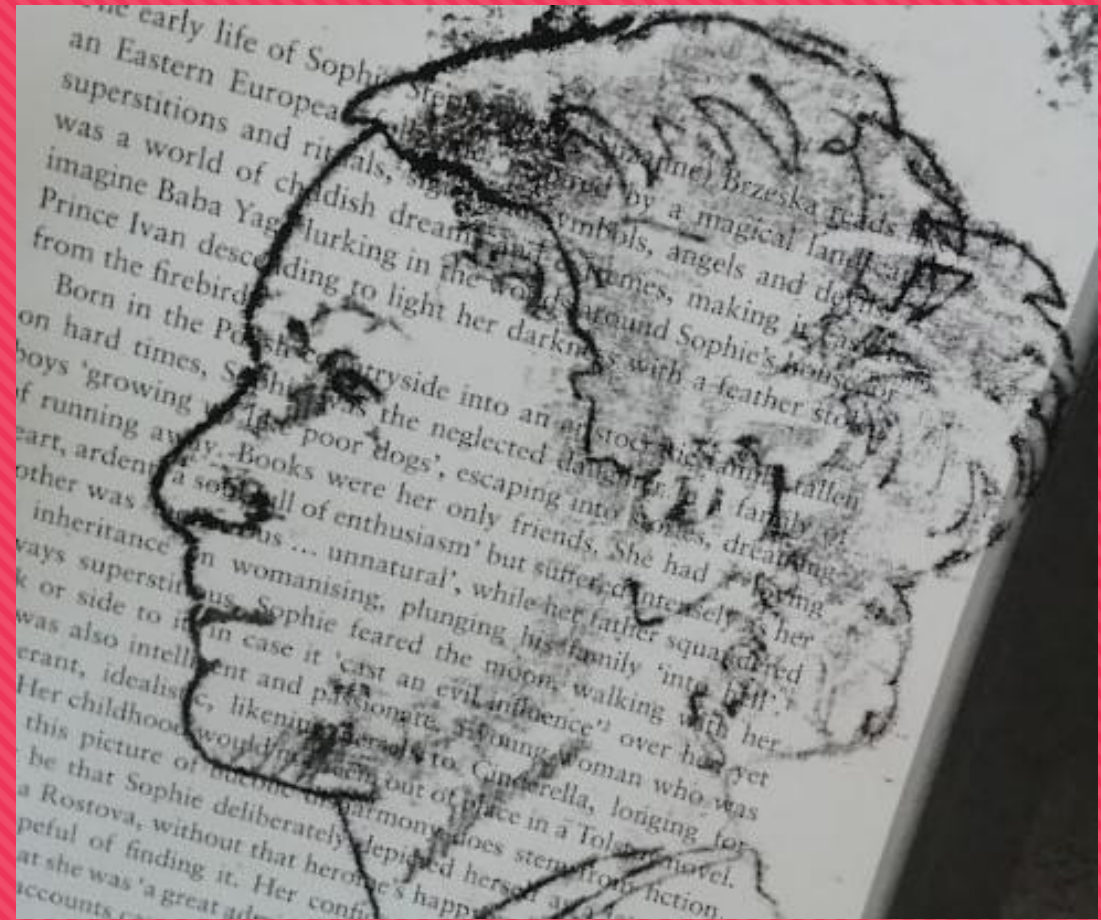


# Unsung heroines

**A pack of creative response activities for KS1/KS2**

**inspired by the life and work of Sophie Gaudier-Brzeska**

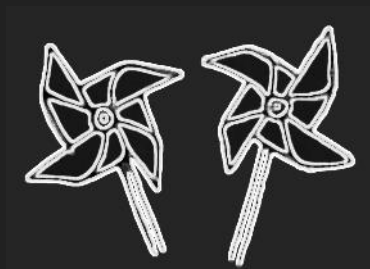


Linked to the exhibitions 'I/We also fight windmills'\*

\*A reference to 'battling' difficult, seemingly never-ending and often invisible challenges in life.

This resource was created for you by Teresa Smith, artist/ writer/ researcher/ educator, and contributor to the 'We Also Fight Windmills' artist collective exhibition at the Hundred Heroines Museum in April and May 2025.

Teresa works in the School of Education and Lifelong Learning at the University of East Anglia.



Whilst this resource takes the life and works of **Sophie Gaudier-Brzeska** as a starting point for ideas, the activities within it can be used more widely, beyond just learning about Sophie.

Its main aim is to **celebrate unsung heroines**, and to help pupils to think about **heroines in the world around them**.

Sophie lived in a time of greater gender inequality, and so her life and works can also be used to begin to explore women and the theme of **gender inequality through history**.

