

# Picasso: Peace and Freedom

## *Educators' Pack*



Pablo Picasso, *Still Life with Skull, Leeks and Pitcher* 14 March 1945 © Succession Picasso/DACS 2010, Courtesy the Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco

### Introduction

The exhibition *Picasso: Peace and Freedom* examines the artist's representation of war and peace during the Cold War. A lifelong socialist, Picasso became a member of the Communist Party following the Second World War and a committed campaigner for world peace. His Dove of Peace became the emblem for the Peace Movement and a universal symbol of hope.

This pack provides the art historical context for the exhibition, examining the unique visual language that Picasso developed in order to express his response to conflict in Europe. It focuses on key works from the exhibition such as *The Charnel House and Monument to the Spanish who died for France* 1945-7. It also explores Picasso's exploitation of the traditional genre of still life to express feelings of pessimism and despair that pervaded post-war Europe.

The pack is designed to support educators in the planning, execution and following up to a visit to Tate Liverpool. It is intended as an introduction to the exhibition with a collection of ideas, workshops and points for discussion. The activities are suitable for all ages and can be adapted to your needs.

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## Picasso's Visual Language

Picasso established the basic vocabulary of his visual language through his development of the avant-garde movement Cubism with Georges Braque in the early twentieth century.

Cubism broke radically with traditional means of expression – distorting and redefining form, exploring spatial relationships and establishing new ways of depicting three dimensional objects on a two-dimensional surface. During its most complex phase, known as Analytical Cubism, this form of art often replaced objects with signs or signifiers (see for example, Picasso's painting *Ma Jolie*, 1911-12, where a musical instrument is suggested by lines and curves along with musical signs such as a treble clef). Analytical Cubism became increasingly abstract as the dense compositions were loaded with such signifiers, and form was fragmented to the point where it often became difficult to read.

With his collages of 1912-14, Picasso sought to simplify his images and to re-establish links with everyday life. He often incorporated materials associated with day-to-day existence rather than fine art (eg *Still Life with Chair Caning* 1912 which used printed oil cloth glued to the canvas and framed with a piece of rope).

Picasso continued to explore new approaches to art and develop his unique and highly personal visual language throughout his career. This language was rooted in Cubism, employing metaphors and imagery and an economic approach to representing form which often incorporated multi-viewpoints (eg *Head of a Woman* 1924 in Tate Collection which combines a face in profile with one seen simultaneously from the front).

Picasso took inspiration from his own life and surroundings. Objects and materials from his home, such as kitchen utensils and his children's toys appear in his art both as images and even physically incorporated into sculpture. The people in his life also became vehicles for expression, the most famous example being his mistress Dora Maar, whose tortured features convey the artist's own responses to the Spanish Civil War as *The Weeping Woman* 1937.

Picasso also created a cast of characters, such as the harlequin, horse, bull (or minotaur) and warrior who appear in his work in various guises and continually evade attempts of definitive interpretation. He also drew heavily on the art of the past, often appropriating layers of reference and meaning from masters such as Goya, Velazquez, Van Gogh and Manet.

**Look** at examples of Picasso's Cubism and make your own cubist portraits and still life compositions. Make preparatory sketches by drawing your subject from different viewpoints. How can you combine these alternative views into your finished work?

**Collect** examples of signs and symbols from everyday life (eg road signs, food symbols, map keys etc) How could you incorporate them into a cubist collage?

**Read** a poem and discuss imagery, rhyme, metaphor, rhythm, mood, structure etc. Do you think there are visual equivalents to these in art? (eg colour, composition, line, imagery, brushstrokes, texture etc)

## The Spanish Civil War and Guernica

*‘...artists who live and work with spiritual values cannot and should not remain indifferent to a conflict in which the highest values of humanity and civilization are at risk’.* (Picasso statement sent to the American Artists' Congress, New York 1937)

Prior to 1937, Picasso's work has generally been considered apolitical. A life-long socialist, his paintings of the Blue Period between 1901 and 1904 focussed on subjects of oppression and poverty (eg *The Tragedy* 1903) but he usually depicted his subjects as passive victims of their circumstances and avoided moral or political comment.

