STANLEY SPENCER
A twentieth century British Master
EDUCATION RESOURCE
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This Education Resource is produced in association with the exhibition Stanley Spencer: a twentieth-century British Master presented by Carrick Hill, Adelaide from 3 August to 4 December 2016.

Cover Image: Sunflower, 1938, oil on canvas, 50.9 x 40.5 cm
Collection of the Carrick Hill Trust, Adelaide, Hayward Bequest

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ABOUT THIS EDUCATION RESOURCE

The Resource is designed to support learning outcomes and teaching programs associated with viewing the *Stanley Spencer: a twentieth-century British Master* exhibition by:

- providing information about the artist
- exploring exhibition subjects and themes
- challenging students to engage with the works and the exhibition’s themes

It may be used in conjunction with a visit to the exhibition and as a pre-visit or post-visit resource.

**Year Level**

This Resource is designed to be used by upper primary and secondary students.

**Learning Connections**

Engaging with this exhibition involves critical thinking, developing skills in visual analysis and aesthetic knowledge and broadening an understanding about arts practices. It also involves developing informed opinions about art works and learning to communicate these opinions effectively to others.

In more specific art-historical terms it introduces students to one of the twentieth century’s greatest figurative artists. Through the diverse media and subjects represented in this exhibition students will also gain insights into how an artist translates personal experience into powerful visual art statements.

From such insights students will gain confidence in applying ideas and methodologies within their own creative work.

*Stanley painting, 1940s, Courtesy of The Stanley Spencer Photograph Achieve. Credit: Charles Cooke*
ABOUT THIS EXHIBITION

*Stanley Spencer: a twentieth-century British master* is the first exhibition in Australia in fifty years devoted to British modernist Stanley Spencer (1891-1959). The first Spencer exhibition in Australia was held in Adelaide as part of the 1966 Adelaide Festival of Arts for which the Haywards of Carrick Hill lent paintings. It will be one of five exhibitions in the world this year marking the 125th anniversary of Spencer’s birth. The show is also the centerpiece of Carrick Hill’s 30th anniversary of public opening.

It re-examines Stanley Spencer’s contribution to British Modernism through the Spencer works currently held in the Southern Hemisphere. Spencer is regarded as one of Britain’s most significant twentieth-century artists. Although he never visited the antipodes his work is in every major institution throughout Australia and New Zealand with Adelaide at one time being home to as many as twenty works, the largest group collected outside of the United Kingdom during the artist’s lifetime. The exhibition includes still-lifes, landscapes, portraits and figurative compositions on loan from national and international sources.

The Carrick Hill connection
Carrick Hill comprises a major heritage building, being the previous home of Sir Edward and Lady Ursula Hayward; internationally significant art and decorative arts collections; original subsidiary buildings such as stables; and approximately 40 hectares of land which includes approximately 26 hectares of native bushland. The property is located close to the city of Adelaide in the Adelaide foothills with spectacular views stretching to Gulf St Vincent. Carrick Hill was a bequest to the people of South Australia. It was officially opened to the public by Queen Elizabeth II in 1986.

Art collection
A very important aspect of the Haywards’, and Carrick Hill’s, influence on the cultural life of South Australia was through their patronage of the arts, in particular the visual arts. Both Ursula and Edward were keen collectors, and many works of art by contemporary European and Australian artists were on display in their home. On their many trips overseas the Haywards also acquired works of art, mostly by well-known British and French artists of the early twentieth century. Internationally important artists collected by the Haywards include Stanley Spencer (Great Britain 1891-1951), Jacob Epstein (Great Britain 1880-1959), Auguste Renoir (France 1841-1919) and Paul Gauguin (France 1848-1903). At home the Haywards acquired the work of many well-known Australian artists including William Dobell, Russell Drysdale, Nora Heysen and Ivor Hele.

