

In the spotlight

Investigating with an interactive whiteboard

The interactive whiteboard's spotlight tool enables you to focus attention on one portion of the screen at a time. It is particularly effective when used with pictures, as it allows you to move the focus very rapidly from one part of the image to another, varying the size of the 'light beam' so that you control how much of the wider context is visible.



The shape and transparency options allow further control over what is revealed – and hidden.

Used in conjunction with the magnifier and other whiteboard tools, the spotlight offers a powerful way of exploring images and stimulating discussion. With the appropriate image filling the board, students can concentrate on whatever details you – and they – are interested in. You might, as in examples 1 & 2, want to use an illustration that relates to literature or use a photograph as a stimulus for writing or discussion. You might even want to demonstrate how selective we often are when responding to images. Annotations contributed by the class build up a series of notes that can either be left on screen whilst discussion and/or writing continues, or saved to a file that all students can then use as the basis of further activities.

Examples 1 & 2 use one of the most popular pictures at the Tate Britain gallery, 'Ophelia' by Millais. Visiting school groups are often shown the painting and invited to suggest what is happening, exploring possible stories behind the painting, looking at the details and being invited to write their responses. Although there's no substitute for standing in front of the original work, the whiteboard permits you to do all sorts of things that are most definitely not allowed in a gallery, such as hide parts of the picture, write on it and even cut it up – and the large screen is a much better focus for discussion than photocopies on a worksheet.

This lesson activity should be used in conjunction with the SMART Notebook™ file 'In the Spotlight.notebook'.

 Notes

Suggested activity outline

- Begin with the image hidden, so that you can control what the class sees. Move the 'spotlight' over a feature – a face perhaps, or part of the background. What can you see? What's going on? What can we deduce the picture is about? What sort of clues are we looking for?
- Move around the picture to explore a number of significant features. You may decide to hold back some important details until you reveal the whole image, so that there's an element of surprise.
- Enlarge the size of the spotlight beam to reveal more of the picture – so the face can be shown against the background, or other figures seen. What does this additional information reveal?
- Show the whole picture. Are there any surprises? Do they now change their minds about what is going on?
- Use the whiteboard pens or the keyboard to record comments, both those made earlier and the ideas the class now want to add. They may want to speculate about the story now that they have all the information in front of them. Notes can be moved around to the appropriate part of the picture.
- If you wish to use the picture as a stimulus for creative writing but want the class to develop the outline further, you could ask them to work on their own copies of the image loaded from the network (perhaps in groups), typing short comments using a word processor or other software. After feedback in which students display their outlines on the whiteboard, discuss some effective structures for their writing.
- If the objective is to explore a literary text, this may be the point to introduce the text or at least an extract. You can either read from books or worksheets or display extracts on screen. Have students place words or phrases from the text beside appropriate parts of the image. Later you might have students read out the text whilst group members use the spotlight or other tools to focus attention on particular parts of the image.
- If desired, you can save the complete page with image and annotation to print out for students who need guidance or who were away.

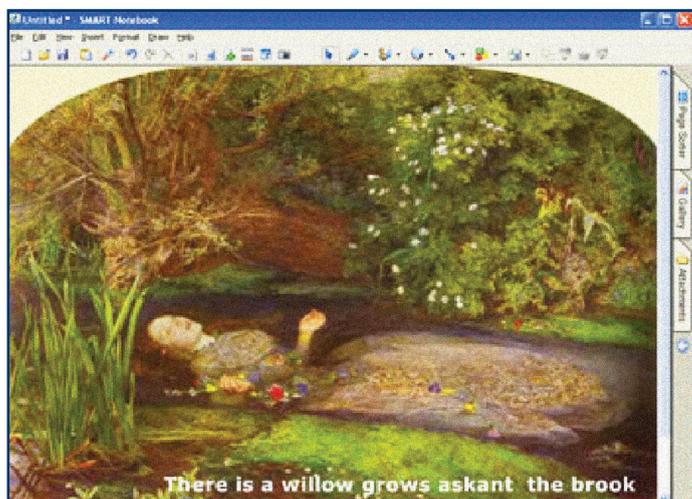
Notes

SMART specific

The 'spotlight' tool can be found in the Control Centre – you may find it helpful to add it to your floating toolbar for ease of access.

