

Creativity and Wellbeing Inspired by Lorina



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A resource pack introducing Lorina Bulwer, her embroidered samplers and activities inspired by her work.

Creativity and Wellbeing

Introduction to Lorina Bulwer

Lorina Bulwer was an inmate in the Female Lunatic Ward of the Great Yarmouth Union Workhouse in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. During Lorina's time at the workhouse, around fifteen years, she created embroidered letters. The letters were made by creating a patchwork of fabric to stitch the text on to. We call them samplers because they are similar to the needlework samplers made to teach embroidery to young girls. Lorina was provided with the materials to do this, including fabric and thread. On her samplers Lorina mainly stitches words, all in capital letters with no punctuation. They read as a constant stream of thought, sometimes angry, sometimes funny. They provide us with an insight into her mind as well as the world of the workhouse.



Through our research and the details in her samplers, we know a lot about Lorina Bulwer. She was born in 1838 in Beccles, Suffolk. As a child she was taught needlecraft and then moved with her mother to Great Yarmouth to help her run a boarding house until her mother died in 1893.

Sampler: "I MISS LORINA BULWER LIVED AT BECCLES SUFFOLK WAS EDUCATED THERE UNTIL ABOUT SEVENTEEN YEARS OF AGE THEN CAME TO GT YARMOUTH NORFOLK TO LIVE"

In 1901 Lorina appears on the census in the workhouse. Workhouses were established in 1834 as a place where the poor could go to receive food, shelter and clothing. However, the conditions were made tough to deter people from coming in and many people did fear entering a workhouse. This fear is depicted in Charles Dickens' *'Oliver Twist'* and in Berlie Doherty's *'Street Child'*.

We think Lorina may have been in there due to her brother not being able to take care of her. She spent the rest of her life in the workhouse, until she died in 1912 from influenza.

During this time she created her samplers. At this time The Brabazon Scheme was running, which encouraged female workhouse inmates to use handicrafts as occupational therapy. Perhaps this is why Lorina was allowed to stitch the samplers. It is unlikely that they expected her to stitch such angry and emotional letters, but maybe they allowed her to continue because it helped her to express herself.

Lorina's samplers are long, made up of short sections, with the longest around 310cm. They are unique and a rare example of something created by a workhouse inmate, as well as a personal piece of writing from a woman of that time.

We have created this resource pack to provide activities inspired by Lorina and her work, which we hope you will enjoy.

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Free Writing: A Constant Stream of Thought

In her samplers Lorina writes in a constant stream of thought. She doesn't include punctuation and always writes in capital letters. This makes her writing feel urgent.



'I MISS LORINA BULWER HAVE BEEN TO SANDRINGHAM NORFOLK AND ADMIRED THE GATES AT THE ENTRANCE OF THE LIMETREE WALK I SEE THE HUNTSMAN DRESSED IN SCARLET COAT WHITE BREECHES WHITE TOP BOOTS HIGH BLACK SILK HAT SILVER BULLION CORD ROUND THE RIM ALSO A CORD ROUND THE HAT A WHITE LEATHER BELT ROUND HIS WAIST I HEARD THE HORN I ALSO SEE A LITTLE CHILD ABOUT ...'

Lorina's samplers were created by joining together scraps of fabric into a patchwork. She made the sampler in sections and then stitched the text onto the patchwork. The sections were made in stages and then added on as Lorina wanted to continue expressing her thoughts.



Activity – Free Writing

Free writing is when you write continuously for a set time or word count. Free writing is a good way of expressing yourself quickly and allowing your mind to be creative and generate ideas.

For this activity the set time is 100 seconds, or the set word count is 100 words (around seven lines). You can choose either. You can follow Lorina's inspiration further and write in capital letters with no punctuation. You may prefer to stitch your writing and there is a guide at the end of this pack to stitching in capital letters.

Lorina used the following words often in her samplers and you could use them to begin your piece.

FAMILY, TRICK, LESSONS, MONEY, SCHOOL

Choose a word, or one of your own. Then take a pen or pencil and paper and begin. Don't stop until you have reached your time limit or word count and then see what you have written.

To consider: Did your writing surprise you? How do you feel after completing your writing? If you wrote in capital letters with no punctuation does this change the feel of your writing?

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Visualising a Character: Who Was She?

In her samplers Lorina writes a lot about herself as well as other people around her. She provides details about them, including her thoughts and opinions of them.