The Haywards first saw Stanley Spencer’s work in Adelaide in 1935 in the landmark *Loan Exhibition of Contemporary British Art* and were inspired to buy their first work by the artist during their honeymoon in England the same year. They eventually amassed the largest private collection of Spencer’s work outside England.
MEET THE ARTIST

Stanley Spencer (1891 – 1959) is regarded as one of Britain’s greatest artists of the modern era. This reputation recognises his remarkable ability to see the familiar world with fresh eyes. As a child he showed a remarkable talent for drawing and appreciating the visual features and wonders of semi-rural life in and around his birthplace, the small village of Cookham on the Thames River outside of London. While art school studies took him to London he continued to draw subjects and inspiration from the sights and memories of Cookham across his working life. His output included portraits, figure compositions, landscapes and close-focus still life subjects – particularly flowers. He had a very distinctive style of expression. In general terms it was realistic. But his people, scenes and objects were never copies but interpretations of what he saw and remembered.

Observing the world

Spencer was always a close observer of the world around him. No detail, however small escaped his attention. Because of this his pictures make fantastic visual reading. They invite us to recreate his own experience of gazing at something and seeing, as if for the first time, and appreciating how wonderful it looks. This as a special talent. Spencer had it as a young person and never lost it across a lifetime.

Story telling

Spencer’s other talent, apart from being able to brilliantly recreate a sense of ‘being there’ and seeing something with fresh eyes was to tell stories through images. The stories he wanted to tell the world about were all about Cookham as a place where heaven and earth lived side by side. The artist was raised in a religious home where reading the Bible and thinking about big questions related to life and death were a normal part of everyday life. From this he developed the idea that Cookham would become his ‘heaven on earth’. Spencer’s most remarkable pictures are those in which he explored the idea that extraordinary and ordinary and even miraculous and earthly things could live side by side. On this basis he was quite comfortable with the idea of Christ wandering around Cookham or the Resurrection taking place in the local church’s graveyard.

So, remember when looking at many of the works in this exhibition – nothing is just what it appears. It might look like a face, a figure or building but it might also (from the artist’s perspective) represent some inner meaning about such things as nature as evidence of creation or the way the past and present speak to each other.

“Spencer has said that ‘everything has a double meaning for me, the ordinary, everyday meaning and then, if you like, the spiritual, mystical meaning’. That underpins the entire basis of his art.” Carolyn Leder, Curator, Stanley Spencer Gallery, Cookham
Find out more about Stanley Spencer

If you would like to know some details about Stanley Spencer’s life, there are a number of resources available.

**Carrick Hill provides an extensive biographical outline:**

**The Stanley Spencer Gallery (at Cookham UK) provides a good biographical background and information about Cookham:**
http://www.stanleyspencer.org.uk

**Youtube videos:**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8nfzYFlODgI
See also:
Art Historian Peter Ackroyd visits The Stanley Spencer Gallery, Cookham (an excellent analysis of one of Spencer’s final major work and his ability to work with complex figure arrangements).
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=letuHE4XO70
This video clip explores Spencer’s extraordinary murals in the Sandham Memorial Chapel, Hampshire.

**See also**
http://www.tate.org.uk/search?type=artwork&q=stanley%20spencer
Catalogue (with images) of the Tate Gallery’s extensive collection of Spencer’s works.

**Insights**
‘Stanley Spencer is a major twentieth-century artist whose work is linked thematically and stylistically to the painting of his time, and closely engaged with the changing nature of modern experience.’
- Timothy Hyman, artist and Patrick White, cultural historian:

‘Spencer was an extrovert: childlike, open, honest, almost unbelievably naive and with an exceptional sense of humour. He was at the time of his death far outside the mainstream of British art, but now, with the hundredth anniversary of his birth, Spencer has an assured place in the history of European art.’

‘Spencer’s art knew no boundaries; his ambition was enormous, matched only by a single-minded pursuit of an unorthodox personal vision that now marks him out as one of the greatest British painters of the 20th century.’
- Professor Paul Gough
As an artist working in the studio tradition Spencer thought and acted visually. His training taught him to think of a picture as essentially a composition. This meant that no matter what the subject might be (a face, a scene figure or bunch of flowers for example) it had to work as a visual statement. So drawing and painting for Spencer was always more than copying or creating a likeness. It had to capture the visual character of the subject and it had to capture the viewer’s imagination.