Picasso's Cubist collages often incorporated newspaper cuttings and far from being arbitrary material, some of these clippings offer a commentary on current affairs. *Bottle of Suze*, 1912, for example contains newspaper reports of horrors as conditions experienced by soldiers involved in the Balkan Wars. During 1912 and 1913, Picasso made over twenty collages that incorporated such cuttings from French socialist journals. They are often placed across a table top alongside still life elements such as wine bottles and glasses, thereby suggesting a contemporary conversation taking place in a Parisian cafe. This technique allowed Picasso to reflect on political matters without offering a direct opinion.

During the 1930s, his relationship with Dora Maar who had strong left-wing connections influenced Picasso's political thought. His involvement with the Surrealist circle during this period also brought him into contact with political groups. His friend Paul Elouard was one of the first of the Surrealists to join the Communist Party in 1926 and he strongly believed in the militant role of the artist in society.

Events in his home country of Spain during 1930s eventually persuaded Picasso to use his own art more actively as a weapon. *The Dream and Lie of Franco* 1937 was his first work to explicitly address the political situation in Spain. In a series of etchings which run together like a cartoon strip, he depicts the Fascist leader Franco as a pathetic, maggot-like creature.

Picasso's abhorrence and disgust is expressed in these drawings and his accompanying poem which were sold in a portfolio to raise money for the Republican troops in Spain.

*'No, painting is not made to decorate apartments. It is an offensive and defensive instrument of war against the enemy'* (Picasso, 1945)

In 1937, Picasso was commissioned to paint a mural for the Spanish Pavillion at the World Fair which would be held in Paris that year. At first, Picasso was hesitant and unsure of his subject matter for this public event. Then on 27 April, Nazi bombers in collaboration with Franco's forces attacked the Spanish town of Guernica, killing or wounding 1,600 civilians. Picasso heard about the massacre through newspapers in Paris where he was living. He immediately set about creating his response to the tragedy – to go to war himself through his painting. His mural for the Spanish Pavillion would become the greatest anti-war statement in the history of art.

Rather than depicting the event in realistic terms or recording the actual bombers and perpetrators of violence, Picasso assembled a cast of allegorical characters: a fallen classical warrior (suggesting, perhaps a collapse of civilized standards); a bull and horse (recalling the traditional Spanish ritual of the bullfight); a lady with a lamp (possibly representing hope); and weeping women with children as a sombre reminder that this violent act was perpetrated against innocent civilians.

The painting received a mixed reaction when it was shown at the World Fair. Art critics were overwhelmed but the visitors to the exposition were largely confused by the artist's use of imagery. The Spanish Embassy that commissioned the work was disappointed that it did not specifically address the crisis in Spain or directly blame the Fascists for their deplorable crimes.

Though it officially belonged to the Spanish Embassy, Picasso rolled the painting up at the end of the fair and took it back to his studio. In 1938, it was sent on a world tour to raise money for the troops in Spain, beginning in England and ending in New York where it remained on loan to the Museum of Modern Art for the next forty years.

He did not write a will, but Picasso left instructions that *Guernica* was only to return to its rightful owners, the Spanish people, when 'public liberties' had been restored. Franco died the year after Picasso in 1975 and Juan Carlos took the throne of Spain. In 1981, *Guernica* was finally transferred with an armed guard from New York to Madrid where it is now housed at the Reina Sofia.

**Study Picasso's *Guernica*** in groups and try to work out what is going on. What does it represent? What mood does it evoke? Then discuss the bombing of Guernica. How does Picasso's painting relate to the real life events? Why do you think Picasso avoided using colour in this painting? What effect would colour have on the image? Discuss the differences between photographs and painting in responding to or reporting tragedy. Which is most effective and why?

**Make** your own collage based on a current event using newspaper cuttings and photographs. You could add text and incorporate your own drawings.

**Research** other artists who have responded to conflict in their art (eg Goya, Henry Moore, Paul Nash, Otto Dix, Jean Fautrier, Leon Golub, Willie Doherty, Jeremy Deller, Jake and Dinos Chapman etc)

## The Occupation

*'I have not painted the war because I am not the kind of painter who goes out like a photographer for something to depict. But I have no doubt that the war is in these paintings I have done'.* (Picasso, 1944)

While many of his contemporaries fled France, Picasso remained in Paris during the Nazi Occupation. His decision to stay was prompted less by heroism than by his reluctance to move his art and expanding family. On the whole, he managed to avoid the attention of the occupying forces. Though they kept him under surveillance as a foreigner and as an artist working in the style identified by Hitler as 'degenerate', his paintings did not seem to express political or anti-German sentiment.

