

# Works in profile

## Charles Conder

- 1** [Departure of the Orient – Circular Quay](#) 1888  
oil on canvas 45.1 x 50 cm  
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. Purchased 1888
- 2** [On the River Yarra near Heidelberg, Victoria](#) c.1890  
oil on canvas 30.4 x 40.7 cm  
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. Jean Cameron Gordon Bequest Fund in memory of her mother, Mary Gordon 2002  
  
[An impressionist \(Tom Roberts\)](#) 1889  
oil on wood panel (cedar cigar box lid) 28.5 x 23.4 cm  
Art Gallery of New South Wales. Purchased with funds provided by the Art Gallery Society of New South Wales, 1997
- 3** [The hot sands, Mustapha, Algiers](#) 1891  
oil on canvas 46 x 55.3 cm  
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. Purchased 1982
- 4** [The awakening](#) c.1900  
watercolour heightened with gold and white on silk, fan shaped  
14.2 x 42.5 cm  
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- 5** [The sands, Newquay](#) 1906  
oil on canvas 45.7 x 60 cm  
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. Purchased 1986



## Departure of the Orient – Circular Quay

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My 'Orient Leaving' was liked at once because people understood it at once.

Conder to Margaret Conder, Melbourne, August 1889

Mr Conder has studied the impressionist school... 'The Departure of the Orient, Circular Quay' is one of the most character-marked pictures in the exhibition this year – misty and dim in tone, showing the scene on a drizzling morning, with groups of figures moving rapidly away, and the effect losing itself in dull grey and mirk of a lowering sky...

Sydney Morning Herald, 18 September 1888

Why did Conder choose to paint such a composition that bore no relationship to anything he had done before? Was it an especial focus on thoughts of a voyage home resulting from his conversations with Roberts? With ships coming and going, Circular Quay would have provided a natural attraction to his 'vagrant' spirit. Positioned on a hotel balcony overlooking the Quay, he gazed down at the bustling seaport on a wet winter's day and orchestrated its atmosphere and detail with masterful sensitivity.

The Art Gallery of New South Wales purchased *Departure of the Orient* from the Art Society in September 1888. Newspaper reviews as usual for Conder were positive. But he wrote to his friend G.V.F. Mann that he was 'sick of Sydney' and intended soon to go to Melbourne, which he did two days after payment came through from the Gallery in October.

Barry Pearce, 'Between Worlds: Conder in Australia', *Charles Conder Retrospective*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2003

## K–6 LOOKING AND MAKING

**Slip** into this painting and point out where you are and what you are wearing.

**Deliver** an eyewitness report from the scene, detailing the weather conditions and the mood at Circular Quay.

**Locate** the Orient. Who could be on this boat and where is it going?

**Invent** a story about someone who is on board.

**Count** the number of boats in the harbour.

**Find** some children in this painting, a lady lifting her dress, and a building with a zig-zag roof.

**Find** the artist's signature. **Read** out loud the place name and date under this signature. **Calculate** how many years ago this painting was created.

**Describe** how Circular Quay looks today.

**Recreate** this painting in different weather conditions.

## Links with key learning areas

**English:** *Talking and Listening; Writing*

**Describe** the work and the scene represented, discussing the colours, subject and atmosphere.

**List** words (adjectives, etc) for language study.

**Assemble** word banks to use in reference to the work. **Invent** and **write** stories about the scene represented. **Prepare** scripts for a play about a person embarking on a journey, or seeing someone off on the Orient.

**Drama:** *Making; Performing*

**Role-play** or present a performance about one of the figures in the painting.

**Mathematics:** *Number; Space and Geometry; Measurement*

**Consider** mathematical concepts such as size, position in space, distance, perspective, viewpoint and direction when looking at and discussing the work. **Count** the number of boats and identify the shapes of the buildings, eg triangular prisms.

**HSIE:** *Change and Continuity; Environments; Social Systems and Structures.*

**Explore** topics such as transport, weather and climate, mapping and history through the images

depicted in the painting.

