poundage of lard and pork	Chop
Trouble of cutting it up	Scald
Scour it like a doorstep	Dignity ... entirely gone
Weighed ... as much as three men	Stronghold of earthly pleasure

Framework for writing sheet (enlarge on to A3 paper)



	The writer says...	My response...
References to the weight and size of the pig are:		
The colours the writer uses are:		
Similes the writer uses are:		
Violent words used are:		
The life of the pig is described with phrases such as:		
References to the death of the pig are:		
Words used which you usually associate with pigs are:		
The movement of the pig is described with words such as:		
The actions of the pig are described by the poet as:		
How does the poet feel about the pig?		
What makes you think this about the poet's feelings?		
How does the poem make you feel about the pig?		
What is it about the poem that makes you feel this?		



It's a pig's life (and death)

Modern pig production



A sow confined in a farrowing crate resorts to biting the bars out of boredom and frustration

- Around 15 million pigs are slaughtered for food every year in the UK. They are killed to be made into bacon, ham, pork and sausages.
- The majority are raised in filthy and cramped factory farms. They are denied almost everything that makes life worth living for pigs – such as playing, foraging, building nests, or wallowing in mud. They never feel fresh air or see sunlight.
- Breeding sows are forced to produce as many piglets as possible in a repeated cycle of impregnation, pregnancy and birth. A week before they are due to give birth, sows are moved to a farrowing crate – a restrictive stall built from metal and concrete that is only a little bit bigger than the sows themselves. They are unable to stretch, turn around or move freely.

- At three or four weeks old, piglets are taken away from their mothers and placed in groups in barren pens. A high protein diet makes them grow very big, very fast. This causes painful leg and joint problems. The unnatural conditions also lead to heart and breathing problems, plus infections of the gut, skin, brain and nervous system. In an attempt to fight off disease, pigs are routinely fed a cocktail of drugs.



Pigs being herded to market



Pigs are typically slaughtered within 3-6 months

- Although they have a natural lifespan of 15 years, pigs are typically slaughtered at only 3-6 months.

They are usually stunned with electric tongs applied to the side of the head, designed to make them unconscious before their throats are cut.

Studies have shown that pigs are often not stunned correctly. As a result, they may still be fully conscious when their throats are cut.



The truth about pigs

Did you know...

- The ancestor of today's 'domestic' pig is the wild boar, who can still be found in the forests of central Europe. Boars and pigs love foraging for nuts, seeds, roots and grubs in the woodland undergrowth. They like to build nests for their young and to keep their living areas scrupulously clean. Pigs love to wallow in wet mud to cool down in hot weather and to remove pests. This is probably where their unfair reputation for being dirty comes from. Like us, pigs are social animals who relish the companionship of their own kind.
- The BBC programme, Q.E.D., reported research that demonstrates how intelligent pigs are. Tests in which two pigs were taught to play simple computer games in return for food rewards showed that they performed the tasks better than dogs and displayed learning abilities similar to chimpanzees.



- In 1995, sales of pork in the US fell by 10% after the popular film, Babe, starred a loveable young pig successfully taking over the role of a sheepdog.
- Dick King Smith, whose book The Sheep-Pig inspired the film, said: 'If we find that pigs are as intelligent as we suspect, we are up against another problem. Take other intelligent creatures like dogs: we don't eat dogs – some people do, but we don't. Take chimpanzees – some people eat them, but we don't. Now what are we going to say about pigs?'

- Pigs have an excellent sense of smell. The French traditionally use them to sniff out truffles (a form of fungus that is a prized food delicacy). Only pigs can detect the ripe truffles that grow deep under the soil on the roots of trees.
- Marion runs a farm animal sanctuary in Kent and has 30 pigs to look after. She has got to know them all very well.

'Living with the pigs day in day out, you become familiar with them as individuals. You soon find out what sensitive, playful and intelligent creatures they are. I've taught some of the piglets to sit which only took moments for them to learn. I find they are so much quicker on the uptake than dogs. I will never understand how people can treat them so badly – incarcerating them in factory farms and killing them to eat.'



Marion with four of her rescued piglets