In addition, Spencer wanted to convey the idea that the subject was more than just its appearance. The way he represented his faces, scenes and still lifes, for example, was the means by which he expressed feelings about life as a spiritual journey. That’s quite a juggling act. How did he go about this?

To get some insight here are two quite different paintings by Spencer which demonstrate how he organised details and emphasized aspects to create strong visual images.

*Hilda Welcomed*, 1953
oil on canvas, Collection of the Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Morgan Thomas Bequest Fund 1956
Background briefing
The artist Hilda Carline, Spencer’s first wife, died in 1950. Stanley and Hilda divorced in 1937, and in the same year Spencer married Patricia Preece. This second marriage was unsuccessful and the artist continued to court Hilda, hoping she would be reconciled with him. This work depicts the resurrected Hilda being welcomed into the Spencer family home by the artist and the couple’s two daughters, Shirin and Unity. The two women on either side are possibly Charlotte Murray, a friend and lover of Spencer’s, and Patricia Preece.

The scene takes place on the last day, the day of resurrection, before the Last Judgement.

This painting was to be included in an ambitious project, Church–House, which Spencer envisioned would one day be built in Cookham and house dozens of paintings of a more personal nature. A feature of this building was a side chapel devoted to Spencer’s first wife Hilda Carline.

Consider

Emotions. Spencer wanted to convey the intensity of feeling about greeting someone who had been absent for a long time. To emphasize this, he arranged the arms of the figures to echo each other as wrap around Hilda – like a repeated wave motion.

Viewpoint. Viewpoint describes the way an artist positions the viewer. This is a multi-viewpoint composition. While we are made to feel as if standing near this group and seeing it at eye level, the legs and feet show a child’s eye view of the event.

Proportion. In this painting (and others in this exhibition) Spencer has deliberately distorted proportions – particularly the length of the arms – to emphasize this sense of people being entwined.

Pattern. Pattern and surface textures were of intense interest to Spencer from around the 1930s to the 1950s. When looking at the original work take note of how carefully the artist has represented patterns using small, detailed brush marks. Notice the figure on the right. The leaf pattern on her dress has begun to grow across her arm. Consider that in the art of many cultures patterns are used to convey a sense of another (even spiritual) dimension. Without its mix of patterns this image would look very different indeed.
Between 1940 and 1946 Stanley Spencer served as an official war artist and was commissioned by the War Artists Advisory Committee to record shipbuilding at Lithgows Shipyard in Port Glasgow. The subjects were essentially groups of men sail making, rolling and swaging ropes and cables, bending large sheets of metal and riveting pipe work. This small painting of a scrap heap continues Spencer’s interest in visual rhythms, showing rusted metal stacked in various piles, represented as an overall design.

**Consider**

**Visual rhythm.** This term describes the way an artist builds a sense of rhythm by repeating particular kinds of lines, shapes and colours. The eye, as a result, ‘goes along for the ride’. This has the effect of holding the eye within the image and sometimes directing it to follow a particular pathway.

**Colour.** The selection and combination of colours usually has a key role in the overall ‘look’ and mood of a picture. *The scrapheap* uses a palette of earth colours in varying degrees of lighter and darker tones to match the heavy industrial content of the work.

**Compression and expansion.** This image is full of crowded, busy details. But notice how the artist has left more open, ‘quieter’ areas in the upper half of the image to contrast with the visual complexity of the piles of scrap metal below.