In his own way, however, Picasso was creating resistance simply by continuing to produce work under the pressure and hardships of wartime Paris. He declined offers of food and fuel from the Nazis (though as a successful artist he was by no means impoverished). For his friends and those who remained in the city, his determination to produce art under these conditions gave them encouragement and moral support. His cataloguer, Christian Zervos records over 2,200 paintings and drawings between the years 1937 and 1945. Though his art of this period was not explicitly about war, a dark mood permeated his paintings, particularly his still life works.

A general feeling of pessimism, profound despair and guilt pervades much of the art produced in post-war Europe. The human body was used as a vehicle for expressing these emotions in the work of artists such as Sutherland, Bacon, Gruber, Fautrier and Richier. Picasso expressed his anguish through paintings of the women in his life, particularly in the distorted features of his mistress Dora Maar – the most famous example being *The Weeping Woman* 1937

**Discuss** *The Weeping Woman*. Can you find any other examples of weeping figures in art? How can emotion be described in paint and lines? What emotions are expressed here? Is this a portrait or is the artist using a woman's face in order to convey his feelings? How would you draw a weeping person? What colours or shapes suggest pain and distress?

**Visit** *Rineke Dijkstra: I See a Woman Crying at Tate Liverpool (27 April – 30 August 2010)* and explore works inspired by Picasso and the ways in which local communities discuss artworks in the gallery.

*The Weeping Woman* is also currently on display in the *DLA Piper Series: This is Sculpture*

## Work in Focus: *Monument to the Spaniards who died for France 1945-7*

This painting pays tribute to the Spanish exiles who gave their lives for the liberation of France. Half a million Republicans who fled to France from Franco's Spain joined the French Resistance to avoid being sent to German labour camps and to escape persecution.

Although Picasso avoided direct involvement with the Resistance, he allowed Spanish exiles to meet in his studio. He also generously funded the Spanish Communist party and donated paintings to be sold in support of the Republican troops. Two of his nephews had been interned in Spanish camps and it was through his intervention that they and other Spaniards were able to acquire papers to remain in France.

Picasso refused to adopt French nationality even though the country was his home for most of his life. He endured the annual hassle of renewing residency documents. 'I am Spanish', he declared, 'I have the papers to prove it'. He vowed not to return to Spain until democracy had been restored. *Guernica*, painted for the Spanish people also remained in exile (temporarily housed at MOMA New York) until Franco's regime was over.



Pablo Picasso, *Monument to the Spaniards who died for France, 1945-7* © Succession Picasso/DACS 2010, Courtesy Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia

Picasso's monument is a compilation of military, classical and funerary motifs. The bust appears less classical and heroic than misshapen. The lettering on the commemorative plaque is scrawled rather than skilfully carved in stone.

The painting is full of symbolism: the bust is shaped like a waning moon, suggestive of death; its eyes are outlined with the Christian fish symbol representing sacrifice; the skull and crossbones is used traditionally to mark the entrance of Spanish graveyards, but has also been adapted by paramilitary groups, pirates and rebels.

According to Francoise Gilot in her memoirs of this period when she lived with Picasso, the artist kept a bugle in his studio which he regularly sounded in an act of defiance over the streets of occupied Paris.

Painted in the sombre palette Picasso favoured for his war paintings, the greys and browns are relieved by a burst of red, white and blue of the tricolour and the gold of the bugle. This blast of colour seems at odds with the serious tone of the subject matter – almost mocking the hollow gesture of the memorial to men who gave their lives in the fight against fascism and because their own options were limited.

**Discover** memorials in your area. Take photographs of them and compare them to Picasso's painting. What or who do they commemorate? Who commissioned and paid for them? What are they made from?

**Design** your own memorial for a specific event or person of your choice. You could construct this as a sculpture or a collage.

**Compare** this painting with *Still life with Guitar* 1942 which is also in the exhibition and is a similar tribute to Picasso's countrymen who died in conflict in Europe. Discuss the objects depicted in these compositions. What connections could they have with the soldiers who fought for Spain and France?