**Research** life and society in 1880s Australia for topics such as *The Way We Were*, *Colonisation of Australia* and *Places: Then, Now and Tomorrow*.

## 7–12 FRAMING QUESTIONS

Consider the location represented in the image. Describe what is happening. Do you recognise this place? Describe the changes in the location and the daily activities since Conder's day. Investigate why this is an important site in Sydney and Australian history.

Compare *Departure of the Orient – Circular Quay* to other landscapes of its day. Was Conder breaking from the traditional view of the Australian environment? Discuss, citing examples. Does Conder's view of Australia, and Sydney in particular, still hold true?

*Departure of the Orient – Circular Quay* is considered Conder's greatest Sydney painting. Analyse the composition. Is it static or dynamic? How does the artist achieve a sense of movement and drama? Does the movement radiate beyond the picture plane? Describe the passage of movement your eye follows when viewing the work. Does it feel like you are on the Quay or standing beside the artist?

Conder painted this work on location or *en plein air*, as he witnessed the drama of events unfold. What painting techniques has Conder used to reinforce the energy of the composition? Compare the work to a historical photograph or a tourist's snap shot of Sydney. What does each capture? Is Conder's choice of composition and painting technique successful in representing the location and a moment in time? Discuss.

*Departure of the Orient – Circular Quay* shows a mixture of influences on the young artist. Investigate the Art Gallery's permanent collection other sources to analyse the influence of: Japanese woodcuts and screens, *plein air* painting technique, the artists Girolamo Nerli and Tom Roberts.

Research the influence of travel, movement and change of geography on Conder's 'vagrant spirit'. What personal significance could *Circular Quay* have had for the artist? If an artwork can give an insight into an artist's personality, how could Conder be characterised from this work? Debate.



## On the River Yarra near Heidelberg, Victoria

c.1890

oil on canvas 30.4 x 40.7 cm  
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. Jean Cameron Gordon Bequest Fund in memory of her mother, Mary Gordon 2002

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Conder painted until the last. Full of wine, seated on the green turf in the diminishing light, the sunset touching the tips of the pines, he made a painting, with dozens of students in flannels or white muslin sitting and lying all around him. Now and again in his odd falsetto he sang his favourite melodies from *The Yeomen of the Guard* or 'The Sun whose rays', from *The Mikado*.

John Rothenstein, 1938

Conder spent two summers at Heidelberg ... The paint handling of *The Yarra Heidelberg* and *Landscape with river and a boat* and *On the river Yarra near Heidelberg* is that of a mature artist, secure in his aesthetic and relishing the warm brown tonality of his palette. Forms are softer and more suggestive. There is the feeling that the artist has mastered the local *plein air* style and is ready for change.

Ann Galabally, 'Plein air painting', *Charles Conder Retrospective*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2003

The English-born Walter Withers, who was residing at Eglemont for a period asked Conder to paint for him a little *plein air* impression of the Yarra, below the homestead, which Conder handed to him just before leaving Australia forever in April 1890. *On the Yarra River, Near Heidelberg, Victoria* is covered with the casual urgency of his fingerprints, and a perfect example, with quick jabs and drags of colour, of that Corot-esque notion of the oil sketch as the ideal submission to a moment of nature.

Maybe this was the work John Rothenstein described as one of Conder's last painted in Australia ... Happily, the Gallery recently purchased it, a remarkable work which encapsulates so much of Conder's intentions, his feet on Australian soil, his head already in Paris.

Barry Pearce, 'The enigmatic Charles Conder: spotlight on a lesser known Heidelberg painter', *Look Magazine* May 2003

## K-6 LOOKING AND MAKING

Look at Charles Conder's *On the River Yarra near Heidelberg, Victoria* c1890

Find five examples of different paint marks in this picture. Can you find Conder's fingerprints or marks that were made with his fingers?

Was this painting made quickly or slowly? Was it made indoors in a studio from memory or outside in the landscape? **Discuss.**

Find four different things from nature. How has the artist painted each one differently?