'WAS A CARPENTER THE WOMAN ANNA MARIA AFTERWARDS M YOUNG WENT TO JOHN LANGHAM'S LONDON IN THE YEAR 1851 TO THE EXHIBITION HYDE PARK SHE WENT FROM CHIPPENHAM STAYED THERE ONE WEEK E. BULWER E – KNOW THIS HOUSE IS FULL OF NORWICH TRAMPS POCKTHORPE CASTLE DITCHES AND ARE PLACED IN THE ROWS FOR A CERTAIN TIME THEN BROUGHT INTO THIS'

Unfortunately, we have yet to discover an image of Lorina Bulwer herself. However, we do have this image of female inmates from Leeds Workhouse during the same period to give an impression of what women in the workhouse did look like.



Activity - Visualise a Character

Visualising a character develops our imagination and reminds us of all the different elements that make up one person, from their appearance to their personality.

As we don't have a picture of Lorina we want you to visualise her. Start by what she may look like e.g.

How tall is she? How long is her hair? What colour are her eyes? Where does she place her hands?

Then develop her character. If you prefer you could pick one of the women in the picture to focus on for this part – e.g.

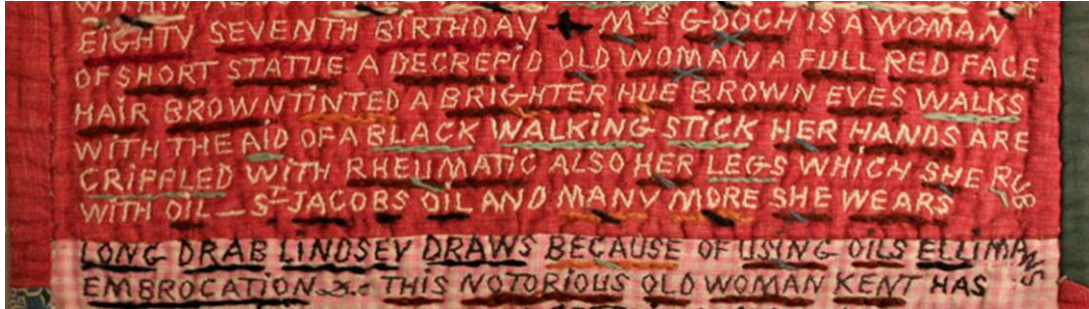
What is her favourite food? What makes her laugh? How does she laugh? What does she dream about? What makes her sad? What makes her angry? Is she quiet? Are her nails bitten? Does she scratch her hair? What accent does she have?

To consider: is there something else you would like to know about your character? Did you base it on someone you knew? Would you like to meet this character?

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Exaggeration: the Amazing Inventive Activity

When Lorina writes about other people she emphasises their traits to create a very clear picture of what she thinks about them.



‘EIGHTY SEVENTH BIRTHDAY MRS GOOCH IS A WOMAN OF SHORT STATURE A DECREPID OLD WOMAN A FULL RED FACE HAIR BROWN TINTED A BRIGHTER HUE BROWN EYES WALKS WITH THE AID OF A BLACK WALKING STICK AND HER HANDS ARE CRIPPLED WITH RHEUMATIC ALSO HER LEGS WHICH SHE RUBS WITH OIL ST JACOBS OIL AND MANY MORE SHE WEARS LONG DRAB LINDSEY DRAWS BECAUSE OF USING OILS ELLIMANS EMBROCATION THIS NOTORIOUS OLD WOMAN KENT’

Lorina uses hyperbole, or exaggeration, to draw out details of these people. She uses a mixture of **adjectives** e.g. brighter, decrepid, black, **verbs** e.g. rub, wears and **nouns** e.g. woman, oil, to really bring this description alive. This can be seen in the following section and you may like to pick out the adjectives, verbs and nouns used here.

‘OLD MAD MOLLY HAWES WHO WAS TAKEN TO COLNEY HATCH ASYLUM IN A TINKERS CART STRAPPED IN SHE LOOKED AS IF THE DEVIL HAS CHASED HER THREE TIMES THROUGH THE FLAMES OF HELL FIRE AND TURNED OUT THIS HIDEOUS WILD BROWN EYED OLD WOMAN’

Activity – Exaggeration

Through exaggerating descriptions, we can release our emotions about that subject. It also provides us with an opportunity to creative in the way we use language.

Lorina used exaggeration about both things she liked and disliked, so you can choose to focus on either.

Positive Exaggeration

Choose five qualities that you like about yourself or someone else. e.g. FRIENDLY

Then use an adjective, verb or noun to exaggerate it once. E.g. SMILING

Then do it again. E.g. KIND

E.g. KIND SMILING FRIENDLY.