## Work in Focus: *The Charnel House*

An image of this work can be found at:

[http://www.moma.org/collection/object.php?object\\_id=78752](http://www.moma.org/collection/object.php?object_id=78752)

This painting, of heroic scale was conceived in early 1945 as Picasso's second major political work. With *Guernica* 1937, it frames the artist's war years.

There are similarities between these paintings in their linear style, muted colour scheme and subject matter. Like *Guernica*, *The Charnel House* addresses the effect of conflict on civilians. The restricted palette of black and white echoes, perhaps, the news coverage of the war in print and on film. Dora Maar claims this painting was inspired by a news reel they had watched together which reported the murder of a Spanish Republican family in their kitchen, though the Holocaust was also an obvious source for this work.

This painting does not address one particular incident, nor is blame specifically directed at the Nazis. As with *Guernica* the meaning of the painting was removed from its original context to become representative of all conflict and its victims, regardless of time or place.

The composition is dominated by a pyramid formed by the tangled bodies of a family – mother, father and child. Behind them, a table with elements of a still life set the scene as domestic, with abstract drifting forms in the right hand corner which are suggestive of fumes or smoke. In his sketchbooks of this period, studies for *The Charnel House* are accompanied by drawings of burning logs. Comparisons can be made between the compact, rigid piles of wood in these sketches and the corpses of his painting. The abstract suggestions of smoke or gas can also be traced to these studies. Picasso would have been aware by this point of the horrors of the Holocaust. The first revelations about the gas chambers at Auschwitz reached Paris during the summer of 1943 and photographs of piled human bodies were published in journals from September 1943.

Picasso's preliminary sketches for *The Charnel House* feature symbols of patriotism, sacrifice and rebirth such as a crowing cock and a landscape in the background. In his final work, however, the artist removed all signs of hope bar the clenched, militant fist of the trussed male corpse. The daily revelations of further Nazi atrocities may have convinced Picasso to pare his imagery down to reflect the sombre reality of the horror that had taken place.

As with *Guernica*, Picasso the stages of the painting's development were recorded, this time by the photographs taken by his cataloguer Zervos. The work was signed and dated 1945, although Picasso never considered it to be 'finished' in the traditional sense. He deliberately left areas of the canvas bare. He declared:

*'What does it mean: not finished, not resolved,  
as they all say...Finished! Only death finishes*

*something. It was only after the painters had killed the finish, that they discovered behind it that the moment where everything is said on a canvas and when it is necessary that nothing more be added'.*

**Look** at the different stages of the painting recorded by the photographs of Zervos and discuss the changes made by Picasso.

**Compare** *The Charnel House* with *Guernica*. Discuss similarities and differences in representation of these paintings based on real life events.

**Goya** has been cited as a great influence on Picasso's painting. Compare *The Charnel House* with *Ravages of War*, from *Disasters of War*, plate 30, 1810-14 by Goya.

**Look** at other examples of war art, eg in comics, film, literature, poetry

**Write** an account of what you think may have taken place in this painting. This could take the form of a news report or a poem.

## Still Life

The French phrase for still life is *nature morte* and for Picasso, the association of objects and death in his compositions is often more than a mere play on words. He said to his friend and biographer Pierre Daix of one of his paintings: 'You see even casseroles can scream'.

In art history, *vanitas* is a symbolic form of art, originating in Northern Europe during the 16<sup>th</sup> century and particularly associated with the still life genre. The word is latin for 'emptiness' and alludes to the meaningless of life and transience of worldly pleasures. The skull is a common *vanitas* symbol adopted by Picasso for his art of the war period and after. It is also associated with the theme of *momento mori*, which dates back to antiquity. Meaning 'remember you must die' it acts as a reminder of the inevitability of death. Picasso expressed his wartime anguish through images of animal and human skulls, sometimes covered in decaying flesh. The bull's skull had significance during the Spanish Civil War as a reference to his homeland with its tradition of bullfighting.

Picasso's still lifes often place these emblems of death alongside symbols of hope such as candles or plants. The book is a traditional *vanitas* symbol alluding to excessive pride through learning, however, Picasso includes motifs such as books, paintbrushes and palettes, to suggest perhaps that there is yet hope for civilisation. They may also allude to the important role of the writer and artist in times of conflict.