Follow the river through this painting. **Visualise** and **describe** what lies at either end.

Point out the people in this painting. What are they doing?

**Role-play** being one person in this group and describe your outing to the River Yarra.

**Take** some paints outside and paint something from nature directly in one sitting.

**Experiment** with mark-making and create a chart of as many different painted marks as possible.

**Create** a painting using at least five different paint marks from your chart.

Look at Charles Conder's *An impressionist (Tom Roberts)* 1889

**Meet** Tom Roberts, Charles Conder's friend and painting buddy.

What clue tells us that Roberts is an artist?

**Describe** what Roberts is like from this portrait.

**Visualise** what an artist might look like today. How does this differ from this portrait?

Is this portrait still or does it show some movement?

**Point** out areas that are still and those that portray

movement. Where is Roberts going? **Invent** a story. **Look** at the other portraits in this kit and compare them to this one.

**Talk** about their similarities and differences.

## Links with key learning areas

**HSIE:** *Change and Continuity; Cultures; Environments*  
**Consider** the connection to Australian history made by these works. For example: Who was Tom Roberts and what was an Impressionist? What was the Yarra River at Heidelberg like in 1889-90? How has this place changed today?

**Research** Conder's role with the Heidelberg artists and his participation in the *9 by 5 Impression Exhibition* and the artists' camps.

**Experiment** with producing some *plein air* landscapes painted on cardboard similar in size to that used by Conder and the Heidelberg artists in the *9 by 5 Impression Exhibition*.

**Drama:** *Making; Performing*

**Role-play** the artist Tom Roberts being painted by his friend Charles Conder.

**Develop** into a class performance with scripts, props, music and costumes about the Heidelberg artists preparing for the *9 by 5 Impression Exhibition*.

**English:** *Talking and Listening; Writing; Reading*

**List** words to describe the two works. **Discuss** why they have been paired together in this kit.

**Imagine** Conder taking a walk through the painting *On the River Yarra near Heidelberg, Victoria* to choose the scene he wished to paint. Write a passage to show how he would have described this landscape.

**Read** some of the contemporary accounts and reviews of *The 9 by 5 Impression Exhibition*.

## To the Public

An effect is only momentary, so an Impressionist tries to find his place. Two half-hours are never alike; and he who tries to paint a sunset on two successive evenings must be more or less painting from memory. So in these works it has been the object of the artists to render faithfully, and thus obtain first records of effects widely differing, and often of very fleeting character.

*The 9 by 5 Impression Exhibition* catalogue, 1889

I feel more than sorry that these days are over, because nothing can exceed the pleasures of that last summer when I fancy all of us lost the 'Ego' somewhat of our natures in looking at what was Nature's best art and ideality. Give me one summer again with yourself and Streeton – the same long evenings, songs, dirty plates – and last pink skies – But these things don't happen do they – and what's gone is over.

Conder to Tom Roberts, Paris, 20 August 1890

## 7-12 FRAMING QUESTIONS

Locate the figures in this landscape. Conder was interested in figures as structural elements in the landscape, suggesting mood and action. Analyse Conder's use of the figure as the focal point of the image. Consider composition and formal elements. Compare this use of figures to that of the other Heidelberg school artists, Roberts, Streeton and McCubbin.

*On the River Yarra near Heidelberg, Victoria* is thought to be one of the last works Conder painted in Australia. It is apparent he has mastered the landscape *impression*. Investigate this technique. Create a list of its characteristic qualities. Analyse this work using the list. Compare with his other Australian works. How successful do you think Conder is here?

Research the history of *plein air* painting and its development in Australian art. Who made up the Heidelberg school? Why are they also called Australian Impressionists? Evaluate their role in the acceptance of this painting style, first reviled as *avant garde* and now revered as our first national school of painting.

Investigate *The 9 by 5 Impression Exhibition* shown in Melbourne 1889. Why is it considered one of the most famous of all Australian exhibitions? Where does the title originate? Who conceived it and why? *An Impressionist (Tom Roberts)* was one of Conder's contributions to the exhibition. Examine the influence of Tom Roberts on Conder and his colleagues.