Click on the menu button to control the shape and transparency – set transparency to a low amount and the person using the spotlight can see enough of the underlying image to help them uncover just what's desired, without those further away seeing the covered portion. Experiment.

The spotlight takes over the whole screen, not just the SMART Notebook page. This is an asset until you want to control an application whilst the screen is hidden. Just click in the middle of the spotlight beam and you can control whatever is in the beam – so you can, for example, press page up or down to move to a new Notebook page. Clicking in the beam also brings your Windows taskbar to the front.

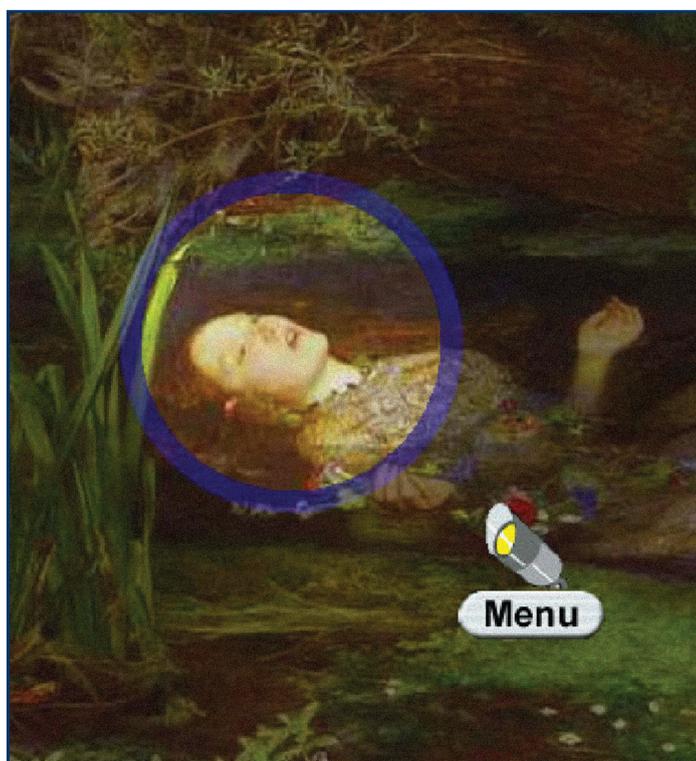


Example 1

You can use the spotlight to explore any document – such as an image on a web page – but you'll find it easier if you have pasted a copy of the image into a Notebook page as you can then annotate it too (example 1).

Try the magnifier as well, particularly when exploring the complete image – it allows students to see details more clearly (example 2).

You could also use the spotlight to uncover text. However the smallest 'beam' is still rather large for this purpose, so you'd need to prepare large and well spaced text. It might be better to use other tools to hide and reveal text, such as the screen blind.



Example 2

Extension activities

After reading a text associated with an image, have students present commentaries based on what they have learnt and on the picture, using the spotlight and/or other tools. For example, they could take the role of a gallery guide talking about the picture and how well it matches the text, or a detective reporting what they have discovered about the death of the victim.

Find a number of images associated with a text – for example paintings or film stills of the witches in Macbeth. Students can then make presentations on these, spotlighting key features for comparison and contrast.



Resources

Remember that images found on the Internet are often quite small so that they load rapidly - enlarging them produces poor quality display. Look for large images – try CDs, use your own photographs or scan in suitable pictures.

Here are a few sites worth visiting:

Tate Online has good education resources on Millais' Ophelia, complete with an extract from Hamlet and interesting information about the composition of the picture: www.tate.org.uk/ophelia

Tennyson's The Lady of Shalott is another poem that appealed to Victorian artists. There's a good section, with a range of paintings, on Ed Friedlander's site: www.pathguy.com/shalott.htm. One advantage of this site is that clicking on a picture loads a high quality version – much better to use on screen.

The Blake Archive - www.blakearchive.org - is a great source for high-quality images of Blake's engravings, when you can show the poems as he engraved them by hand.



Notes

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the UK exclusive
distributor, in
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Authors:
Trevor Millum
Chris Warren
Tom Rank