Besides using the skull of animals in his still life works, Picasso often included animals. Picasso's affinity with animals of all species is evident in their proliferation in his art. Wherever he lived, he surrounded himself with a menagerie which over the years included dogs, a monkey, a mouse which he tamed, various birds and an owl. Wild creatures were of particular interest to him. He was fascinated by the antics of feral cats and on evening walks he used to watch owls circling in search of prey. In late 1946 he was given an injured owl which he nursed and kept in his studio. This owl features in a number of Picasso's still life paintings of this period, including *Owl with Sea Urchins*, 1946. In this work he reduces the owl, a common symbol of death, to a compact shape that is reminiscent of a skull. It is perched on the back of a chair and looks as though it is ready to swoop down at the sea urchins on a plate below him. Picasso connects the owl to the still life with a long shadow, and this creates a double image. The composition can also be read as a skeletal figure offering the plate of seafood to the viewer – perhaps another reminder of the transience of life.

During the 1960s, Picasso created several still life works featuring the confrontation of a cat and lobster in a playful parody of artists such as Jan Van Kessel and Jean-Siméon Chardin who employed these creatures as *vanitas* symbols. In Picasso's paintings, however, the seafood is far from dead and his cats feral rather than domestic. Their engagement in conflict and the date of his works suggests that Picasso was making reference to the hostilities between East and West during the Cuban missile Crisis which began in October 1962.

(See: *Cat and Lobster* 1962; *Lobster and Cat* 1965)

**Research** symbolism in art (eg goat, dove, candle, apple, cat, butterfly, book) Make a list of the different objects and animals featured in Picasso's still life paintings and discuss whether the artist could have meant them to be symbolic. Do you think Picasso might have had his own meanings for these symbols?

**Create** your own still life with personal belongings – things that mean something to you. How could you use objects symbolically?

**Set up** a still life in the classroom and draw it over a number of sessions. Change the objects. Move their positions. Draw them from different viewpoints.

**Look** for examples of *vanitas* and *momento mori* in painting, sculpture, architecture and literature. You can find examples in graveyards, tombs, memorials (skeletons, reapers, candles, clocks etc); still life works by Chardin, Claesz, Van Kessel and Cézanne; poems such as Thomas Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*; the Mexican *Day of the Dead* celebrations etc

## Communism

*These terrible years of oppression have taught me that I must fight, not only with my art but with my person... While I wait for the day when Spain can once again receive me, the Communist party of France has opened its arms'. (Picasso, 1944)*



Pablo Picasso, *Dove* 1949, © Succession Picasso/DACS 2010

On October 4<sup>th</sup> 1944, six weeks after the Liberation of Paris and on the eve of his grand exhibition at the Salle d'Automne, Picasso announced that he had joined the French Communist Party.

During the war, French Communism had been seen as the only effective opponent of Fascism and many European intellectuals expressed their support for the party. They perhaps naively overlooked the atrocities committed by Stalin in Communist Russia and clung to the idealistic belief that Communism represented an end to oppression and the promise of peace and freedom.

Having the world famous artist Picasso as a member was a great coup for the party even if his art was at odds with the socialist realist style favoured for their official art. It was perhaps a concession on Picasso's part that the drawings he produced for the party were generally in a more naturalistic style.

Following the War, Picasso moved to the hill town of Vallauris where he turned his hands to the traditional crafts of ceramics and pottery. Communism glorified the simple strength and integrity of the working man and Picasso equated his own art with manual labour. His presence in the town helped to revive the local pottery industry by attracting artists and tourists to the area. He liked the idea that his pots could be bought as art objects, tourist souvenirs or functional household use.

Picasso also became interested in producing art for the people in the form of murals, public sculpture and the medium of lithography. Prints were historically a democratic art-form as theoretically they were available to a wider audience and were cheaper than paintings. In reality, most of Picasso's prints of this period were bought by art dealers for the local workers still found his images inaccessible – both financially and intellectually.

