

Create: an animated film

Transcript

What's the true value of arts and culture?

Explore perspectives on how they enrich our lives, help us learn, keep us healthy and support the nation.

Meet Ted.

Ted was born in Camberwell a long time ago. He worked for a brewery, and then a pub. His wife Doris died seven years ago. Ted has a broken heart. He's always loved music. Frank Sinatra, Matt Monro, songs for romantics.

Once he was persuaded to sing on a cruise ship. He shook with fright and tried to flee. But the band leader brought him back to sing "I just can't stop loving you" for a standing ovation.

At the Albany, he keeps his passion alive. He sung in an opera written by members. And he's written a love song for Doris.

Intense focus on an activity takes us to a different place. Illuminating our inner lives, and enriching our emotional worlds.

64 per cent of adults in England took part in arts activities at least three or more times during 2012/13. 2/3 of adults think that engaging with arts and culture can improve peoples' overall sense of well-being. Here in the UK, we're seen as the fourth best nation out of 50, according to the Nation Brands Index, for being an interesting and exciting place for contemporary culture such as music, films, art and literature. It's a strong part of our national identity.

Most adults think that the country's arts and culture are the best in the world. Three in five adults say that having more arts and culture in their local area, would make it a better place to live. And 65 per cent think the arts have a role in bringing communities closer together. Art holds the key to understanding our human existence in all its messy glory.

Education is preparation for life. Good exam results are important and so is the development of the whole child. Arts and culture is the essential bedrock of both. Taking part in arts and culture activities increases skills such as confidence, teamwork and communication. Skills that are invaluable to academic performance, the world of work, and our personal lives. Everyone should enjoy the thrill of creativity. Whether that's learning to appreciate music, enjoying a stage performance or expressing themselves through performance, writing, or art.

Hollie McNish, slam poet and internet sensation, takes no prisoners when it comes to the politics of her poetry. She now regularly takes her work into schools with her company Page to Performance. She believes spoken word could be integrated into every subject.

Hollie always wrote. Even her diaries were in poetry from the age of about seven. She knows this is really geeky, but she used to write little poems about physics during her GCSEs. She thinks the way we split up arts and science in schools is not realistic. There's no reason that someone who's good at maths wouldn't be creative. There's no reason not to combine the two. The arts could be there in every subject.

Hollie got an A* in her GCSE Science and believes that it was all down to her habit of writing poems about equations. Hollie now works in schools, working with the children that are often deemed "unreachable". After working with them for just a day many of the children go home and start writing.

One of the children in a workshop started to write about her mum getting beaten up. About how the two of them tried to leave the house, but her dad hit them both. She articulated this in an amazing poem about a dragon living in their house. Hollie says, if you've got the skills to go and write about it, it won't stop these things from happening but it can help to get these things off your chest. She believes it isn't just about having an "arts week". This stuff should be in classrooms every day.

78 per cent of children who took part in the first year of the daily music programme In Harmony, showed improved performance across all subjects.

78 per cent of adults agree that skills learned through arts and culture are useful in other parts of life. Children from low-income families who take part in arts activities at school are three times more likely to get a degree.

A true arts-based education will make children wiser and more reflective and academic learning more productive and harmonious. It will equip our children with a wide range of skills they need to flourish in the modern workplace. And it will turn out young men and women who will be happier humans.

Art centres and cultural organisations like libraries, galleries and museums are great public spaces where people gather to look at the world differently. They're not just treasure houses, they're places for encounters. They let people learn together and solve problems. They let people follow their curiosity and learn in a way that's informal, engaging and fun.

People will always need to be resilient, creative, resourceful and empathetic. Exactly the kind of attributes, places like museums, galleries and libraries have always supported.

Neil Gaiman is an author. He writes fiction, graphic novels, plays and films. He describes himself as "a feral child who was raised in libraries". He first started going to libraries when he was about three or four. When he was old enough he persuaded his parents to take him to the library and just leave him there. He felt like he'd been given the keys to the kingdom.

In the beginning, there was the children's library. Then he began to venture out to the main library where the librarians huddled together around an ancient wooden desk. To Neil, they were the library police.

He was terrified of them but he discovered this series of books Alfred Hitchcock Presents. He couldn't work out how to find more of them, so he had to be brave and speak to the tall librarian with the dark beard. The librarian, like most librarians, loved being a librarian. Helping a child with an interest. Going out of his way to recommend things and get books in, no matter how obscure. He found those books and ordered them for Neil. He made Neil ridiculously happy.

But that was an age ago. Before the internet, before the information glut. Imagine you were a child now. What would draw you into a library or indeed any other cultural space? Anybody online can find a book they know they want to read. But it's so much harder to find a book you didn't know you wanted to read.

Physical spaces have real people. They're curating things. Sharing knowledge and ideas. Physical spaces let you explore, to pick something up because the cover looks interesting. Pick something up because it's sitting next to the book that you meant to pick up.

Reading a book puts you inside somebody else's head. You see the world through somebody else's eyes. There's nothing quite like the glorious serendipity of discovering something you didn't know you wanted to read.

Participation in the arts contributes to community cohesion, reduces social exclusion and isolation, and makes communities feel safer and stronger for people of all ages.

60 per cent agree that having more arts and culture in their area would make it a better place to live. In a society where we live longer, often more fragmented lives, arts and culture can be a vital constant bringing us together and contributing to our well-being. From stimulating innovation and creative thinking, to active and positive intervention.

Arts and culture is providing new solutions to society's challenges. With busy theatres, concert halls, galleries and museums come people spending money in local shops, cafés and restaurants. Visitors create thriving local economies. This all adds up to just over 110,000 people

employed directly in the arts and culture sector. And around 260,000 employed indirectly. But the economic impact goes beyond that.

The arts and culture sector is the laboratory of the creative industries where talent can experiment and ideas can come to fruition. Stories are ingrained in our DNA. They make us laugh or cry. They make us think and learn. They bring us together and keep our emotions alive. Understanding the importance of narrative is one of the most vital things arts and culture can teach us. Whatever age we are.

There's no good reason for fitness to be boring when you can be the hero of your own adventure. *Zombies! Run!* is a smartphone fitness game co-created by prize-winning novelist Naomi Alderman and games company Six to Start. In it, you're one of five, one of a few to survive a zombie apocalypse. Each run you take is a mission with a unique audio drama. It also weaves in music from your phone. It's like being the hero of your own film. The game now has 160 missions which is over a year of running, even if you're out three times a week. *Zombies! Run!* wouldn't be possible without the blend of arts and technology, of story-writing and games design.

Can an arts and culture centre, can a venue kick start an area through regeneration? Launched in 2000, the Lowry has directly influenced £1,400,000,000 regeneration of Salford Quays, now the new home to the BBC, which has seen the former docks regenerated into one of Greater Manchester's strongest growing areas.

The Lowry adds £26,000,000 to the national economy each year. People do not see culture as an optional extra in their lives, to be cut when times are hard. 76 per cent agree, that arts and cultural organisations attract tourists to this country. 55 per cent agree, that this country's arts and culture are among the best in the world. And for every £1 of salary paid by the arts and culture industry, an additional £2.01 of income is generated in the wider economy. The arts and culture sector is vital. It's the ideas workshop and testing ground for the fastest growing part of the UK economy. It plays a significant role in creating jobs and supporting the growth of local economies.

It enriches our lives in every sense.