This teaching and learning resource was developed to support the use of two books created by young people, *Grow Up Strong* and *The Real Us*, in the classroom. It is suitable for primary and post-primary levels. The resource was designed by a working group of teachers, STAR project Traveller and Roma Education Workers, alongside Kids' Own artists and writers, who came together to respond to these books made by young people and to consider how these books could be used in the classroom. The main focus of the resource is to develop cultural and intercultural understanding through a focus on creativity, art, and discussion, and above all, by listening to and responding to children and young people's voices and experiences.

Kids' Own Publishing Partnership offers a space for children and young people to express themselves through professional arts practice.

This project was developed in partnership with Cork Traveller Visibility Group and the Cork STAR (supporting Traveller and Roma) project.

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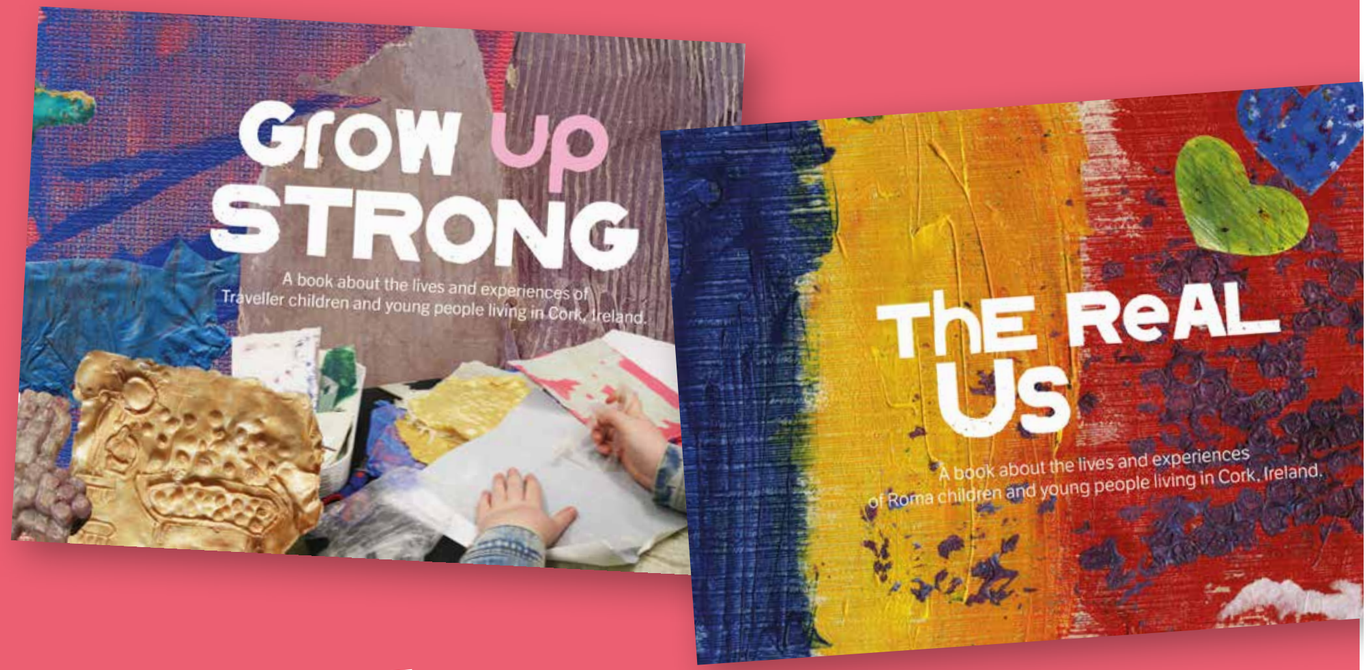
A teaching and learning resource for

The Real Us and *Grow Up Strong*

books created by Roma and Traveller children and young people, for children and young people



A teaching and learning resource for use in the classroom to accompany *The Real Us* and *Grow up Strong*, publications authored by Roma and Traveller children and young people, for children and young people.

kids' own
PUBLISHING PARTNERSHIP

About us

About Kids' Own

Kids' Own is a children's arts organisation and publishing house. We are Ireland's only dedicated publisher of books by children, for children. We foreground the child's voice by providing a space for connection, creativity and self-expression through professional arts and publishing. Our archive of books celebrates and charts the varied lived experiences of children all across Ireland, in an evolving multicultural landscape.

Our approach is strongly rooted in a rights-based framework. We support children's right to express their views in all matters affecting them; their right to freedom of expression; and their right to participate fully in cultural and artistic life, as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. We highly value artists, professional arts practice and children's free expression through publishing and the arts. We strive to elevate and give credence and visibility to all children's voices and artwork in order to champion their status as equal and active citizens within our society.

Our vision is for a society that recognises children as independent writers, thinkers and creators and that truly values the arts in the lives of all children.

Our mission is to create opportunities for children to collaborate with artists, and to publish and promote the artwork and insights that emerge from these encounters.

How we make our books

Every collaborative book project with children and/or young people is developed by providing a space where a group of children or young people can connect with an artist or writer on a regular basis through dialogue and artwork. We focus on making everyone feel safe and welcome and creating a positive, creative atmosphere.

Children and young people work collaboratively with a Kids' Own artist and writer. The context of the project can inform the conversations we have and the artwork we create. Over a period of several weeks, the group develops artwork and conversations evolve further. The book output is not the primary focus of the engagement, but in later sessions, the group may begin to think about what it could look like. Many of our books contain a page on "How we made this book" from the perspective of the participants.

About this project

In 2021 and 2022, Kids' Own developed and facilitated a publishing initiative that would allow Traveller and Roma children to be at the centre of the representation of their own identities, cultures and lived experiences, through engagement in a meaningful creative process with professional artists and writers. In collaboration with our partners, particularly Cork Traveller Visibility Group, and their Education Workers on the Cork STAR (Supporting Traveller and Roma) Project, Kids' Own artist Francesca Hutchinson and Kids' Own writer Danny Brennan facilitated an artistic process that developed over a 12 week period. As with all of Kids' Own's projects, the aim was to support the young people to share their lived experience, to have their voices heard, and to explore what matters to them and their families. The outcome of this arts-rich process is two new books *Grow Up Strong: A book about the lives and experiences of Traveller children and young people living in Cork* and *The Real Us: A book about the lives and experiences of Roma children and young people living in Cork*.

During the project, researchers Dr Tamsin Cavaliero and Dr Susan McDonnell from ATU, Sligo, spoke with the children and young people over the course of the project to explore the impact of this project on participants, with a focus on the arts and creativite work as a means of allowing children to express themselves and have their voices heard, from a rights-based perspective. To read this research report visit www.kidsown.ie or scan the QR code on page 44.

This teaching and learning resource to accompany the child-authored books *Grow Up Strong* and *The Real Us* was also developed as part of this project. Kids' Own worked with the following working group: Katelyn O′ Shea, Kay Kelleher, Jim O′ Connell, Aideen Ahern, Bríd Kelleher, Kids' Own Associate Writer Mary Branley, Associate Artist Francesca Hutchinson, artist Polly Minett, STAR Traveller Education Worker Rachel Coffey, and Roma Education Worker Gina Miyagawa. Rachel and Gina were key to this project; we could not have made the books with the children, or developed this resource without them. Creative sessions were central to the process of making this resource. From this creative perspective, the group looked closely at the child-authored books, which were the result of the children and young people's own creative process. Cultural and intercultural understanding was the main focus of the development of this resource. Gina, Rachel and Francesca, from Roma and Traveller communities, spoke about their lives and breakthroughs, and each noted how teachers had made a difference in their experience and in their continued education. The selected themes were chosen over a number of days by the group of teachers, writers, artists and Traveller and Roma Education Workers looking at the child-authored books, in order to ensure the voice of the child remained central. Themes chosen were: Communication, Culture, What′s Important To Us, Dreams and Ambitions, Discrimination and Fairness, and Intercultural Awareness.

Special thanks to Francesca Hutchinson, who developed the arts activites in this resource.

Kids' Own is indebted to a focus group of teachers who shared their professional views and observations on a draft of this learning resource. The focus group included the following teachers who are teaching in a variety of different schools in Dublin and who shared their expertise generously with Kids' Own: Kevin Kealy, Niall Keane, and Stephen Jackson.