**Ordinary as extraordinary.** To an artist like Spencer, ‘scrap’ or ‘junk’ can be an exciting subject to work with. All you need are the visual tools to unlock its potential. These odd bits of rusty metal have been transformed by art into something quite dramatic and special. Would you also add ‘beautiful’? It has been suggested that Spencer, in this painting, is alluding to Vulcan, the ancient god of fire, who forged art and weapons for the gods.
KEYS FOR LOOKING

As a modern artist trained in the studio tradition Spencer was aware of how manipulating a full range of visual elements and pictorial devices he could make any subject special and visually interesting. As he developed images from sketches to finished paintings he was constantly juggling and making decisions about a wide range of options. Here is a list of some of the primary options on offer.

**Light:** Where is the light coming from? Is it natural or artificial? Is there any reflected light? Is it bright or dull?

**Colour:** What kind of colours has the artist used? Do some kinds of colours dominate? Does it look as if the artist has given some thought to where different areas of colour are placed? To answer this question focus on a particular colour in any picture in the picture. Is this colour concentrated in one area or is it ‘scattered’ within the composition. Are they cool or warm colours or a combination? Do you think the artist intended the colours to work in this way? If so, why?

**Patterns:** Patterns are often used by artists to build visual energy. Items in a picture may have decorative patterns as part of their surfaces. The artist will sometimes repeat marks, lines, shapes, colours or brush marks to create patterning. Spencer enjoyed using patterns in his work. Look at a few works in the exhibition from this perspective.

**Composition:** How is everything arranged or placed within the picture? Does it look as if the artist has given some thought about where different things are placed? Sometimes artists organise compositions as a kind of conversation between the foreground and back ground. In these situations, the artist will use compositional devices such as angles and lines to lead the eye from one section to the other. Spencer’s painting Cookham Lock is a good example of this. Find this work and see if you can unlock the secrets of its composition.

**Proportion:** You will usually know if things are ‘in proportion’. If they are not, they might look ‘out of proportion’ or even distorted. Some artists ‘lose a sense of proportion’ because of errors in observation of lack of drawing skills. Spencer deliberately exaggerated or distorted proportions at times to help express or create an emotional mood. Can you find an example in the exhibition?

**Lines and shapes:** Artists like Spencer understood the power of lines and shapes to create interest and to control the way a picture is viewed. One visual device he often used was to crop or show only part of a shape (such as the side of a building) to engage the viewer’s imagination about the ‘missing’ bits.

**Space and spatial depth:** The artist has used shading to create illusions of things being solid. The artist has also used a visual system called perspective to increase the spatial depth of the picture. Find out what this term means and see if you can find examples of this system at work in this exhibition.
**Viewpoint:** Imagine you are standing or sitting in the picture. This will give you some idea of how the artist has ‘placed’ you – whether you like it or not. But, as seen in Hilda Welcomed Spencer sometimes introduced more than one viewpoint into the same image. It is an art work after all. It can have its own rules.

**Tilt ups:** When modern artists one hundred years ago artists experimented with new ways of representing reality they took a liking to a visual device which involved imaginatively tipping or tilting up the surface on which objects were placed. This might be the floor or a table top. This encouraged the viewer to feel as if they were looking into rather than at the subject. It was a way of getting the viewer to feel more involved with the image. It could also mean that you get see what’s inside things like bowls and vases without losing their ‘outside’ appearance.

**Mood:** Spencer created interpretations not copies of reality. In expressing feelings about his subjects he intentionally or otherwise created moods which speak directly to the viewer. The way (see style) the artist chooses to interpret subjects usually decides the overall mood of the work. It remains a personal thing. You may get a sense of a particular mood the artist never intended. Do any of Spencer’s pictures have a particular mood?

**Style:** Art works are often classified according to style. To say that Spencer’s art is in a realist or Post-Impressionist or Modernist style is only useful to a degree. It doesn’t say what makes his art special or distinctive. However, when analysing or discussing individual works it is very useful to think about style as being the sum of all the various features and visual elements working together. We can talk about Spencer’s art as using a lot of realism. But would you say it is realistic? Other work may be described as expressive. But what do these terms really mean? Sometimes it is better to talk about what’s happening in a work rather than be worried too much about labelling.