Negative Exaggeration

Choose five things that you dislike. E.g. MUD

Then use an adjective, verb or noun to exaggerate it once e.g. MESSY

Then do it again. SLOW

E.g. SLOW MESSY MUD

To consider – if you did both did you find one easier than the other? What was your favourite description and why? How did the activity make you feel?

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Drabble: The 100 Word Challenge

Lorina spent many years in the workhouse and stitched her hatred and scorn for her situation. She did this in a short and clear way, making her thoughts plain.



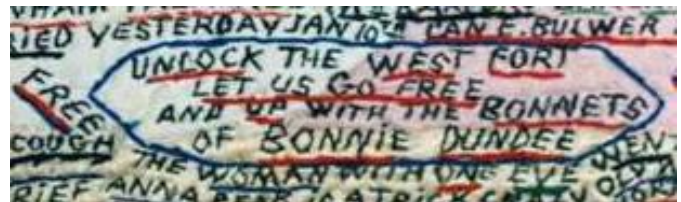
‘I HAVE BEEN EDUCATED AND PASSED THEIR DEGREES IN CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY NOTHING WHATVER TO DO WITH THESE NOTORIOUS WORKHOUSES CAMBRIDGESHIRE TRAMP TRIBE TRICK DENS THESE NOTORIOUS TRICK DENS WERE BUILT IN CAMBRIDGE CLOSE TO THE UNIVERSITY COLLEGES AND ARE TRUTHFULLY SPEAKING THE WIDE ROAD TO HELL DENS SERVING THE DEVIL INSTEAD OF GOD THE GENUINE CLERGYMEN ARE MY MEN’

Lorina’s samplers also tell us about the things she enjoyed.

She may have stitched about them to remember these enjoyments whilst being in a place she did not like.

One of her favourite activities is needlework, as shown in her samplers and the range of techniques she uses.

Lorina also enjoyed music, she talks about being taught to read music and includes lyrics to folk songs, such as Bonnie Dundee.



Activity – Drabble

Writing a drabble, which is a piece of fiction of no more than 100 words, helps you get straight to the heart and point of what you want to say. It encourages you to focus on what’s important and the core of your story.

Lorina wrote about situations and her interests in small sections, around 100 words a time. Within this limit she still provided detail, personal information and emotional connection.

Write or stitch a drabble based on one of these themes that Lorina also wrote about (at the end of this pack there is a guide to stitching in capital letters just as Lorina did)–

Your favourite activity ...

The most interesting person you know ...

A situation you would dislike ...

Something you would like to do in the future ...

To consider – did you want to continue after 100 words? What did you cut out to stay in the word count? Why did you choose to write about that?

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Intuitive Collaging: Your Personal Picture

Lorina was provided with the materials to create her samplers and the fabrics varied in colour and material. She mainly used the fabric to join the scraps into a patchwork so she could stitch her words directly onto it. But sometimes she used the fabric to create portraits of people and attached these on top. Her samplers then have a collage effect, with many different elements overlapping and building up her sampler.



Activity – Intuitive Collaging

A collage is a layered picture that is made up of many different elements to make a whole. When you create an intuitive collage, you are responding to colours and shapes that represent what you are feeling. This activity can be short or long, depending on how long you want to spend on it, but we recommend at least five minutes.

Lorina used collaging in her samplers as a practical solution to sometimes only having a small amount of fabric. But, she also used it to develop detail on people she described. To stitch these people must have taken time and allowed her to think about how she viewed and thought about them.

When creating a collage you will need some old materials to cut up, such as old magazines, leaflets or packaging, a background to stick them on and some glue. We want this intuitive collage to be inspired by what you respond to in your old materials – it could be an image you like or dislike, a colour you want to include, an interesting material.

Cut out or tear up what you want in your collage. Place these pieces on your background and when you are happy with how they look stick them in place. You can leave it there or come back to it to add more another time.

To consider – does your collage have a theme? What emotion do you feel when looking at your collage? Did you learn anything about yourself in this process?