Has Roberts' influence extended beyond his time? Generate a 'family tree' of his influence on artists in Australia, from his time with Conder to contemporary Australian art practice.

Roberts was ten years older than Conder and his mentor. Examine this portrait closely. Interpret Conder's feelings about Roberts. Does the work give us insights into how Roberts presented himself to the world or how Conder perceived him? Debate. Consider framing, body gesture, props and the title.

Although this is a portrait of Tom Roberts, it can also be interpreted autobiographically for Conder. Research Conder's evolution from a surveyor, to illustrator to artist. Are there clues in the portrait of these various incarnations? Consider the tools and techniques of each vocation. Could *An Impressionist (Tom Roberts)* be read in a contemporary sense, as an artwork about art-making? Debate.



### An impressionist (Tom Roberts) 1889

oil on wood panel (cedar cigar box lid) 28.5 x 23.4 cm  
Art Gallery of New South Wales. Purchased with funds provided by the Art Gallery Society of New South Wales, 1997



## The hot sands, Mustapha, Algiers

1891

oil on canvas 46 x 55.3 cm

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. Purchased 1982

# The hot sands, Mustapha, Algiers

1891

oil on canvas 46 x 55.3 cm  
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. Purchased 1982

I am painting also two roses in a pot on a rose tile terrace and away in the distance blue sea and Algiers. I only started to paint today. I cannot tell you much of Algiers but will when I go there. At present I have spent a good deal of my time on my bed as I got much worse but am better now I wish I had left that cursed – alone before I did – and then I might have kept my health but every damned organ is now out of place.

Conder to William Rothenstein, Algeria, 23 February 1892

Here one feels quite in Australia again, even the old remembered gum trees have been transplanted and summer reigns; they say its winter anyhow its spring. There is a long line of almond trees budding in the garden and a pearly sea behind underneath all rows of white Bengal roses. Its a delightful place and quite equals one's expectation; the house is white inside and out and was once the abode of a Pasha and his thousand wives.

Conder to William Rothenstein, Mustapha, December 1891

Conder's few Algerian pictures, among his most beautiful, have a poignant, attenuated air of the convalescence about them. *The hot sands, Mustapha, Algiers*, dated December 1891, with its japoniste high horizon and blossom-scented sunshine, incorporated what Barry Pearce describes as 'a splendid strip of seascape which could pass as a Streeton panel painted in Sydney at that time'. However, a faintly melancholy symbolism of faded rose petals also perfumes the work. In soulful colours of blue and mauve, Conder carries a nostalgia for the days of his youth in the 'Sunny South' (and a new awareness of his own mortality) into the Orientalist setting of a pasha's house from the *Arabian Nights*. It is the beginning of his flight from reality into reverie and fantasy, from Impressionism to Symbolism, from landscape into decoration.

Ursula Prunster, 'From Empire's End: Australian's as Orientalists, 1880–1920', *Orientalism: Delacroix to Klee*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1997

## K–6 LOOKING AND MAKING IDEAS

**Look** at this painting and **find**: 3 different flowers, a person leaning over a balcony and some flowering almond trees.

**Count** the number of falling petals and boats in the harbour.

**Find** examples of opposites in this painting: i.e. large and small, vertical and horizontal, dry and wet, dark and light, object and shadow.

**Read** the title for the place where this painting is set. **Write** an imaginary postcard from this place.

**Imagine** this painting as the opening scene of a movie or a play. **Detail** what will happen next.

**Create** a flower still life in your classroom to draw and paint.

**Design** and **write** a postcard from Mustapha, Algiers.

## Links with key learning areas

**Science and Technology:** *Physical Phenomena, Investigating*

**Explore** the relationship between light, shadow and colour. **Experiment** with using a light source to produce a still life painting with similar tones (highlights and shadows) to that depicted in the work.

**Mathematics:** *Space; Measurement*

**Discuss** the representation of size, space, shape, symmetry position and viewpoint and in the painting. What impact do such mathematical concepts have upon the painting? **Identify** the 3D form of the vase.

