What are you thinking?

Lesson Objective: To investigate how figurative paintings translate meanings and messages to the viewer.

You will need: Reproductions of Carravagio & Gentileschi painting: Judith beheading Holofernes and something to symbolise a sword.

Remind or discuss with the group the meaning and interpretation of body language. How do we use body language to communicate? That it is a powerful, yet often subconscious tool. It helps if you have learned a bit about this beforehand. Try to make your discussion light hearted, entertaining and thought provoking. Show some examples, get the group involved and having some practice goes and remember; Teachers use body language more than almost anyone!

Show the painting: Carravgio's "Judith beheading Holofernes" Ask the group to study the painting.

Tell them the Bible story that the painting is based on. (Research this yourself first.)Ask for volunteers. Pose them across a table to re-enact the painting. Ask them to copy the facial expressions in the paintings. Get them to freeze.

Get the class to write down what they think is going through each person's mind at that moment. What are their facial expressions revealing about their thoughts? How dispassionate does Judith look in Carravagio's painting? Why was this do you think? (Carravagio was trying to portray her as a non-violent heroine, an angel doing God's work.)

Now show the group Gentileschi's version of the same painting painted a few years later. Again, use volunteers to pose them (perhaps side-by-side with the earlier one.) How

is the painting different? Why might the artist have wanted to depict the same scene differently?

It is thought that Gentileschi (a female artist posing under a male pseudonym) was abused and wanted to show a stronger woman exacting revenge on the evils of men.

Activity: Ask the pupils to think of a story line that might be acted in a freeze frame. Maybe you might be able to get hold of some props to make it interesting. The pupils have to pose in a freeze frame to represent their story then the class has to guess what their story is. You might take digital photos as support/evidence. Next, how might this be translated into a piece of art?