About the Cork STAR Pilot Project

The Cork STAR Pilot Project, Supporting Traveller and Roma in Education, is a pilot program that was developed under the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017. There are four pilots across the country. The STAR pilot project has a number of targets to address education outcomes for young Roma and Travellers in the education system. This pilot will run to 2024.

Message to Teachers

Rachel Coffey: Traveller Education Worker, STAR project, Cork City.

All of us who work with the STAR project understand and see the enormous amount of work and dedication that goes into teaching and the importance of your role as a teacher in the classroom setting. Your contact and daily engagement with all young people is paramount and I wholeheartedly respect your tremendous effort to support all our young people, including Travellers. We understand the topics that may arise can be difficult, however together with your young people, you can create awareness and explore these uneasy topics together in a space that will generate conversations collected in the classroom setting.

The books *Grow Up Strong* and *The Real Us* were developed over a long period of time with children and young people and the young people's commitment was amazing to see. This learning resource is here so it can guide and complement the great work being carried out already within your school. Having this resource welcomed and used is a clear indication of the openness and respect for young Travellers and our culture. When teachers share a knowledge of communities it gives young Travellers a sense of belonging in the classroom.

Having that powerful relationship with young people can really shape their educational experiences and may keep our young people in school and all the way to third level education.

We hope this resource is welcomed within your services and can be welcomed into your school education curriculum with an open mind and have an acceptance to the differences young people face.

Gina Miyagawa: Roma Education Worker, STAR Project, Cork City

Teachers are our everyday heroes. How many of us can think of at least one or more teachers that impacted us and maybe even inspired us to be and do the thing that we are doing as our passion today. As Joyce Meyer suggests "Teachers can change lives with the right mix of chalk and challenges." Teachers do so much more than plan fun educational activities that keep our children occupied each day and teach them what they need to know to pass tests. They have the power to inspire and change the course of the lives they impact for so much good!

It isn't just about learning reading, writing and maths at school. Instead, formal education is about gaining the knowledge and the skills needed to become a better person and create a better society to live in. A proper education sets people up to grow personally, professionally, and socially. It can awaken joy, curiosity, and a deep desire to solve problems and help others. Plus, teaching a student can inspire them to pursue leadership roles and positively impact those around them.

Educating the next generation helps fight back against ignorance. It helps people learn about the community at large and develop informed opinions on world issues. With educated opinions, we can support each other and make decisions that help establish a positive change in our communities.

I sincerely hope this learning will become an excellent tool and will complement the amazing work you are already doing with our children.

Foreword
Dr Bernadette Ní Áingléis

As a teacher/teacher educator over the years, I was always delighted to find a resource that would deepen my own understandings of 'good teaching' and 'good learning'. A resource rich in child-centred pedagogies with new ways to think about approaching a topic was particularly welcome. Even more welcome was a resource that got me thinking differently and more expansively. I am therefore very pleased to write the Foreword for this publication; a learning/teaching resource that scaffolds teachers in how to use Kids' Own books, *Grow Up Strong* and *The Real Us* creatively in a teaching/learning context. The resource is designed in a wonderfully supportive way so that all children and young people come to know, value and respect the richness of cultural diversity in Traveller and Roma lives and communities. I warmly welcome it.

I welcome the learning/teaching resource for many reasons. Firstly, it was designed by teachers for teachers in collaboration with an artist, writer, and Traveller and Roma Education staff who had worked with the children and young people that authored *Grow Up Strong* and *The Real Us.* Collectively, they brought the best of their professionalism, their pedagogic knowledge, creative experiences and wisdom to bear on the resource to ensure that the content would be meaningful and helpful to teachers. The resource straddles primary and post-primary with pointers towards additional curricular resources that help foster respect for cultural diversity and challenge racism.

Secondly, the resource offers teachers a range of valuable insights and creative themed activities around intercultural education and specifically in exploring creatively Traveller and Roma culture and identity, values and cherished traditions. The thematic approach allows a teacher to choose from a range of themes that include communication, culture, dreams and ambitions, discrimination and fairness, and intercultural awareness.

The resource is not in any way prescriptive and takes great care not to detract from the professional autonomy and decision-making of the teacher. How a teacher uses the resource is entirely a matter for the teacher. Indeed, it is the kind of resource that lends itself to dipping in and out of it with the teacher choosing to focus on a particular aspect that is most relevant to the children and young people in the classroom at a particular time. The resource is therefore strong in its flexibility and user-friendliness in a classroom context.

Thirdly, I welcome this creative learning/teaching resource most especially as it holds the young learner at the heart of the creative process and therefore is in line with curricular policy, pedagogical research, and a children's rights approach to educational provision in Ireland. The various activities in the resource embed the foundational tenets of our national participation strategy for children and young people into classroom life; they provide space to enable learner voice and opportunities for listeners to develop a repertoire of responses that are integral to good learning, good teaching. The voices of Traveller and Roma children and young people in *Grow up Strong* and *The Real Us* reflect the lived experiences of these young learners at a moment in time and they merit good listening. Taking a quiet moment to reflect on their narratives and their artwork is a good starting point.

I congratulate all involved in the creation, design and publication of this learning/teaching resource. This resource enables 'good teaching', 'good learning'. It is hugely welcome and will make a difference not alone in an intercultural education context but more broadly across the curriculum. In the process, it affirms and confirms excellence in teaching and in classrooms across the country.

How to use this resource

We hope you have enjoyed hearing from young Traveller and Roma children in the books *Grow Up Strong* and *The Real Us*. These books were developed by primary school students in fifth and sixth class and post-primary school students in first and second year. This resource is designed with these age groups in mind, but can be adapted for all ages.

These books have many uses across the primary school curriculum including English (as reading material, for language development, and for creative writing activities), Art, Drama, and SPHE, particularly when dealing with the themes of being, belonging, ethnic and cultural diversity, and inclusivity. Post-primary: the books and this resource have particular relevance for Visual Art curriculum and CSPE curriculum. Please see the Further Resources section on page 40 for links to the Junior Cycle Visual Art curriculum.

At the time of publication, the Traveller History and Culture in Education Bill is progressing through Dáil Éireann. We hope that this Bill will bring about the curriculum change needed so that Traveller children and young people can see themselves and their community's history and culture reflected in the materials they encounter in school.

In the meantime, teachers at primary and post-primary level have the opportunity to be an important precursor to this curriculum change. We hope that the books *Grow Up Strong* and *The Real Us*, along with this resource, will support teachers in their explorations of Traveller culture, and of Roma culture. Rachel Coffey, Traveller Education Worker on the STAR project, is keen to point out that these resources are not just for Traveller and Roma children and young people; they are also an important opportunity to deepen our understanding of our own culture and of interculturalism, and an opportunity for all young people to reflect with each other in a safe manner, especially with other minoritised communities, and for classes where there is no diversity or different communities present.

We hope that this resource will provide a starting point for using *Grow Up Strong* and *The Real Us* in your classroom. Above all, we hope that reading and listening to the children's voices in these books will guide other children and young people in respectful, empathetic intercultural exploration, and in articulating their own perspectives and experiences.

I like experimenting to learn – *Grow Up Strong*, page 11

The Creative Process

In Kids' Own's work with children, we think of creativity as an original, authentic response to something new (for example, something in a Kids' Own workshop) that can be verbal, visual, or written. In the work we do, the creative process is central in ensuring that children's voices are heard in a meaningful way. The creative process will be different for everyone, and it will look different in every classroom. You do not need to have expertise in art, but creating the conditions for creative exploration is key.

Making space for open-ended enquiry and activity and allowing sufficient time for this is important. Communication and collaboration is also key to this process. Kids' Own Associate Writer Mary Branley writes "There are many definitions of art, but in Kids' Own we agree that art is communication, art is dialogue, and we value the process of working together and dropping into the unknown together. Children discover who they are in making art, and delving into different aspects of their experience."

In Kids' Own's work, participation in a meaningful creative process is an important way of providing the time, space, and conditions to facilitate children's reflection and the articulation of their voices. Project artist Francesca Hutchinson described her artistic approach on this project as providing children with an opportunity to discover what they want to say with their voice. Engaging in an artistic process provides children with an opportunity to explore and experiment with new ideas and materials, to move into a new space, where new thought processes and reflections can emerge.