The lithograph, *Dove* 1949 was chosen for the poster of the Paris Peace Congress that year. It became the symbol of the Peace Congresses and was also adopted as an international Communist emblem. Doves and pigeons played a significant part in Picasso's life. As a child his father taught him to paint pigeons and later Matisse gave him some Milanese pigeons as a gift. Françoise Gilot described them: 'They had feathers right down to the ground covering their claws'. Besides keeping them as pets, he famously shared his studio with birds that flew in and out of the open window. Doves roosted in the trees and boxes outside his atelier in Cannes (see for example, *L'Atelier* 1957) and he often interrupted major works in order to sketch them.

In 1949, Louis Aragon visited Picasso's Paris studio to choose an image for the poster for the first World Peace Congress which was to be held in the city that year. He chose this image of the dove-like Milanese pigeon, recognising its simple power as a symbol of peace. He may also have chosen it for its relative realism and accessibility for those who did not approve of Picasso's more radical art.

Picasso made *Dove* 1949 in the studio of printmaker Fernand Mourlot. It was published in an edition of five artist's proofs and fifty signed and numbered prints. Mourlot called it 'one of the most beautiful lithographs ever achieved; the soft tones attained in the feathers...are absolutely remarkable'. The prints were sold to raise funds for the Communist Party.

Picasso's daughter was born the day before the *Congrès Mondial des Partisans de la Paix* in April 1949 and her name Paloma is the Spanish word for 'dove'.

**Research** the symbolism of the dove in art and religion

**Find** other examples of peace symbols.

**Look at** examples of doves in Picasso's art. Which do you think works best as a poster design? Why? He also made sculptures and ceramics of doves – find as many different examples as you can.

**Design** your own poster for world peace and invent your own symbols. Remember that posters should carry simple messages and should be eye-catching as they are used for mass communication.

## War and Peace

During the late 1940s and early 1950s, Picasso was actively involved in the communist-supported International Peace Movement and attended congresses in Poland, Italy and England. In 1950 he was awarded the Lenin Peace Prize, but his art was not generally approved by the Communist Party. Picasso avoided using overtly communist symbolism in his work and refused to work in the socialist realist style favoured by the party. He was criticised for not being obvious enough in his accusations of American aggression in paintings such as *Massacre in Korea 1951*, which depicted a group of naked women and children being fired at by a group of helmeted, but anonymous soldiers.

In 1950, Vaullaris' municipal council offered him a deconsecrated chapel to decorate as a Chapel of Peace. Between April and September 1952, Picasso worked on two monumental paintings with the subject of *War and Peace* on hardboard panels to be fitted into the curved barrel vault of its interior.

The *War* panel was designed for the right side of the chapel. It features the allegorical figure of Peace as a classical warrior brandishing a shield embossed with the dove emblem. He confronts a frenetic scene of destruction where a demonic figure in a chariot distributes over-sized insects from a basket. A sack of skulls is slung over his shoulder and he brandishes a weapon which drips blood. The imagery of War explicitly refers to America's alleged use of germ warfare in Korea which was exposed in the French journal, *L'Humanité* in 1952. The source for Picasso's deadly insects may have been the photographs which accompanied the article showing sensationally enlarged bugs. He used imagery that was accessible to the French communists even if he adhered to his non-socialist realist style for the paintings.

The companion panel, Peace reads like a frieze from left to right. Contrasting with the nightmarish *War*, it presents an idyllic scene with family groups, orange groves, dancing and music. His partner, Francoise Gilot, claimed that she inspired the central image of the ploughboy suggesting that: 'In peace time, everything is possible; a child could plough the sea'. Picasso conjured up a magical image by yoking the mythological horse, Pegasus to the farming equipment.

This harmonious scene has its origins in Picasso's *Joie de Vivre* 1946, which was itself influenced by Matisse's landscapes of pleasure. With its blue fields and mythological figures it could also represent the landscape of the imagination for Picasso felt strongly about protecting European culture. It is significant that the allegorical figure of Peace is armed not with a spear but with a giant paintbrush and the shield bearing Picasso's own dove emblem could be interpreted as his palette.

*War and Peace* was Picasso's last major political work, completed in 1952 and installed in the chapel in 1954. He donated the work to the French State which preserved the chapel as the National Picasso Museum.