**Technique:** This a broad term that covers the different methods the artist uses when working with an art medium such as oil paint or pastel. It may include the choice of support, (stretched canvas or board), ground (base on which the pigment is placed), preliminary drawing on the ground, underpainting, washing or staining, indirect painting methods such as working from thin to thick layers of pigment or applying glazes over pre-prepared surfaces, direct painting methods such as wet-in-wet manipulation of pigment or working back such as wiping, scraping or inscribing.

The way the paint is applied in a painting (usually but not exclusively with a brush) reveals much about the artist’s intentions. A lively or ‘worked’ painting surface or areas composed of multiple and visible brush (or other medium) marks will usually build the visual energy of the picture. It may also help to define the mood of a work. Spencer had a very distinctive and precise way of applying thin layers of paint. It was a technique well suited to an artist who wanted to retain the freshness and detail of the preparatory drawing. Reproductions will not always convey this information so check this out in the exhibition.
EXPLORE

Take some thematic trails through the exhibition

**Theme A: My world**

Spencer was born and raised in Cookham, a village in Berkshire, in England. He lived there for forty-nine of his sixty-eight years. It was for him a heavenly paradise where everyday village events were transformed into visionary spectacles of spiritual significance. While studying art in London he was even given the nickname of ‘Cookham’ by his fellow students. Some of his drawings and paintings depict scenes in and around Cookham as he encountered them with pencil or paintbrush in hand. Others incorporate views and locations within symbolic images in which the village and its daily life is recast as a stage for extraordinary events inspired by the New Testament and the life of Christ.

The following selection of works offer an introduction to ‘Spencer’s Cookham’ as he encountered it and took delight in it on a day to day basis. While Spencer felt that painting straightforward landscapes (and still-lives) were a distraction from his ‘real work’ they form an important part of his work.

Spencer painted more than a hundred pictures of ‘in and around Cookham’ subjects.

*Cookham Lock, 1935*

oil on canvas, Collection of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Purchased 1937
In this painting Spencer demonstrates confidence and skill in arranging the composition so that the foreground takes the eye though the railing back into the middle distance. This kind of visual ‘game’ is often on offer in Spencer’s landscape.

At the time the painting was made the owner of Harwood House employed four maids, a live-in cook, a chauffeur and five gardeners who tended the terraces, rockeries and several greenhouses. Today Harwood House is an aged care facility. While the grounds are beautiful, much of the garden in this view no longer exists. The distant view beyond the garden remains little changed.

This work shows how imaginative and skillful Spencer was in handling landscape subjects that were crowded with details. By using a high viewpoint, he has been able to arrange the various plants and trees as if units within a mosaic. He has also used a restrained colour scheme of muted cool and warm colours to create a sense of everything being blended together. But his sharp eye for patterns and textures ensures that the viewer can appreciate the diversity of the various plant forms.
In the semi-rural setting of Cookham, countryside and villages sit side by side. Spencer has captured this in a view which takes in a wheat field bordered by houses. This painting is one of a number of views Spencer painted around Cookham Dean looking principally towards Cookham Rise, a working class neighborhood where the artist lived after the war. The actual setting of this painting is a view southward from Kennel Lane showing the rear of the house in Whyteladys Lane and the gasometer. The interesting thing about Spencer’s interpretation is that he presents this quite pleasant view through the framework of an old fence and gate in the foreground. ‘This is how it was’ he seems to be saying. This is sometimes how you see things – not neatly organised with only the best bits on display. Spencer’s observational skills caused one critic to say he could paint detail such as ‘a motor-tire or a laburnum tree or an iron bedstead in a way that makes one catch one’s breath with a shock of delight’.