Francesca says: "Experimentation and discovery is a means of finding a sense of identity and self-expression.
The freedom to experiment and make discoveries in art without constraints, allows children a space to flourish and find themselves."

The Creative Process

Francesca's perspective:
One feeling during making the book that resonated with most children was the excitement of using unconventional materials, and seeing how far they could push the abilities of these materials. It's a euphoric feeling to make art and not have a desired outcome, to live in the moment and embrace every experiment as a new discovery or a new way of seeing the world. It was during these moments that I really saw the children flourish, they were in a safe space wherein they understood they no longer had to ask me 'what do you mean I am allowed to do what I want?'

Sometimes the most effective and easiest way to allow a child to experience play and become themselves is when you create a safe space without constraints, success criteria and expectations.

The children used lots of materials during the making of this book from found materials to unconventional materials such as wax, latex, clay and PVA. Although some of these materials may not be accessible in some schools, a material that the children loved, and one that is relatively inexpensive in bulk is PVA Glue.

Below and opposite are creative activities that project participants took part in as they made their books.

Please see page 40 for Junior Cycle Visual Art Curriculum Link.

Activity title: PVA experiments

Materials needed:
PVA glue, acrylic paint

What is needed:
Palette, palette knife, hair dryer, sheets of acetate (thick plastic)

What to do:
Mix PVA glue with your desired acrylic paint choice.
Spread the PVA glue evenly onto a sheet of acetate.
Note: it's best to use thin layers of PVA glue as this will ensure a quicker drying time.

Use a hairdryer and rotate the heat evenly across the surface. Drying time is 10 - 15 minutes using a hairdryer, and approximately 40 minutes to 1 hour air drying. However, this estimation is dependent on the quantity of PVA glue.
Note: avoid placing the hairdryer too near the acetate as this will result in the plastic melting.

Once the PVA glue is dried, it should look transparent.
You can then peel the PVA glue from the acetate.

Activity title: Texture discoveries
Get the children to experiment with mark making on the PVA whilst it is drying. Mark making is another form of drawing and means of self-expression.

Textures and surfaces: it will be interesting to get the children to experiment with pouring and peeling PVA glue onto non-porous surfaces, for example bubble wrap, or textured glass etc. A surface like corrugated cardboard etc., will only soak up the PVA glue resulting in inability to peel the PVA. Casting PVA onto nonporous materials and taking the time to consider, decipher, and infer their qualities is an exciting and interesting way to look at representations of surfaces and the non-traditional ways of mark making.

The tactile representations of porous surfaces can be explored through creating rubbings of surfaces using pencils and crayons (term also known as frottage).

Suggestions: Students could compare and contrast the visual representations of texture with implied representations.

Communication

The themes on the following pages were devised by the working group of teachers, artists, and educators who contributed to the development of the resource. Approaching the books through this thematic focus can be a good place to start and in linking the content to the curriculum. Before moving onto thematic explorations, the working group felt that establishing the importance of appropriate and respectful communication when using these books in the classroom was really important.

The simple activity below focuses on creating a community agreement in the classroom. This is a good way to introduce and begin talking about and using the books *Grow Up Strong* and *The Real Us*. The teacher can introduce the books and how they were made (please see page 2-4 of this resource). The teacher can also introduce the question of why it's important we listen to children and young people, and why we need to be respectful when discussing our culture, identities, and experiences. Sensitive and respectful language is key.

Learning objectives:

(Teachers can tailor these to create their own learning outcomes)

- Students recognise the importance of respectful communication in the context of exploring and discussing our own culture and other people's culture.
- Students can discuss the importance of being aware of stereotypes when discussing our own and other cultures.
- Through discussing the books *Grow Up Strong* and *The Real Us* and having the opportunity to create their own community agreement, students can consider the importance of listening to children and young people's voices.

What is needed:

Materials: pen/pencils/chalk, large sheet of paper (that can be displayed for class to see).

Visuals: select pages from *Grow up Strong* and *The Real Us* (to be selected by teacher).

Vocabulary: teacher may want to consider in advance how they can model respectful conversation and communication and how they might respond to challenging issues that could arise.

Reflection and further learning:

How did the students feel about creating this agreement together? How will they incorporate the agreement the next time you come back to explore the books *Grow Up Strong* and *The Real Us*?

Rachel's perspective:*

A student can write up the agreement as everyone discusses and agrees on what they will include. Teachers, Special Needs Assistants, and students should all sign the agreement. It might be a good idea to revisit the community agreement each week to discuss if there's anything anyone wants to change or add to the agreement. It can also be an opportunity to talk about any parts of the agreement that students feel might have been breached or any feelings that were hurt, and address this through the agreement. This is an opportunity for everyone to consider:

What do I need to be able to participate well in a group setting?

What do I need to be able to learn in a group/space?

Some further tips

- Make sure everyone is able to contribute
- Only one person speaks at a time
- Respect each other's opinions even / especially if you don't agree with them
- Participate and have fun!
- Confidentiality
- Be conscious of time - help stick to it
- When you speak check your motivations

*Rachel was Traveller Education worker on the Cork STAR project.

Project artist Francesca's perspective on communication and the creative process:

Communication is an overarching theme that resonates throughout both books, so it is only fitting that the creative processes should be interpreted through the lens of communication. Communication can be interpreted in many ways but in this instance, communication can be understood as how I communicated with the children as an artist, how the children communicated through art, and how we gradually created a space where we could communicate openly, honestly, and trustfully.

I have devised this creative process into stages: how do I communicate; what do I want to communicate; and why do I want to communicate. My approach to the creative activities and strategies was influenced heavily by the processes that the children undertook for the making of this book. I will clearly identify how each of these stages and processes complement the themes that emerged in the creation of this resource and are part of my own artistic practice.

How do I communicate?

Process: Exploration and discovery with materials, mediums, and processes.

Activity: Sketchbooks, PVA experiments, Texture discoveries

Theme: Art as a means to create meaning and find voice.

What do I want to communicate?

Process: Reflection; give the child time to understand what they want to explore through themes.

Activity: Sketchbook work; collage, drawings

Theme: Themes explore meaning and purpose; Culture, celebrations, language, family and traditions, what's important to us.

Why do I want to communicate?

Process: Reviewing and creating. Reviewing based on exploration and discovery; successes and weaknesses, trails and errors. And reflection to inform creating. What am I trying to say, how can I say it?

Activity: Creating Identity Objects and Identity Boxes.

Theme: Influenced by all themes; creating is inspired by motivation and meaning making. This can only be articulated and expressed through art when a child has enhanced their sense of voice. This is why it is vital to reflect on work made and core ideas previously expressed.

Themes that could assist further with the sense of motivation and meaning making are: dreams and ambitions, discrimination and fairness, intercultural awareness.

Creative Activity: Sketchbooks/Sketchpads
What do I want to communicate?

Suggestion
I would highly recommend you encourage the child to use a mix of different types of text such as key words, phrases and sentences as well as visuals, such as sketches and collages.

Sustained exploration can be developed into sketchbooks. The child should be given the freedom to explore their thoughts and ideas that emerge throughout the themes within the book. This reflection will allow the child to fully comprehend what it is that they want to communicate. The development of sketchbooks is a continual process that could be implemented in response to all themes throughout this resource.

Note: a variety of different types of papers will add interest and uniqueness to the work the children are creating. For example, sugar paper, tracing paper, newspaper, newsprint, blotting paper, crêpe paper, cotton paper and gloss coated paper can be used, to name a few. Essentially, creative and unique sketchbooks can be created using recycled materials that are all around us too. (Not just standard white printer paper or card!)

Sketchbooks can be created using the template opposite.

Fig 1: The children made an accordion style sketchbook using heavy duty tracing paper

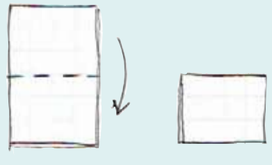
The 8 page folded book

Book-making in the classroom can also provide an excellent starting point for note-taking, journaling and documenting conversations and research. The 8-page fold has provided a timeless method for supporting children to create their own instant book. Why not try this yourself? All you need is a piece of paper and a pair of scissors! (And it's fun!)