**English:** *Talking and Listening; Writing; Reading*

**Describe** the work, paying particular attention to its visual qualities such as colour, light, shadows, texture, viewpoint and composition.

**Read** about the popularity for travelling and exploring distant and exotic locations in the 19th century, try to find biographies or narratives about such journeys.

**Explore** the work as a stimulus for creative writing.

**Focus** on Conder painting this work, with a possible title 'A day in the life of the artist in Algiers'.

**HSIE:** *Cultures; Environments*

**Use** maps to locate Algiers and Mustafa and find out about its geographic and cultural features. **Consider** the qualities of culture and geography that attracted the 19th century traveller artist to these places.

## 7–12 FRAMING QUESTIONS

Describe your first impression of this work and its mood. Visually stroll through the image and detail what you see. Is this a slice of reality or fantasy? Find elements in the work that support your position. Compare with Conder's Australian Impressionist works. How has his vision of the landscape shifted? Speculate on what factors contributed. Investigate if such shifts of mood and approach recur in the artist's body of work to this.

Locate the focal point of the image. Using this point, describe the path to which your eye is directed. What or who is there? Is there a link between these two points? Consider the implications of echoing forms. Why does the artist lure the viewer around the environment in this way? Is it a compositional device or something more symbolic? Discuss.

Conder was bedridden, convalescing from a recurring illness when this work was painted. Is he guiding the viewer through the world he, himself cannot navigate or teleporting himself through this world in a non-physical way? Debate.

Upon arriving in Paris in 1890, Conder realised the Parisian avant-garde had moved on from Impressionism to the aesthetics of Symbolism. Investigate the Symbolist movement and the new attention given to world of the artist's imagination.

What is a symbol? Find examples in everyday life. Explore how objects can communicate certain, often universal, meanings. Create an inventory of visual elements and objects in *The hot sands, Mustapha, Algiers*. Develop symbolic meanings for your list. Does this contribute to your reading of the work? Discuss.

Conder's recurring symbolic themes were: the fragility of youth, the unchanging beauty of the natural world and the passage of time. Research Conder's body of work. Identify specialised motifs symbolic of these themes. Are any apparent in *The hot sands, Mustapha, Algiers*? What relationships can be drawn between these symbols, themes and Conder's personal condition at the time?



## The awakening

c.1900

watercolour heightened with gold and white on silk, fan shaped 14.2 x 42.5 cm  
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. Purchased 1974

# The awakening

c.1900

watercolour heightened with gold and white on silk, fan shaped 14.2 x 42.5 cm  
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. Purchased 1974

The painting of a fan, for Conder, was the most serious business of his life and his name is inseparable from his perishable speciality... A certain reverberation of wondrous flowing limpid colour results from his regard for the delicate sheen and texture of the material, and the subjects exhale the beauty and enchanting melody of Verlaine.

Martin Birnbaum, 1919

Charles Conder found in the shape of the fan both a basis for design and a much needed limit ready set to his faculty for exhaustless improvisation ... as with the Japanese, the decoration is subordinate to the character of the object decorated ... From some examples of his art it to be presumed that he only retained the fan shape for the reasons we have indicated, and as an excuse for the silk surface upon which he preferred to work. But the fan is only an incident in the story of his painting, and to refer to him, as one writer did at the time of his death, as the master of the fan, is somewhat to obscure the nature of his genius as a painter, which was great enough in itself to be altogether independent of the ends to which he adapted it.

'Studio-Talk', *International Studio*, 1909

Conder's first fan design was exhibited with the New English Art Club in April 1893 and from then until 1904–05 he produced a large number of watercolours on silk in fan-shapes. Although some artists worked on chicken skin, silk was the preferred support for fans in the years immediately before the Revolution – the period Conder identified with – and the sticks they were mounted on were usually of mother of pearl or ivory. Conder loved his silks to look as though they had actually come from the eighteenth century, hence his delicate, faded palette.