If curious about this image do some online research on contemporary Cookham to find out how much of Spencer’s Cookham still remains.
From the artist’s window, Cookham, 1938
oil on canvas, Collection of the Carrick Hill Trust, Adelaide, Hayward Bequest

This painting and another in the exhibition (Cookham, flowers in a window, 1938) use the visual device of ‘flowers on a window sill’ framing a view of buildings below. This is a very effective way of involving the viewer. It is as if you are leaning out of the window to get a better view of the world outside. As usual in Spencer’s ‘views’ no detail has escaped notice. However, he has made sure that all the visual information packed into this image does not overwhelm the viewer. Consider how the stems of the flowers in the bowl ‘point’ in different directions like sign posts directing the view. The lace curtain on the right functions like a stage curtain being drawn back to reveal a scene. The ornate fern tendril–like capping on the roof below cleverly establishes a visual link with the foreground flowers in the bowl.

Theme B: Nature alive
In Spencer’s very special way of seeing the world around him, everything in nature was truly wonderful. While he felt at times that painting still lifes and landscapes was taking him away from his ‘real’ work of expressing the fusion between earthly and spiritual life, in a Cookham setting, he never failed to give his flowers, grasses and trees full respect. The result is that they are ‘larger than life’ representations, full of energy and expressive of natural beauty in all its forms.
This image of a single sunflower is typical of the type of composition which made Spencer very popular with collectors of his still-life and outdoor images. He reminisced that during his childhood he and his brother would peep into gardens and yards. This image of a sunflower has all the characteristics of something seen up close – as if through a gap in the fence. The massive bloom, which almost has a ‘Jack and the Beanstalk’ quality to it, dominates the foreground of the picture. The up-tilted roof in the background sets the viewer down as it were alongside the artist. Spencer retained the magic he imagined during a child on these garden adventures - always striving to capture his familiar world with fresh eyes.
The monkey puzzle tree is also known as the Chilean pine. It is a native to that country. Chile declared it a national monument in 1990. It gets its common name because gardeners thought its spiny branches would puzzle a climbing monkey. It is not a pine but an evergreen conifer. The indigenous people of Arauco in Chile eat its seeds. Spencer’ imagination was clearly captured by its exotic and spectacular design. The degree of observation and concentration required to effectively ‘paint its portrait’ exemplifies Spencer’s dedication to his subject. Another feature of this work is the significant attention he has paid to a wide diversity of other plants in the vicinity. Rather than blend this information into the background he has given all plants, flowers and grasses equal billing. The result is a portrayal of nature humming with biodiversity and life.

**Theme C: People and figures**

Spencer was trained in the figurative tradition. His art studies consolidated a natural talent for drawing from observation. As a result, while he often exaggerated aspects of faces and figures to intensify mood or convey a sense of the extraordinary, his portraits and figures always convey a sense of having been closely observed. He was a highly accomplished portraitist, able to engage with his sitters and sensitive to their characteristics and body language.
Stanley Spencer was a fine portraitist and produced several self-portraits throughout his career. Many of these are simple images of the artist’s reflected face, such as his very early oil of 1914 (Tate Gallery, London) or this simple drawing made six years later. In other paintings Spencer included himself as part of the overall portrait composition.
This portrait of the artist’s niece was made on one of Spencer’s visits to Merville Garden Village in Northern Ireland to see his brother, Harold. Spencer made four portraits of Daphne. In this portrait the artist has chosen to look down on his subject, who is settled on a couch and looks up at the artist. A feature of this portrait is the detailed modelling of Daphne’s blouse which appears to be leading an energetic life of its own. Consider the way light is working within the image. The figure is backlit by the window at the rear. Normally this would create a darkened, silhouette effect in the foreground figure. But Spencer clever implies reflected light bouncing from Daphne’s right shoulder to illuminate the side of her face.

![The wedding cake, 1953](image)
lithograph on paper, Collection of the Carrick Hill Trust

This is an excellent example of Spencer’s sharp eye for observation. The image is titled ‘The wedding cake’ but it could have been titled ‘Taking a seat at the wedding’. The artist has captured a split second moment when in the act of having a chair pulled out for her the woman is smoothing her dress (perhaps to avoid creasing it) before sitting down.
Theme D: Heaven and earth

‘Believing that the divine rested in all creation Spencer transformed Cookham into a paradise where everything was endowed with mystical significance. It was a place of daily miracles, where his family might daily rub shoulders with Old Testament figures, and where it seemed entirely appropriate that Christ would wander in the garden behind the local churchyard and the Resurrection take place in its churchyard.’