You will need: A3 paper (or other sizes) and scissors, table (optional)
Please see page 40 for Junior Cycle Visual Art Curriculum Link

1. Sheet

2. Fold sheet in half



3. Fold it in half again

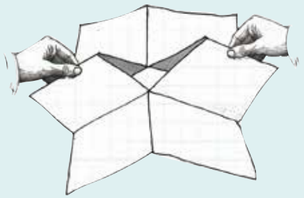
4. And once more

5.

6.

7.

5. Open the sheet and you will see it is now divided into 8 parts.
6. Fold it like you did for the first fold
7. Cut the paper (from the folded edge) as far as the middle



8. Pick the sheet up like in the picture above (opening the gap in the centre of the page)

9.

10.

9. Lift it until the hole is at the top and the pages fold down into a + shape.
10. Lay it flat on the table and give it a press.

11.

11. You can now close all the pages together and you have your book!

Culture

In *Grow Up Strong* and *The Real Us*, the young people speak about culture in different ways. Listening closely to the voices of the young people in these books, the working group of teachers who helped create this resource identified the following themes under the broader heading of culture: celebrations; family and traditions; language; where I live, and what's important to us.

Discussions about culture can be facilitated under any or all of these themes; there are some starting points for discussion when using *Grow Up Strong* and *The Real Us* in class outlined in this section. These discussion-based activities alongside reading the books together can be used as the basis of a lesson; they could also be used as a way to build up to the creative activity on page 27. These discussion-based and creative activities could be spread over a number of weeks in order to give time and space to these topics and to the creative process. This is often how Kids' Own's process of working with children and young people to create books together works too.

You will find more resources about Traveller and Roma culture at the end of this booklet in the Further Resources section. However, we really encourage you to learn alongside the children in your classroom when you are learning about other cultures; you do not need to be an expert on different cultures. An attitude of being open to learning and to listening to those from different communities is more important than expert knowledge. From Kids' Own's perspective, we recommend that you start by closely reading the accompanying books, *Grow Up Strong* and *The Real Us*. The approach we take when creating these books is always to start with the children's voices and experiences: what they know about their own culture and their own community. This can be brought into the classroom by reading the words of other children in these books together and giving space for the children in your classroom to respond.

Research perspective

An important point in relation to culture and identity is noted in the research accompanying this project (Cavaliero and McDonnell): "Education Workers supporting this project recognised that Traveller young people do not think about their culture in the same way that earlier generations did. It is important to remember that identities, as well as being a source of pride and connection to community, are fluid, emerging and intersectional (Valentine, 2007)". In conversations, Traveller Education Worker Rachel noted that Traveller children and young people have a wide range of different circumstances and experiences, but are negatively affected by media representations and perceptions of others in the media and on social media, which often seeks to negatively stereotype Travellers.

Learning objectives:

Culture > Family, traditions, and celebrations

(Teachers can tailor these to create their own learning outcomes)

- Students recognise they are all part of a culture, through what they learn from their family and traditions, and the celebrations they take part in.
- Students identify that there are many shared elements between cultures, as well as differences.
- Students have discussions about key elements of culture, for example, that it is learned and passed on through our families and communities.

What is needed:

Materials: *Grow Up Strong* and *The Real Us*

Visuals: select pages from Grow Up Strong and The Real Us (see quotes on pages 18 and 19 for suggestions relating to family, traditions, and celebrations).

Vocabulary: culture, traditions, celebrations, family.

Process:

Verbal – discussion.

As a starting point for discussing culture, start by thinking about what do we understand about Irish culture. Try questions like: What do we understand by Irish culture? Can you give some examples? Responses might include references to the Irish language, dancing, music, GAA etc.

Celebrations can be a good way of starting conversations about culture in a gentle way. Questions about what festivals or other days of importance we celebrate could be a useful way of starting discussions. Responses might include: St Patrick's Day, St Brigid's Day, Halloween, as well as other shared holidays like Christmas, Easter, and any others.

Culture is also passed down through our families and traditions. The importance of family and extended family for Traveller and Roma children and young people is also apparent throughout the books and in the quotes on the following pages.

The children in your class might talk about the times when grandparents, parents, and children get together – for meals, or travelling together, for celebrations, weddings, baptisms, funerals etc.

Other questions could include:

What happens when everyone is together? Is there food or music? Does your family have any traditions? Do your parents tell you about how they grew up? Do your grandparents tell you about when they were young?

Discussion could then return to *The Real Us* and *Grow Up Strong* (particularly quotations from pages highlighted on the following pages).

Students could be asked questions like:

- Do you share any of the celebrations in the book? What celebrations are different to yours?
- Discussions on families, traditions, and celebrations are good ways of making everyone aware of their own culture, and that everyone is part of culture.

Follow-up activity:

Activities to support this discussion and learning could include asking children to talk with their parents/grandparents/their adults at home about the celebrations and traditions they had when they were younger and coming back to the classroom with a photo, object, or story.

Reflection and further learning

Did this activity provide an opportunity for students, and teacher, to reflect on how significant culture is in everyday life?

Traditions
Inspiration from *The Real Us*

I know a tradition, we put candles out on Easter on the bridge of the rocks on the side of the footpath. – page 18

My mum and dad put stuff in our shoes for Christmas. Our Christmas is on a different day. – page 23

If it's a cousin's birthday, Christmas or New Year, we gather all together. A lot of food on the table, songs, dancing. I always dance with people. It's Romanian dancing. I learned from my aunties. My granny always says we two sisters are like my aunties who taught us to dance. Art and dancing makes you happy when you are sad. – page 26

We get an earlier Christmas. On the 6th December and the 30th December we have Christmas and we have New Year on the 1st of January... They all gather around in one house. You go to individual houses and go from house to house during Christmas and New Year. We bring fireworks and we celebrate birthdays and New Year that way. – page 32

Our Families
Inspiration from *Grow Up Strong*

Our Mum teaches us a lot about respect, you can't judge people, and about how they grew up. She teaches us to have confidence in ourselves. She teaches us to grow up strong, even if people are talking behind your back and to keep out of fights. – page 25

I was off paintballing with a load of my cousins this week, 10 of us; they are all Burkes from my father's side of the family. It was my cousin's birthday. They came from Cobh, Midleton, and the city. My cousins taught me lots of things, they taught me to climb trees and box. – page 30

My Auntie is my best friend. We talk. I help her out with the kids. – page 18

I'm a bit nervous about going to secondary, but I'm going with my cousins. My mum and my aunts and my nanny went there, but I looking forward to making new friends. – page 17

Culture and Language
Further discussion points and activities

Language is part of culture and an essential part of our identities. The children's statements on language (opposite) could form the basis of discussions on languages, linguistic diversity, but also discriminatory words and terms.

There is language diversity and a multilingual atmosphere in many classrooms now.

This diversity can be a good starting point for discussion.

Rachel's Perspective
Cant words are still often used among family and friends. Lots of settled children use words like "shades" and "beoir" and that's a positive. Sometimes these words can be thought of as slang and it's important to create awareness that these words are part of the Cant language.

Talking points and activities:
The class community agreement (page 12) could be translated into different languages, representative of those spoken in the classroom, or into Irish. Parents may be able to help with this translation and it may be a good way to involve parents in children's learning about culture.

The class group could choose words related to our different cultures to illustrate and include translations for. These could be made into posters or postcards. An example of this can be seen in Kids' Own's book *Can't Lose Cant* (please see Further Resources section for details).

Cant is the language of Irish Travellers and is an important aspect of Traveller culture for many Travellers.

Culture and Language
Inspiration from *Grow Up Strong*

I did a podcast on the Cant language with the STAR project and Music Generation about the Travelling Community.
– page 9, *Grow Up Strong* *(see further resources section)*

I know Cant words and I just use them when I'm talking to my friends.
– page 18, *Grow Up Strong*

Cant is important for us, because we are Travellers and Cant is the Travellers' language. We know a few words already, beoir, lakin, grad, feen, sublic.
– page 16, *Grow Up Strong*

Culture and Language
Inspiration from *The Real Us*

There are many different types of Romani: 63 dialects. Each word has so many different versions. So many ways to say it in both Romanian and Roma languages. – page 17, *The Real Us*

Roma comes from the word Romm, which means man/people. Gypsy was used as a slur against our people. It is a derogatory word.
– page 34, *The Real Us*

Romanes/Romani and Romanian are two different languages. We speak both Romanian and Romanes language.
– page 34, *The Real Us*

Culture
Where I Live

The dwellings we live in are also culturally specific; so are the ways we might organise and lay out the spaces we live in.