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A Guide to Stitching in Capital Letters

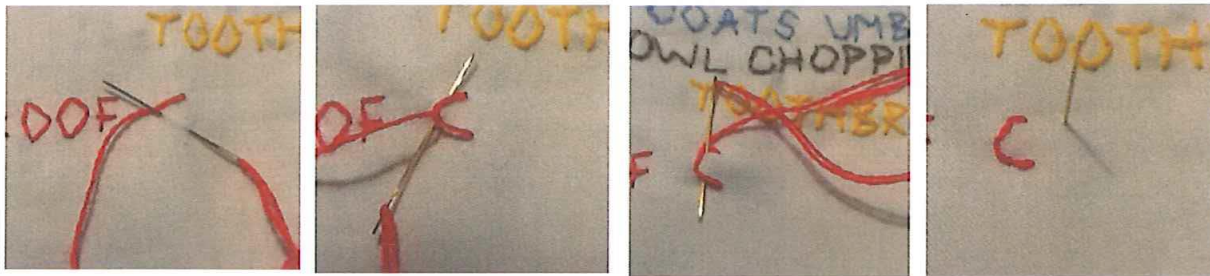
Stitch sequences for reference:

To stitch upper case letters push needle through all the layers of fabric. Upper case letters are faster to embroider than lower case as they are more angular, even the curved letters naturally become less serpentine when worked with the minimum of stitches and maximum speed.

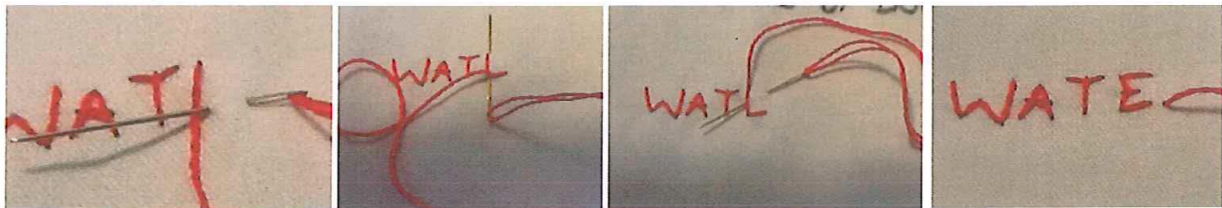
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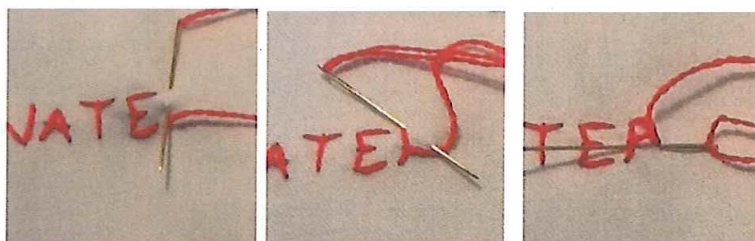
C & G



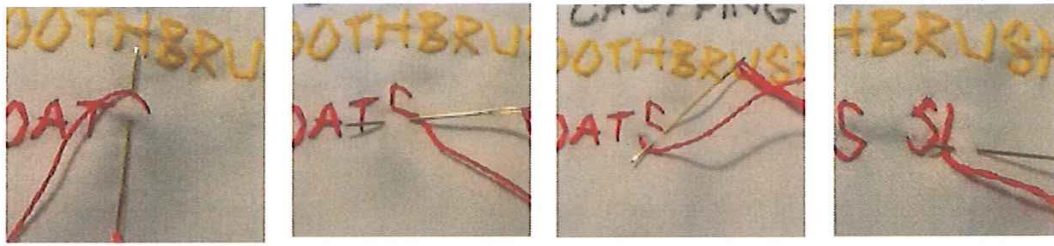
E & F



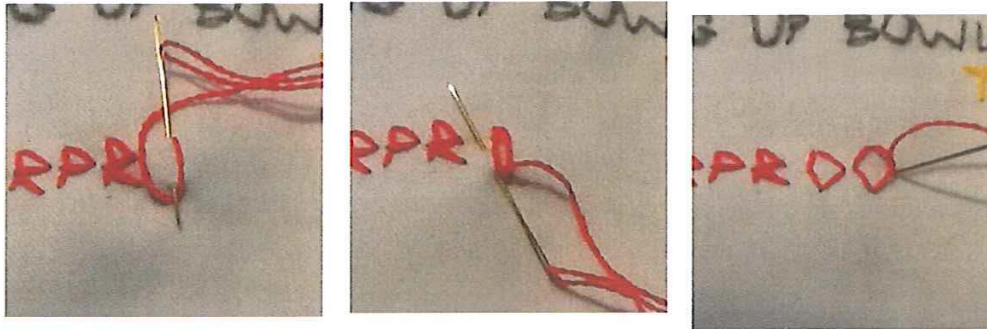
R, B & P



S



O



N