But by and large Conder's fans were considered too good and too delicate to be mounted. Their format usually derives from the eighteenth century rococo fans which developed the use of the vignette (usually three) set against a blank or decorated background.

Ann Galbally, 'Fans', *Charles Conder Retrospective*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2003

## K–6 LOOKING AND MAKING IDEAS

Name the shape and object of this painting. Imagine being one of the figures on this painting and waking up from a dream. Describe the dream. Imagine this painting is an illustration for a poem. Write a poem to match this painting. Draw a cartoon strip and illustrate the dream of one of these figures. Make a drawing of this fan being used.

### Links with key learning areas

**Science & Technology:** *Products and Services; Investigating; Using technology*

Investigate the qualities of the materials (watercolour on silk) used by the artist to produce the painted fan. Consider the functions of fans throughout history and across cultures and decide whether this fan satisfies the needs of function or decoration.

**English:** *Talking and Listening; Writing; Reading*

Describe the work and the scene represented, discussing the shape, patterns, colours, subject, and atmosphere.

Invent stories about the scene represented, using the work as a stimulus for creative writing.

Find and read a variety of stories about 'awakenings', eg Fairytales such as *Sleeping Beauty* and *Snow White*.

**Mathematics:** *Shape; Measurement*

Identify the shapes and geometric terms used in the format of the fan.

**Drama:** *Making; Performing*

Role-play these figures movements in the act of waking.

Develop into a mime performance with props, music and costumes. Consider extending the scene depicted with a story about a picnic in the countryside, a swim and an afternoon nap.

## 7–12 FRAMING QUESTIONS

What is unfolding in this fan-shaped scene? Who inhabits this space and what are they doing? Does this scene have a sense of other worlds and another time? How is this conveyed? Does the title contribute to your reading of the work?

Examine *The awakening* closely. Nominate words to describe it. Are there other art forms with which these words may also be associated? eg poetic = literature.

Research the history of fans. What is a fan? How were they used in everyday life? For whom were they made? Explore how Conder has altered and removed the fan from its original purpose. Is *The awakening* an art object, a fan or both? Present a case.

Are fans still popular today or do they belong to times past? Investigate their presence in visual art and social history. Name and investigate other significant artists enamoured of the fan, eg Degas, Manet, Pissarro, van Gogh, Gauguin and Bonnard.

During the 1890s the re-emergence of fan painting was part of a Rococo revival. Investigate the signature characteristics of this style and the Rococo artist Antoine Watteau. Why was this style rediscovered in post-revolution Paris? Analyse how the Rococo style blurs the boundaries between decorative and fine art, personal and public space and art and everyday life. Is this apparent in *The awakening*? Why would this have been attractive to Conder? Discuss.

Examine how *The awakening* differs from Conder's previous work. Consider scale, shape, materials, colour, composition, subject matter and commercial or critical success. How does such work reflect the artist's personal development? Consider the influence of other artists, locations and cultures on Conder. Research and debate.



## The sands, Newquay

1906

oil on canvas 45.7 x 60 cm  
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. Purchased 1986

# The sands, Newquay

## 1906

oil on canvas 45.7 x 60 cm  
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. Purchased 1986

I don't believe I ever saw a place that would in my humble opinion suit you better than this one. I think you would be delighted with it, and there is a most lovely beach and one sees such charming sights of a kind of strange picturesque people who are always on the beach. If I only had more realistic power like you I could do some splendid things of the children of 4 and 5 years of age; they are perfectly marvelous and you sit on the verandah, or in our summer house, and can draw them.

Conder to William Rothenstein, Newquay, September 1906

Conder sent works to the New English Art Club exhibition in May 1906. Arthur Symons, present at the opening, noted the change in Conder's demeanour; he was 'vague and dejected, obviously very ill; he talked to me wearily of rest'. Not long afterwards Conder had a stroke and was incapacitated for a few months before recuperating in his favourite setting, the seashore. He and Stella stayed three months at Newquay in Cornwall, where his spirits were revived and he managed a number of fresh studies of the beach, cliffs and beachgoers including *Newquay, (Towan Beach)* and *The sands, Newquay*.