Talking points and activities:
Traveller Education Worker Rachel suggests that the teacher could begin by asking students to describe what a house is to them, and to their family, or to their heritage.

The teacher should write down the different contributions for everyone to see, and bring the discussion around to show that the contributions might be different, but the themes are all the same, and that these are part of what makes a home.

Further discussion points could include:

- What kinds of different dwellings are there?
- Who do you live with?
- Do you travel to visit your relations or go on holiday?

Rachel's perspective
Being a Traveller is not just about where you live; it's about your ethnicity. Not every Traveller lives on a halting site or in difficult conditions. I would love if Travellers everywhere felt they could connect with the book *Grow Up Strong*.

There's a museum in Fitzgerald Park. There's a paddy wagon inside there and my grandfather helped build it. He and my grandmother are both dead. She passed away last year but he passed away a couple of years ago
– *Grow Up Strong*, p18

Everyone lives close to each other here and in Romania. Our house is three stories. The top story is used for storage. The middle story is just the bedrooms. Then a big table at the bottom. – *The Real Us*, p32

Culture
What's Important To Us

There are many ways of thinking about and describing culture. One way of thinking about culture is that it's a way groups of people communicate values and codes of behaviour that create identity and belonging.

Rachel's perspective
Some other things that are important to Travellers culturally are making paper roses, road bowling, fishing, baking/cooking "magic bread", religion (you can see this in the young people's artwork in *Grow Up Strong*, but it's not mentioned directly).

What's important to us
Inspiration from *The Real Us*

I love beauty, I wear makeup every day, we all love to dress up.
– page 14, *The Real Us*

I do not say I have religion, I have my faith and that's a whole different level.
– page 17, *The Real Us*

I love using my creativity and focusing on what to do.
– page 17, *The Real Us*

What's important to us
Inspiration from *Grow Up Strong*

I like Hip Hop dancing. I used to go to classes, but I stopped. We were training for ages. We did a dance in the Opera House. During lockdown we were so bored there was nothing to do. We used to play school with old school books.
– page 13, *Grow Up Strong*

Education is very important to me, and back in the day Travellers did not get an education and there's a lot of inequality. – page 18, *Grow Up Strong*

I like school. I like long division. I love doing art, making roses.
– page 14, *Grow Up Strong*

Activity
Identity objects: Amulets and Talismans

Learning objectives:
(Teachers can tailor these to create their own learning outcomes)

- Understand what identity is and articulate parts of their identity.
- Interpret what parts of their identity are most important to them and translate this through constructing an amulet or talisman.
- Experiment with clay, found materials and household materials, and utilise these to create their amulet or talisman.

What is needed:
Materials: Household recyclable materials and/or air-drying clay.
Vocabulary: Scissors, tape, glue gun, flexible wire, rolling pin or clay tools/ found materials see below.

Note: the materials and apparatus are dependent on the approach to creating the identity objects; approach one or approach two.

Paint palette, palette knives, paint brushes.

Process
Stage 1.
Prior to the activity it would be useful to have a group discussion on:

1. What is identity?
2. What are the things that might define your identity?
3. Objects that hold meaning and identity; amulets and talisman.
4. What is an amulet? Provide examples.
5. What is a talisman? Provide examples.
6. What are the similarities and differences between amulets and talismans?
7. Identity object worksheet (please see page 29); the question prompts on this sheet will assist the children by defining the details of their amulet or talisman

Stage 2:
Once the students have identified the objects they would like to make, get them to articulate how they will make the objects. You can create a vocabulary word chart of all the techniques and processes the students might undertake. This will be beneficial for later in the making stage when you can prompt children to a specific technique if necessary.

Ensure the child has the drawing of their identity objects open and in front of them to use as a reference for the making stage. Please see page 40 for Junior Cycle Visual Art Curriculum Link.

Activity
Identity objects; Amulets and Talismans

Approach one:

If using household materials and found materials:
Household materials are a great way to actively practice sustainable art, by repurposing and reusing common materials to create beautiful works of art.

What is around the classroom, in bins or around the school that can be used? What recyclable materials can the children bring in to create their objects?

Note: it would be good to have a selection of materials the children can use as material and idea prompts, and then encourage the children to bring in their own materials.

Ask students to identify the shapes of their object, and how they can transform these into forms. This will make it less overwhelming to begin the making process.

For example, what are the biggest shapes in your object? Are they organic or geometric shapes? What materials would suit those best? For example, for geometric shapes; cardboard, paper and any material that can be bent to have a defined point would be useful for this shape.

For organic shapes, any material that is mouldable would be suitable such as newspaper and light plastic would be useful for this.

Students should start by making whatever the biggest shapes of the object are first.

Repeat this questioning process for each shape and form of the students work if necessary.

Approach two

If you are using clay:
Sometimes it is not possible to use clay for various reasons. However, clay offers therapeutic qualities that other materials cannot offer. Therefore, if possible, I would highly recommend using clay.

The students should still follow the question prompts as outlined above as this is still applicable to clay. However, as air-drying clay is porous and can become brittle over time, it is essential the children use an armature underneath the clay.

An armature is essentially a skeleton made from wire. So, if the object is a cross you would bend strips of wire in a cross section. The armature depends on the shape of the object you are creating, clay will then be placed over the armature.

Note: cover the table in plastic wrap to avoid the clay sticking to it.

Give each student a lump of clay, allow them some time to get used to the material, get them to engage in all the senses. The student will then use their hands to sculpt and mould their identity objects.

Before the making, get the students to refer back their drawings and ask prompts such as: "How are you going to create the shape? What technique are you going to use to mould those two pieces of clay together?"

The children can make finer details and designs on their objects by using clay tools.

Note: As an artist who uses clay frequently in my practice, I think found materials like skewers, pasta shells, forks, and lollypop sticks are great alternatives to clay tools.

Additional: use colour (paint) to add finer detail and enhance features of identity objects.

Identity Object Worksheet

Name

What do you want your object to do? For example, will it bring good luck, bring good health, bring less worries, bring happiness? OR Do you want it to get rid of something? Do you want it to get rid of illness, get rid of evil?

How do you want your object to look? Draw a picture of how you imagine it.

Will it be decorated? What will it be decorated with?

What colour will it be?

What size will it be?

Will you wear it? Or will you keep it somewhere?

What will your object be called?

Dreams & Ambitions

All children and young people have high expectations of their futures. We love hearing about what children and young people want for their futures and this is often a feature of Kids' Own books. It also points to what is important in children's lives now, as the statements on the opposite page suggest .

Learning objectives:

(Teachers can tailor these to create their own learning outcomes)

- Students discuss their dreams and ambitions and how they might be realised.
- Students consider the challenges some young people might face when trying to fulfil their dreams and ambitions.
- Students develop confidence in themselves and their abilities through discussion and creative activity that validates their ambition and interests.

What is needed:

Materials: A3 paper, pencils/pens, a range of art materials to be used freely as part of the book-making process including for example, coloured paper, stamps, crayons, glue-sticks etc.

Visuals: select pages from *Grow Up Strong* and *The Real Us* or page 31 (opposite) from this resource.

Process:

Exploration of this topic could begin by asking questions like;

- What do you want to be when you grow up?
- What do you need to get there? (For example, we might need family support, financial support, self-belief, and role models). It might be appropriate to point out that not everyone has equal access to these supports.
- A follow-up activity might include researching people who have achieved what we would like to do in the future, maybe research on people who have achieved these dreams in our communities or those we don't know

Creative Activity

After reading about other children and young people's aspirations for their future in these books, everyone could try creating their own handmade books on this subject. This uses the same process as the making of the sketchbook on pages 14 and 15 but invites students to make their own handmade book. The teacher can demonstrate how to make the 8-page fold (see page 15). While the children are making their books, there will be lots of opportunity for further discussion while this activity is happening.

Teacher and students could choose quotes from each student's handmade book and print/write these on large card or banner paper in the classroom. Students could also choose their favourite quotes from Grow Up Strong and The Real Us and write these in large format for inclusion on classroom wall.

Reflection and further learning:

What challenges might people from minority groups face in achieving their dreams and ambitions? How can teachers be part of changing this reality for students?