-Professor Paul Gough

Parents Resurrecting, 1933
oil on canvas, Collection of the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Felton Bequest 1948

In December 1931 the artist had moved back to Cookham having been away for several years engaged in painting a major commissioned series relating to World War One in an especially built chapel at Burghclere, Berkshire. Once back in Cookham, and inspired by the experience of painting such a large and cohesive group of works, he conceived the idea of a Church-House and embarked on a series of figure compositions which might fit in such a space, including Parents Resurrecting. In this work grandparents of Cookham children rise from their graves, watched by the youngsters who are returning from having a swim. Notice how Spencer has tilted the composition to allow the viewer to see what is going on elsewhere in the cemetery.
Spencer used this sketch as a study for his very large painting *The Resurrection, Cookham* (Tate Gallery), which he completed between 1924 and 1927. This drawing relates to a portion of the left hand side of the work, in which people emerge from their graves in the Cookham cemetery. The final painting, measuring 279 high by 549 centimeters across, is an extended view of the cemetery showing people emerging from tombs, graves, coffins and patches of flowers. In this drawing the woman in the foreground is smelling a flower, some figures are lying back on the grass, quite happy to be out and about and in no hurry to go anywhere. A woman in the lower right corner may be dusting off her husband’s coat. In other words – life goes back to normal - even if it is the resurrection.
GET STARTED

The following tasks are designed to support/initiate structured viewing and engagement for students in the exhibition. They can be undertaken in any order and are suitable for individual and small group work. Implicit in some tasks is the idea that students or groups will report findings and discuss works with others. Scribing is not necessary to undertake these activities but some of these tasks could involve scribing to support ongoing post-visit work.

First and last impressions
• What did you think about when you first came into the exhibition and looked around?
• Was there any work in particular you wanted to look at or return to and look at again? Why do you think this happened?
• Is there a work in this exhibition that you think you will find hard to forget?
• Before leaving check out the exhibition one more time to see if there’s an idea or technique in a work that you could try when you get back to school.

Think about
• When you find yourself wanting to look at some works in particular do think it is because the image or subject is interesting or is it because of the artist’s technique or way of interpreting the subject.
• If disaster strikes and you could save only one work from this exhibition, which one would you save and why?

Easy?
• Which work was the easiest and which work was the hardest to make – and why?

Analysis and response (individual work/s)
Choose any work that attracts your attention and apply any or all of the following questions
• Are the visual qualities of this work appealing in any way?
• Can you see any kind of connection between this kind of art and others you know about?
• What do you think this work is about or might be saying?
• Write a caption (extended wall label) for a selected work based on your own personal response, feelings or interpretation.
• Has this given you an idea for something you could make as part of your art studies?
• Select one work that appeals in some way and tell someone else your reasons for your selection.

Analysis and response (the exhibition)
• Write a review of the exhibition which explores the links or relationships between the works.
• Choose one of the themes suggested in the ‘Explore’ section of this Education Resource and review the exhibition from this perspective.
• Are there other themes (not identified in this Resource) which could apply to this selection of work?
• Write a press release for this exhibition.
• Compare two or more works which appear to be exploring similar ideas in different ways.
POST-VISIT ACTIVITIES

Post exhibition activities often consist of sharing and analyzing information gathered during the exhibition visit. This information might be:

- gathered on-site
- recorded individual and shared responses
- findings from any research tasks

The following activities can be adapted for visit/post-visit use:

VISUAL ARTS

Art making
Having viewed the exhibition check it out one more time to see if there’s an idea or technique (in a work) that you could try when you get back to school or your studio.

Spencer always considered the way his pictures worked as compositions. Try producing some images which deliberately use or manipulate compositional elements.