Conder was drawn more and more to the elemental qualities of earth, water and sky with all extraneous matter leached out...

Ann Galbally, 'Life', *Charles Conder Retrospective*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2003

Poignantly it was the beach, that mysterious meeting place of land and sea, matter and non-matter, which had first attracted him to paint his earliest *plein air* studies in Sydney which drew from him a last burst of creativity in the late summer of 1906 when he painted the Cornish beach *en plein air*. A delight in the simple pleasures offered by the natural world characterised his art from first to last.

Ann Galbally, 'Plein air painting', *Charles Conder Retrospective*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2003

### K-6 LOOKING AND MAKING IDEAS

Count the number of people at the beach.

Look closely at these people. What do you notice? Is this a scene from the beach that you visit?

Describe your beach and how you dress for the beach.

What is different about the scene pictured in *The sands, Newquay*?

Imagine talking to the girl at the left-hand side of the painting. Invent a conversation with her.

Close your eyes and imagine the sounds. Describe what you can hear.

Draw and paint a scene from the beach you visit.

Draw the girl at the left-hand side of the painting in a modern beach costume.

### Links with key learning areas

**HSIE:** *Change and Continuity; Cultures; Environments*  
Use maps to locate Newquay in England and find out about features that attracted the tourists there in the early 20th century.

**Research** the popularity of bathing and trips to the beach as part of the growing trend for leisure pursuits at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries.

**Compare** the activities, figures and fashions depicted in *The sands, Newquay* with those that would be seen on a beach today, both in England and Australia.

**English:** Talking and Listening; Writing; Reading

**Describe** the work and the scene represented, discussing the colours, subject, and atmosphere.

**List** words (adjectives etc) for language study.

**Assemble** word banks to use in reference to the work.

**Invent** and **write** stories about the scene represented.

**Produce** an advertisement to promote Newquay as a *Belle Epoque* holiday destination, using the work as a stimulus.

Read accounts of English seaside holidays from literature.

**PDHPE:** *Games and Sport; Active Lifestyle*

**Discuss** the benefits for wellbeing from visits to the beach and the increasing awareness of the link between health and nature in the era depicted in the painting.

**Research** the games and sport that might have taken place at a seaside resort in England at this time.

**Compare** them to those played on beaches in Australia today.

### 7-12 FRAMING QUESTIONS

What emotive responses does this image evoke in you? Are they ones you would normally associate with the experience of the beach? Observe the scene. Identify three distinct zones in the composition. Describe them. Detail the activities you are witnessing. Are these activities of Conder's contemporary everyday life? What is Conder doing? Speculate.

What type of energy is present? Is it passive or active? Can a site like this be both? List other words that may be used to describe the atmosphere. Examine the work closely. Detail formal elements that support your position. Review your initial response. Does it still hold or has it shifted? Describe and explain.

This work is a return to *plein air* painting for the artist. Examine his technique. What clues suggest this painting was made out of doors, on site, with speed. Consider where the artist was positioned when painting the work. Is this Conder's point of view? How is the viewer led into the scene? Is the artist showing the actual location or giving us his impression of it?

Investigate other beach scenes produced by Conder. Compare *The sands, Newquay* with one of Conder's Australian and French beach scenes. Although the techniques are similar, how do the qualities of each work differ?

Was the beach a constant in Conder's life? Speculate on where this may have started. Track the key painting locations throughout his life. When and why does he site himself by the sea? Consider physical as well as psychological reasons.

Compare this work with the *The hot sands, Mustapha, Algiers*. Compare symbolic resonances in the two paintings. Consider in particular, the two young girls in the foreground. Think about how they complement each other. One gazes out of the picture plane, the other into it. What or who are they looking at? What might they represent for Conder or the viewer?

*The sands, Newquay* was among Conder's last works produced while convalescing from a stroke. Is there a sense of the artist acknowledging the inevitability of his own mortality in this work? Debate.