In 2022, the Traveller Graduate Network was officially launched by Leanne McDonagh and her fellow cofounders, Gavin Hennessey, AnnMarie Quilligan and Breda Hogan. It is the first alumni network of its kind in Ireland, set up by, and run for, Irish Travellers. You can read more about this initiative in the Further Resources section.

Dreams and Ambitions

Inspiration from *The Real Us and Grow up Strong*

I'm a 15 year old girl who has many ambitions for the near future. I want to prove to myself and others around me that we Romas can achieve many things. – page 11, *The Real Us*

I love using my creativity and focusing on what to do. I enjoy architecture. I want to get a job where I can be financially secure. – page 17, *The Real Us*

I'm staying on in school after Junior Cert to do the LCA course and then maybe an apprenticeship in carpentry after that. I like experimenting to learn. – page 10, *Grow up Strong*

When I was seven I decided to become a paramedic and I never changed my mind since. I just want to help people since I saw lots of shows on TV. I'm in sixth class. Last year we did a project in our school and there's a teacher there who knows first aid, and I interviewed her about becoming a paramedic. She told me that there's courses I can do to even at my age. – page 13, *Grow up Strong*

Discrimination & Fairness

Some children experience challenges and barriers in simple daily activities such as shopping or are treated unfairly. Many Irish children may not have experienced this kind of discrimination, but unfortunately some will have. Starting discussions around fairness can be an easier way into what can be a challenging subject.

The research conducted alongside the creation of *Grow Up Strong* and *The Real Us* indicated that the young people involved in making these books wanted readers to learn about the discrimination and stereotyping they face: "These accounts of young Traveller and Roma people's everyday experiences of racism provided powerful evidence of the need for representations in schools and in society more generally that counter stereotyped assumptions and highlight unfair treatment of Traveller and Roma people." (Cavaliero and McDonnell, 2023, p37).

Grow Up Strong and *The Real Us* were created by young people who attend schools that are part of a pilot project Supporting Traveller and Roma (STAR). Schools participating in this pilot are "provided with additional resources to work together with parents, children and young people, schools, Traveller and Roma communities and service providers to address the barriers impacting on Traveller and Roma children's attendance, participation and retention in education." (https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/6bc6e-minister-foley-announces-tender-process-for-the-independent-pilot-project-aimed-at-tackling-education-disadvantage-in-traveller-and-roma-communities/)

We are grateful to have had the support of teachers from these schools in the initial development of this resource and to be reaching more teachers committed to addressing these difficult subjects in their classroom.

Research perspective

The young people who participated in the project evaluation spoke about their experiences of discrimination and racism. They also spoke about the pride they felt creating books that would give visibility to Traveller and Roma young people, who project participants had rarely, if ever, seen in books or resources. (Read more in "Our Lives, Our Voices Evaluation Report" by Dr Susan McDonell and Dr Tamsin Cavaliero. Please see Further Resources section for link to this report).

One young person's comment highlights the important role of the teacher in providing a positive response to these books and the stories shared: "I'm kinda nervous about what they're [people in general] going to think of that book...I think they'll like it. My teacher will like it anyway."

Project artist Francesca's perspective

Children should feel like they have a voice in the face of adversity. They should be encouraged to liberate their voice to empower others. Children from ethnic minority groups are the real-life people experiencing discrimination. Therefore, they should be supported to empower their voice to bring about change. This liberation of voice can be done through all of the strands of visual art; art, craft and design and through various levels of engagement. Posters are an effective way to communicate message through a balance of text, message and image. Creating a harmonious balance between text and image can convey a striking and powerful message to the target audience.

Discrimination & Fairness
Discussion and poster making

Learning objectives:
(Teachers can tailor these to create their own learning outcomes)

- Students consider what stereotypes are, and that some stereotypes can be negative.
- Students consider how stereotypes can turn into discrimination.
- Students discuss the importance of really listening to children and young people about their experiences.

What is needed:

Materials for discussion: select pages from *Grow Up Strong* and *The Real Us*.
For poster-making: A3 coloured card, markers, colouring pencils, pencils.

Process:

Discussion:

- We all want to be safe, not to be bullied or stereotyped. How do we make sure this happens for everyone?
- What needs to happen in school for everyone to be treated equally and fairly?
- What needs to happen in the wider world for everyone to be treated equally and fairly?

Possible responses to prejudice/ inappropriate language:

- If there are responses that are prejudiced, note that these responses draw on stereotypes. You can't generalise about people or different groups of people. Note there is a difference between opinions and facts.
- Bring responses back to what the children are saying in the books *Grow Up Strong* and *The Real Us* i.e. "Let's stick to what these children are saying about their experience." "This is their experience. I would listen to you if you told me about your experiences."
- We should always be careful not to jump to conclusions, but adults can sometimes make assumptions. Have you ever been in a situation where an adult made an assumption about your behaviour or where you were blamed in the wrong?
- The teacher could start with some empathethic statements in response what the children have said in the book about discrimination and fairness (such as those on the following pages in this resource).For example: "That must be a hard thing; I wouldn't like that. I'm sure you wouldn't either." From this initial discussion, the class can move into poster-making, and be inspired by the voices of the young people in *Grow Up Strong* and *The Real Us*.

Images to use from the books as inspiration for making posters

- "Respect goes both ways", page 23, *Grow Up Strong*
- "Never judge a book by its cover", page 20 and 21, *Grow Up Strong*.
- Allow the children time to think about the purpose and meaning of this poster, this will ensure clarity and effectiveness in their articulation.
- Ask them to consider: Who is the target audience? What is the purpose of this poster? Posters usually have three purposes: a general message poster, a poster announcing an event or pure advertising. A successful poster should be clear, simple and attract attention.
- Create a series of thumbnail sketches wherein you test out different images and ideas for the poster.
- Create some samples of typography considering the numerous ways you can use text.
- Ask students to consider what colours they will use and why.

Reflection and further learning

Was it difficult to talk about discrimination and fairness with students? What were the challenges? Was it useful to encourage students to return to the voices of the young people in *Grow Up Strong* and *The Real Us*? What were your own thoughts when reading the young people's statements outlined on the opposite page?

Discrimination and Fairness
Quotes from *The Real Us*

I myself sometimes feel excluded from people around me and because I know the feeling, I try to be inclusive with all people of all backgrounds and ethnicity. I hope to educate others with the same information and make the world a better place.
– page 11, *The Real Us*

I got in a fight at school because he was calling me names. There's bad people in that school. My brother came back with black eyes but I'm not scared.
– page 30, *The Real Us*

We hope our book goes worldwide and people open up their eyes to our culture and traditions. We want our culture to be recognised as other eastern European cultures are. We are stereotyped too often, and people think we don't want education or to do anything with our lives. But the opposite is true, we want opportunities to perform to the best of our abilities and have a well-off life. We do not want to be judged.
– page 7, *The Real Us*

Discrimination and Fairness
Quotes from *Grow up Strong*

We have rules. We have to contribute but they need to be fair. You need to be more fair. It goes both ways
– page 22, *Grow up Strong*

You don't have to be perfect either to learn. It would be better if we had teachers from the Travelling community because they'd understand. I'd like to do that when I'm older.
– page 23, *Grow up Strong*

Education is very important to me, and back in the day Travellers did not get an education and there's a lot of inequality.
– page 18, *Grow up Strong*

Intercultural Awareness

Intercultural awareness is often about celebrating difference, knowing that we all have a culture, and we are comfortable with others who have a different culture and knowing we are all equal, all part of the human family and one race, the human race. Intercultural awareness is about having a better understanding of our own cultural identity, our values and beliefs, because with a better understanding of our own cultural identity, we can appreciate different cultural identities and be interested in learning about what's important to other people.

Intercultural awareness doesn't mean knowing everything about another culture. Developing intercultural awareness with children can simply be wondering and questioning in an appropriate way, starting with understanding ourselves and how our culture plays a part in our thinking and how we communicate and what's important to us.

The power of other people's stories is also important: we really believe that simply reading Kids' Own books together, including *Grow Up Strong* and *The Real Us*, can help us develop in awareness and empathy for others.

The creative activity on page 38 focuses on making 'Identity boxes', a home or a haven for the objects developed through the earlier creative activity "Identity Objects: Amulets and Talismans" (page 27). This creative activity provides a good opportunity to discuss issues connected to intercultural awareness: each student could be provided with the opportunity to tell the class about the contents of their identity box. The class could then be asked to reflect on the similarities and differences of the identity boxes, which can support the development of an understanding of our own identities and cultures and how others' responses might be different. Teachers could also consider developing a classroom identity box which represents everyone in the room in some way.