The Tate exhibition, *Picasso: Peace and Freedom* features some of the preliminary works made by Picasso for the *War and Peace* panels:-

**War and Peace 1951** shows how the artist was thinking through the concepts of *War and Peace* and how he could represent them in his murals. Using pointed imagery, he shows War as an armoured vehicle with arms, legs and two skull-like faces: one grinning at the viewer and the other spitting fire in profile. The freedom fighter, half-man and half-dove, brandishes a shield with a human face. In the final version, he would be replaced by a classical warrior bearing the peace emblem of the dove on his shield.

**Owl of Death and Dancer 1951** features another hybrid creature as a sinister counterpart to the peace warrior. He is part human and part owl with devil's horns. He hovers menacingly over a ring of wildly animated dancers. Throughout Picasso's sketches, this figure of War undergoes numerous metamorphoses before finally appearing as a demon in a chariot. Two of the dancers would become part of the idyllic landscape in the *Peace* panel.

**Les Centaures 1946** shows a group of centaurs frolicking with doves. Being a combination of man and horse, these mythological creatures usually symbolise the struggle between civilisation and the dark unruly forces of nature. In this scene, Picasso suggests that they have been tamed. The scene is reminiscent of the later *Peace* mural which contains humans and imaginary creatures in a pastoral setting. In the final version, the centaurs were replaced by Pegasus the winged horse, who has also been restrained and harnessed to a plough

**Compare and contrast** the *War and Peace* paintings. Discuss the imagery used by Picasso, the moods of each painting and how he has created them (colour, line, composition etc). Can you see and similarities with any of his other works (eg *Guernica*, *Joie de Vivre*, *The Charnel House*)

**Create** your own modern day versions of *War and Peace* using collaged materials from newspapers and magazines. Make up your own allegorical figures.

**Discuss** what it is like to live in a war zone. Imagine you are living in a country at war. Write an imaginary account of a day in your life.

## Past Masters

From his childhood Picasso was an avid student of art history and throughout his career his work frequently referenced and alluded to past masters. During the final phase of his life he created his own variations of famous paintings, as though pitting himself against the artists he revered and taking them on in his own terms. He also chose masterpieces that he felt had relevance to current affairs, which he could use as vehicles for expressing his personal feelings.

His obsession with masters from the past during this period was possibly due to Picasso's acute awareness that his long career was nearing its end. Perhaps he felt compelled to review his achievements and assess his own position amongst the great historical figures. During his later years, he worked his way through famous works by Velázquez, Manet, David, Van Gogh, Degas, Rembrandt and other artists with similar fervour.

Picasso had been familiar with *Las Meninas* by Velázquez since he visited the Prado Museum in Madrid where it is displayed with his father at the age of 14. His first encounter with this work came just a few months after the death of his younger sister who was only

seven years old when she died from diphtheria. There is little doubt that the young Spanish princess in this painting would have reminded him of the blonde Conchita.

62 years later, Picasso worked obsessively on his own versions of the Velázquez painting. Over a period of four months he produced forty-five paintings ranging from small studies of individuals or groups of figures to full scale copies of the original.

The first painting of the series is the largest. Picasso changes the layout of the painting from portrait to landscape. The figure of the artist on the left of the scene is much larger in Picasso's version. He towers above the royal group. Picasso gives him his customary double profile so that he simultaneously looks at his canvas and engages with the viewer. He also has two palettes and numerous brushes which creates a sense of fervent activity. Perhaps by exaggerating the scale of the artist, Picasso is mocking his vanity and self-importance in depicting himself as part of the royal scene. Note that the king and queen, whose portraits are being painted, are reflected in the window behind the artist.

The Princess and her retinue are reduced to simple, childlike representations. As a Republican, Picasso did not approve of royalty or their excesses and so he turns the servants into cruel caricatures. He also replaced the royal mastiff of the original painting with his own comical dachshund, Lump.

**Compare** Picasso's *Las Meninas* with the original painting by Velazquez. Discuss the changes Picasso made in his version

**Distribute** postcards of famous paintings amongst your class and invite them to make their own variations of the works (eg in collage, as a line drawing or cartoon, as a sculpture with cut-out figures etc)

**Research** Picasso's artistic influences. Pupils could take a different artist each and trace the influence throughout Picasso's career (eg Cézanne, Degas, Goya, Chardin, Matisse, Van Gogh, Manet, Velazquez, Delacroix etc) or work in groups to put together a presentation on their findings for the rest of the class

## More Gallery Activities

**Choose one work** to study in depth. Begin by writing words that come to mind to describe the work. Make detailed drawings, colour notes and work out the materials Picasso has used and how he has used them in order to create the work. Read any information you can find on the gallery about this work. Ask an Information Assistant for help if you need assistance or advice on where to find out more.