Compose a scene (drawing, painting, photograph) which deliberately uses visual devices such as shapes or lines to link foreground and background.

Spencer often used colour relationships as a means of organising and adding interest to his images. Try producing some images which deliberately explore relationships between colours.

Try completing a still life painting of freshly cut or gathered flowers (or a plant) which captures the freshness of the subject before the blooms fade and wilt.

Try producing a work which makes deliberate use of Post-Impressionist ideas and techniques.

Spencer constantly found inspiration and subjects in life around Cookham. See if you can make a work of art based on subjects drawn from your own personal surroundings.

Consider making an art work (or taking a series of photographs) based on a small child’s or a dog/cat’s viewpoint of the world.

Consider making an art work in which different periods of time exist – side by side (as in some of Spencer’s Resurrection images). This project could be ‘personalised’ by using archival family photographs as one source of images.

Personal response/analysis of works
Select one work that appeals in some way and tell someone else your reasons for your selection.

Write a review of the exhibition which explores the links or relationships between the works. You might find the ‘Explore’ themes in this Resource a useful starting point for this.

Write or present a formal analysis of a selected work using aspects listed in ‘Keys for looking’ in this Resource as a reference.
Seeing Spencer in an art historical context
Still life is a significant genre or tradition within art of the European tradition. As a student of this tradition Spencer adopted many of its conventions and techniques. See if you can identify some of them.

Spencer was influenced by various periods and styles—particularly Italian Early Renaissance art and the nineteenth century group of English artists known as the Pre-Raphaelites. What can your research tell you about these connections?

While researching these influences see if you can find out how these artists went about organising their often large and complex works.

Late nineteenth and early twentieth century experiments in art explored different ways of representing the visible world. While Spencer was a realist artist he did adopt some modernist approaches such as flattening pictorial space within a scene. What can your research tell you about the influence of Post Impressionism and Cubism on Spencer’s representation of pictorial space?

Some of Spencer’s images are not meant to be taken or read literally. To convey some deeply-held feelings or ideas the artist used symbols or deliberately exaggerated appearances to communicate how he felt about things. Can you find some examples in this exhibition? Discuss with others how effective the artist has been in doing this?

Opinion
Can art really capture or express ‘art and life’? Or is it just in the mind of the artist or the viewer? Debate with others within the context of a question (e.g. should we really believe or trust what artists say?)

Spencer found beauty in all kinds of things and places. In your opinion are all things equally beautiful? Why is it that some people find certain things to be ugly?

Why do you think Spencer’s flower paintings and landscapes were so popular?

If you were able to own one work from this exhibition – what would you choose? Compare reasons for your choice with others.

Writing
Write a wall label text for one or more works in the exhibition using your personal response as a starting point.

Write a short piece which imagines the thoughts and feelings occurring within the artist’s mind as he worked on a painting.

Write an audio script based on a conversation you have with some of Spencer’s villagers as they wake up on Resurrection day.

Compare two works that explore or express the same or similar subjects in different ways.
VISITING THE EXHIBITION

Booking a visit
• Bookings are required to guarantee scheduled entry to the exhibition.
• To book: Telephone 08 8433 1700 or curator.carrick@sa.gov.au.

All bookings will be confirmed by email with the supervising teacher.

In the exhibition
• On arrival your group will be met and welcomed by a member of the venue staff.
• If planning to divide the class into smaller research/viewing groups organise these beforehand.
• Focus and task your class groups on arrival and outside the exhibition space. This is the best time to distribute prepared activity sheets or the Get Started research activities included in this Education Resource.

• Before groups disperse remind your students of gallery protocols ie;
  • avoid touching any work, support stands or cabinets
  • be aware of others using the space; speak quietly to each other and walk not run in the space
• Involve students in both individual and group analysis and responses. Scribing is optional but will be useful for on-site reporting and post-visit research.

• Encourage students to consider how individual works sit within one or more of the themes.

Stanley painting ‘Wisteria’ in Cookham, 1942
Courtesy of The Stanley Spencer Photograph Achieve