Intercultural Awareness
Quotes from *Grow up Strong*

Our Mum teaches us a lot about respect, you can't judge people, and about how they grew up. She teaches us to have confidence in ourselves. She teaches us to grow up strong.
– page 25, *Grow up Strong*

Cant is important for us, because we are Travellers and Cant is the Travellers' language. We know a few words already, *beoir, lakín, grad, feen, súblic*.
– page 17, *Grow up Strong*

I'm not getting the stuff I need to know about my culture.
– page 22, *Grow up Strong*

Intercultural Awareness
Identity boxes

Learning objectives:
(Teachers can tailor these to create their own learning outcomes)
Students will be able to:

- Recognise and analyse what is important to them.
- Interpret what is important to them and translate this through objects.
- Experiment with paper mâché, clay, and acrylic paint to create their own identity boxes.

What is needed:
Materials: Two cardboard boxes, newspaper, PVA glue, pencils, markers, hairdryer, scissors, hot glue gun and glue sticks.

Visuals: Select pages from *Grow Up Strong* and *The Real Us* (or the quotes on the opposite page of this resource).

Vocabulary: identity; culture; difference; inclusion; respect.

Process:
This activity will be scaffolded by a previous activity in the Culture section: "Identity Objects: amulets and talismans".

The purpose of this activity is for the students to create a box which will hold the identity objects. This activity gives the children a chance to write any text or draw imagery on the box that is central to their enhanced sense of agency developed throughout the stages of creating.

The teacher can explain to the students that they will be creating homes or havens for their identity objects, by decorating them and applying paper mâché. The students will decide how they want to design their boxes. At the end, everyone will have the chance to present their box and to speak about it if they wish.

Stage 1: Identifying and interpreting.
Revisit previous class discussion from earlier topics as outlined in the Culture section. This could involve getting students to reflect on and revisit themes that emerged through earlier conversation that related to culture, celebrations, language, family and traditions, where I live, and what's important to us, as well as discrimination and fairness.

Stage 2: Applying paper mâché
The objects will be secured in a 'haven' / home which will be the cardboard box. Therefore for this stage, the children must apply paper mâché for durability on the cardboard box and then decorate the inside and outside of the box.

Note: the box will stand upright at the end of the project. Paper mâché is a good warm up exercise and great to get students to use fine motor skills.

Start by tearing up newspaper in small pieces the size of a stamp. Apply a thin even layer of PVA glue to the carboard box and apply the newspaper stamps. Even out the newspaper with some more glue to ensure no air bubbles.

Note: wait until the cardboard box is fully dry to start painting the paper mâché (approx. drying time is 40 minutes) you can use a hairdryer to speed up this process. The children have complete control in how they decide to decorate the box although, they could choose a theme or style for convenience.

Stage 3: Assembling and reviewing.
Get the students to arrange and assemble their identity objects into their box/ home for the objects. At this stage you could conduct a group discussion wherein everyone displays their identity boxes and discusses the meaning of them. This will facilitate a space for deeper awareness and understanding of culture.

Reflection and further learning
Did the creative activity encourage or support conversation on difference? Can creative process support other conversations across subjects and curricula in the classroom?

Intercultural Awareness
Quotes from *The Real Us*

I recently researched cultural appropriation and how to ensure we take into account all opinions and how to make people feel included even with a different background
– page 11, *The Real Us*

There's a lot of schools who don't pay attention to the Roma people
– page 34, *The Real Us*

Further Resources

Junior Cycle Visual Art Curriculum links

1. Page 10, PVA experiments, Junior Cycle Visual Art Curriculum link:

Materials and Techniques
"In the media used, the student may discover himself/herself and develop a satisfying means of communication which can be further developed. Media and techniques should be regarded as vehicles for expression - not content."

Link: https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/40a28af3-cd50-40e1-92fd-12473216eb44/JCSEC02_artcraftdesign_guidelines.pdf

Project artist Francesca's perspective: By exploring unconventional materials such as PVA, students can begin to articulate how they can communicate. Art is a form of communication; exploration and discovery of materials and techniques is a form of language. This is where the student will begin to form a sense of voice through communication, through understanding the various modes of communication.

"A picture speaks a thousand words", sometimes children and young people need some positive reinforcement and encouragement to articulate what is expressed in their art. Art is a language, sometimes void of words. What language is the child using throughout their work, what is hidden beneath the surface of the child's work, where was meaning evoked from to create this work? Gently try to uncover the meanings within the work; more than likely it will reveal extraordinary things.

"Visual Art provides the learner with a space within which it is safe to experiment, to fail and to learn. It facilitates and encourages the questions a learner may raise in travelling a path that may not lead to an anticipated outcome or that may produce a different outcome to what was planned. It gives them the capacity to understand and to express ideas, feelings and opinions: both their own and those of others"

Link: https://curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle/Junior-Cycle-Subjects/Visual-Art/Rationale/

Project artist Francesca's perspective: Throughout the making of these books the mantra that was adapted within the creative space was "there is no right or wrong, and no good or bad." With this mindset the children had the opportunity to fail. It is only through failing (for example, a texture study that wasn't as prominent as hoped) that we can learn, and if we are not failing then we are in our comfort zone.

2: Page 12-14, Sketchpad, Junior Cycle Visual Art Curriculum link:

Visual Art Sketchpad
"Evidence of student learning across the three years of Junior Cycle will be captured in a Visual Art Sketchpad. The Visual Art sketchpad is a collection of ideas, processes and work, in physical or digital form (or a combination of both). A student's Visual Art sketchpad will be used by them to:

- Record their approaches
- Capture their ideas creativity, experiments and explorations
- Document and develop ownership of their own personal creative learning journey."

Link: https://www.jct.ie/perch/resources/art/junior-cycle-visual-art-information-leaflet-2017.pdf

Project artist Francesca's perspective: Sketchbooks are a good working process to adapt into the working environment. They are of instrumental importance to record, reflect and analyse thought processes. Sketchbooks can be used as a scaffolding tool throughout both books, as themes, thoughts and opinions emerge students should be encouraged to document these in their sketchbook.

Note: try to give the child autonomy in their approach to the sketchbook process, there is no "right or wrong" or "good or bad" way to use a sketchbook. For example, the sketchbooks could be a mix of formal and informal writing, with loose and free sketches (visual aids) to accompany, and document of some creative processes.

"Visual Art is ambiguous; there is no single 'correct answer' in Visual Art: The subject promotes divergent thinking and develops the learner's ability to interpret, make judgements and express opinions on a work. It also promotes respect for the work and the opinions of others."

Project artist Francesca's perspective: Through a developed sense of voice and agency that is created through time for creativity, children will take ownership of the materials, mediums, and processes they are adapting. The confidence and freedom to experience chance and "what if", pushing the materials to their limits will allow the children to become developed divergent thinkers.

3: Page 34 Identity boxes:, Junior Cycle Visual Art Curriculum Link:

Process – product
"It is important that the product or final statement is seen, not just as evidence of success or failure, but as an effort and structure that reveals to us valuable information about the way the idea originated, developed, and was realised."

Project artist Francesca's perspective: Previously we talked about art being a language that is sometimes void of text, it is a visual representation of voice and language, expressed from deeply rooted meaning and voice. The students' articulation of their work and how it "originated, developed and was realised", is pivotal in allowing a child to use their voice to express what their meaning making was stemmed from. This communication can be scaffolded from the sketchbook processes, the documentation of processes recorded can be useful visual guides to help prompt the students in discussion. "How did you create these textures?", "What were you feeling when you made them?"

Curriculum link:
Assessment Objectives
On completion of the course, students should be able to:

- Give a personal response to an idea, experience or other stimulus.
- Work from imagination, memory.
- Use drawing for observation, recording and analysis, as a means of thinking and for communication and expression.
- Use the three-dimensional processes of additive, subtractive and constructional form-making in expressive and functional modes.
- Use a variety of materials, media, tools and equipment.
- Use an appropriate working vocabulary.
- Sustain projects from conception to realisation.
- Appraise and evaluate his/her own work in progress and on completion.
- Develop an awareness of the social role and value of art, craft and design and aspects of contemporary culture.