**Use Picasso's quotes** from this pack and find works in the exhibition that they could be describing. Why does the particular quote seem to match the work? What is the subject of the work? How has Picasso represented the subject – talk about colour, line, imagery, composition, etc.

You could repeat this exercise using pictures of objects in place of quotes such as bones, flower, newspaper, baby, sun, table, paintbrush, classical bust etc. Find a work that your object could relate to and discuss why.

**Explore** the range of materials used by Picasso in his paintings, sculptures, drawings, prints etc. How many different materials can you find? Discuss how these works were made.

**Compare** *The Studio Window* 1945 with *The Studio* 1955 and *The Studio (the Pigeons)* 1957. The first was painted in wartime Paris and the other two in the peaceful Mediterranean.

**Discuss** the mood created by the artist in each image and how he has achieved this. **Imagine** that you are in one of these rooms – describe the rest of the interior and its contents. Do you think that the rooms reflect the conditions that Picasso experienced while painting them? Do any of the other works in the exhibition tell you anything about the artist's life and surroundings?

**Compile** a Picasso bestiary by finding different creatures that feature in his works. Discuss their roles in his works – what do they symbolise? You could make drawings on the gallery and translate them into paintings or sculptures in your classroom. You could add paintings of your own pets created in the style of Picasso.

## Further Resources

Cowling, Elizabeth (et al), *Picasso Challenging the Past*, National Gallery, 2009

Cowling, Elizabeth and Golding, John, *Picasso: Sculptor/Painter*, Tate Gallery 1994

Daix, Pierre, *Picasso: Art and Life*, Thames and Hudson, 1993

Lake, Carlton and Gilot, Françoise, *Life with Picasso*, Virago Press (new edition) 1990

Martin, Russell, *Picasso's War*, Scribner, 2003

Morris, Lynda and Grunenberg, Christoph, *Picasso: Peace and Freedom*, Tate Publishing, 2010

Nash, Stephen A, *Picasso and the War Years 1937-45*, Thames and Hudson, 1998

Utley, GR, *Pablo Picasso: The Communist Years*, Yale University Press, 2000

## Online Resources :

<http://www.tate.org.uk/collection/>

<http://picasso.tamu.edu/>

<http://homepage.mac.com/dmhart/Teaching/Picasso2.html>

<http://www.culture24.org.uk/teachers/visits+%2526+outreach/art77167>

<http://odeo.com/episodes/1171339-Pablo-Picasso-Goat%E2%80%99s-Skull-Bottle-and-Candle-Annette-King>

<http://www.artchive.com/artchive/P/picasso.html>

[http://uk.maison-de-la-france.com/uk/presspacks/2009/riviera/Picasso\\_Riviera.pdf](http://uk.maison-de-la-france.com/uk/presspacks/2009/riviera/Picasso_Riviera.pdf)

Julie Robson 2010

Visiting *Picasso: Peace and Freedom* at Tate Liverpool

- The exhibition runs from until 30 August 2010.
- Tate Liverpool's opening hours are Tuesday to Sunday 10.00 to 17.50.
- To book your school or college visit to see *Picasso: Peace and Freedom*, please call one of our visitor services team on 0151 702 7400.
- Catalogue to the exhibition available in the Tate Shop.

Tate Liverpool has a dedicated schools team that offers a range of services to support schools and teachers, including programmed and bespoke training. If you would like any more information about our programmes or an informal chat about bespoke training please contact Deborah Riding, Programme Manager: Schools and Families on 0151 702 7452, or Abigail Christenson, Learning Curator on 0151 702 7457 or e-mail [abigail.christenson@tate.org.uk](mailto:abigail.christenson@tate.org.uk). And to subscribe to our free monthly Schools and Teachers e-bulletins, please visit: <http://www.tate.org.uk/bulletins/>