All of these assessment objectives were met during the course of making these two books.

Select further resources about Traveller and Roma cultures and communities

Dr Susan McDonnell and Dr Tamsin Cavaliero, "Our Lives, Our Voices Evaluation Report" (2023).
https://kidsown.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Our_Lives_Voices_Report76.pdf
Description: This evaluation report and research was conducted alongside this Kids' Own project with the children and young people who created the books *Grow Up Strong* and *The Real Us*. In this report, Traveller and Roma children share their experiences of the project, and also some of their experiences more broadly.

Kids' Own books made with Traveller children and their communities.
Please see www.kidsown.ie/books for details of all our books

Can't Lose Cant A book of Cant, the old language of Irish Travellers, by children in County Kildare, Ireland (2003; second edition 2020)

Cant Turn Back A book about Travellers by children in Mohill, Co. Leitrim (2008)

Fishing for Food and Mushrooms A collection of stories, poems, and pen pictures by Traveller children in Belfast (2005)

This Giant Tent A children's celebration of culture and identity in response to the Travellers' Journey/Mincéir Misli'd exhibition at the National Museum of Ireland – Country Life. (2019)

Charley Barley and all his friends A collection of traditional rhymes and jokes with artwork, by children from County Sligo, Ireland. (2022)

Clotty Malotty and all her friends A collection of rhymes with artwork by children from Finglas, County Dublin, Ireland (first edition 2003; second edition 2022).

Kids' Own book on our process and way of working
A Powerful Place Artists and children working together (2021)

Children as researchers:
Across an Open Field Stories and artwork by children from Ireland and Northern Ireland about the Decade of Commemorations 1912-22 (2016).

Other Resources
AnnMarie Collins, "Travelling Community Teaching Resources"
Description: a handbook that "features different sections that aim to guide you to information about the Travelling Community and members of the community from across the country to inspire you."
Link: https://www.collegeaware.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Links-Travelling-Community-Teaching-Resources.pdf

Seamus Nolan, "Traveller Collection"
Description: "The project seeks to open a dialogue around what an appropriate approach to integrating the narrative of Traveller History into the 'National Project' might look like. The project engages in a collaborative process of enquiry with cultural practitioners, activists and archivists in an exploration of contested histories to examine basic notions of representations in relation to Traveller culture and heritage."
Link: https://travellercollection.ie/

Oein DeBhairduin, illustrated by Leanne McDonagh,
Why the Moon Travels, (Skein Press, 2020).
Description: "*Why the moon travels* is a haunting collection of twenty tales rooted in the oral tradition of the Irish Traveller community. Brave vixens, prophetic owls and stalwart horses live alongside the human characters as guides, protectors, friends and foes while spirits, giants and fairies blur the lines between this world and the otherworld. Collected by Oein DeBhairduin throughout his childhood, retold in his lyrical style, and beautifully illustrated by Leanne McDonagh. *Why the moon travels* won both the Judges' Special Award and the Eilís Dillon Award at the 2021 KPMG Children's Books Ireland Awards."
Link: https://skeinpress.com/product/why-the-moon-travels-by-oein-debhairduin-copy/

Note: Children's Books Ireland has developed a resource Free to Be Me: The Diversity, Inclusion, and Representation Resource Pack. There is a section on *Why the Moon Travels* and suggestions for its use in primary and post-primary classrooms, accessible via the link below.
Link: https://childrensbooksireland.ie/sites/default/files/2021-09/CBI-FTBM-Resource-Pack-Secondary.pdf

The Yellow Flag Programme, classroom resources
Description: Traveller Graduate Network Description: "The network consists of Traveller students and graduates working collectively to support each other by using their experiences for the benefit of present and prospective students from within the community. The network provides networking, progression and career advancement opportunities through mentoring sessions and workshops.

It also aims to support and encourage current and prospective students form the community by making role models of its members." **(https://www.mycit.ie/access_disability.traveller-education) Link: https://www.travellergraduatenetwork.com/contact**

Further reading: "Cork women help launch Ireland's first Traveller Graduate Network", Echo Live, 2022 Description: This article describes some of the barriers facing Travellers in continuing in education and in securing employment. It may be useful to read in preparation for exploring the "Dreams and Ambitions" theme with a group of students, which asks students to consider what challenges some people might face in accessing the supports needed to realise their dreams and ambitions. Link: https://www.echolive.ie/wow/arid-40845311.html

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Scoilnet Resources on Irish Travellers
Description: This resource presents information on Traveller culture, history and community and has been developed with links to the post-primary CSPE and History curricula. There are activities throughout the sections on the website.
Link: https://www.scoilnet.ie/go-to-post-primary/cspe/travellers/#fndtn-tab-28303

Background reading for teachers

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, Traveller culture and history in the curriculum: a curriculum audit (2019).
Description: This curriculum audit was undertaken in the context of the 'Traveller Culture and History in Education Bill 2018', which is under consideration by, and in process in, the Houses of the Oireachtas. The Bill aims to provide for the "inclusion of Traveller culture and history in the curriculum taught by recognised schools in the State and for that purpose to amend the Education Act 1998" (4). It is "a detailed exploration of current early childhood, primary and post-primary curricula in terms of opportunities for children and young people to encounter and learn about Traveller history and culture (4)
Link: https://ncca.ie/media/4613/travellerculturehistory.pdf

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, Traveller culture and history research report (2023)
Description: This Traveller culture and history research report is an important first step in responding to the [Traveller culture and history in the curriculum] audit findings (2019) and aims to provide an overview of what is currently known and has been recorded regarding the different aspects of Traveller culture and history. It will be used to inform the review and updating/ redevelopment of curriculum specifications and the development of new specifications as part of ongoing work across sectors. It will also provide a basis for the development of resources and materials for teachers/practitioners, and it will also inform our thinking around intercultural approaches to education more broadly.
Link: https://ncca.ie/media/5959/traveller-culture-and-history-research-report_en.pdf

National Roma Needs Assessment
Description: The Executive Summary of this report states: "The aim of the National Roma Needs Assessment is to establish how best to improve state agencies' interaction with the Roma community in Ireland." Chapter 1 includes "a summary of Roma history and contemporary experiences in Europe", which teachers may find useful background information.
Link: https://www.paveepoint.ie/project/national-roma-needs-assessment/

Pavee Point, Roma factsheet
Description: One-page document outlining the Roma community in Ireland and some of the challenges they face.
Link: https://www.paveepoint.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Factsheets-Pavee-Point-ROMA.pdf

Proiectos Romano: A study of Roma communities in Balbriggan
Description: This research was undertaken by Roma people within their own community in Dublin and provides insights into the community's lives and experiences. The introduction notes that "Aside from the value of the results produced from this study, there is an intrinsic worth in the research process itself. Participants conducted participatory action research by studying and reflecting on how to research their own ethnic group. This changed the dynamic from external research about Roma to 'insider' research by and for Roma people. The Roma researchers decided that the most culturally appropriate method to collect data was through a questionnaire that also included open-ended questions. The questionnaire was divided into seven sections that included the following topics: respondents' profile, housing and accommodation, health, training and education, employment, racism and discrimination, and finally respondents' own views on what needs to be changed. This report reflects the topics in the questionnaires and it adds recommendations which are informed by the analysis of the data" (6).
Link: https://cairde.ie/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/Roma-Project-23-10-16.pdf

Resource on Languages and Intercultural Communication: Professor David Little and Dr Déirdre Kirwan, "Language and Languages in the Primary School: some guidelines for teachers"
Description: "These guidelines are designed to help you respond to the challenges of the Primary Language Curriculum, include the home languages of EAL pupils in the activities of your classrooms, and develop your pupils' intercultural learning. They are produced under Languages Connect: Ireland's Foreign Languages in Education Strategy. It is our hope that you will find these guidelines useful in the context of positive attitudes and appreciation of cultural diversity in the classroom and beyond, as well as fostering an interest and curiosity in learning further languages and intercultural communication" (https://ppli.ie/ppli-primary-guidelines/)
Link: https://ppli.ie/ppli-primary-guidelines/

Link to Further Resources

The links on the previous pages, and further creative material made by Traveller and Roma children who are part of the Cork STAR Project, are directly available online by scanning this QR code to access a PDF of this publication.