Creative acts including **art, writing and photography** are well-placed to shed a light on important issues and even to call for **change and social justice**. The arts can often be seen as a form of protest, and they can reach people on different levels, appealing directly to emotions as well as thoughts.

Remember our heritage is our  
power; we can know ourselves and  
our capacities by seeing that other  
women have been strong.

*Fudy Chicago*

# Educators' overview

- The activities in this resource have been written with KS1 or KS2 pupils in mind, although there is plenty of scope to adapt the ideas to other year groups or age stages too.
- In terms of the National Curriculum, there are many links that can be made to History and PSHE Education. Art and Design and creative writing approaches feature throughout.
- The activities are intended to be helpfully open, hopefully without too much narrow guidance to stifle your own educator creativity. This is purposeful, to allow you to pick and choose and make the activities your own – you know your pupils best, so please be sure to adapt, and add your own slant to the activities as required.
- When teaching children and young people about gender inequality in the past or the present, educators should encourage critical thinking and promote empathy and understanding. The teaching space should be a safe, supportive and inclusive environment for all.



# Why highlight women and gender inequalities in history?

- Learning about women and gender inequalities should, ideally, not be done as a standalone element or token gesture. This work is best done without othering either gender, and so, the activities in this pack can be completed in an ungendered way, looking at all unseen heroic/heroinic people around us.
- Nevertheless, I believe that there is a need to address aspects of gender inequality within all phases of education, and that it is vital to integrate women's history throughout the curriculum, highlighting the importance of women's contributions to our society in the past and present.
- The life and work of Sophie Gaudier-Brzeska offers a good starting point for those discussions, and so these activities are presented with Unsung Heroines in mind for this specific purpose.
- I think children and young people should be given opportunity ask pertinent questions of history and historical sources and make tangible comparisons to the current climate. Outlining some of the ways in which women's lives have been shaped over time and the inequalities that have resulted sets the scene for understanding gender inequality in contemporary society.
- If these conversations are enabled in primary education, children can be better prepared to challenge these when they encounter them at school, in the workplace, or at home. *recognized as an integral part of the human experience*

# Unsung heroines

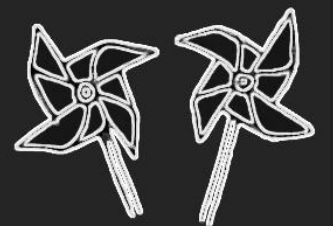
There are heroines throughout history, in every country and in every nation 'fighting windmills.' Many have unsung or neglected stories, just like Sophie, waiting to be discovered.

Yet no matter the discrimination that exists in this world, there are also many contemporary heroines that make the world better for everyone, from Emma Watson to Malala Yousafzai to Greta Thunberg.

Before moving onto the activities, you might choose to research some famous heroines who are fighting against stereotypes or for their freedom or their rights.

You might choose to research your local heroines in the past and present. Through this research you may find unsung, or less well-known, heroines.

In discovering them, we can celebrate the strengths of unsung heroines, like Sophie.



# Who was Sophie Gaudier-Brzeska?

b. 1872 in Galicia, Austro-Hungary, now Poland



d. 1925 in Gloucester, UK

Sophie Gaudier-Brzeska was a modernist writer and poet who wrote in three languages: French, English, and her native Polish.

# Who was Sophie Gaudier-Brzeska?

- Sophie worked as a nanny, teacher, and domestic worker in Paris, Philadelphia, New York, London, and various other locations. Her body of work includes short stories, a novel, an autobiography, an 800-page diary, poems, and plays.
- She was the partner of the French modernist sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, with whom she formed a unique artistic alliance, and they adopted each other's surnames. They arrived in England together in 1911 to dedicate their lives to art and literature. Henri died in WW1 in 1915.
- After Henri's death, Sophie then left London for Wotton under Edge in Gloucestershire. Tragically, she died forgotten in a mental asylum in Gloucester in 1925.
- Sophie's writings are housed in special collections at the University of Cambridge, the University of Essex, Kettle's Yard, and the Musée des Beaux-Arts d'Orléans in France. Her drawings are held at the National Galleries of Scotland.



# Sophie – the unsung heroine

- Sophie was a pioneering feminist writer, poet, and modernist whose life and work has long been untold and unseen.
- She dared to take herself seriously as a writer. She wrote prolifically throughout her life, but it was not until after her death that her writings were published.
- Her work challenged societal norms and conventional wisdom of her time, despite this making her an outcast in many social circles of her time.
- Her courage in pursuing her artistic vision, despite the barriers that she encountered along the way, define her as a heroine worthy of recognition.

# List of activities

1. **Windmills of hope:** Create a garden installation or procession of windmills offering messages of hope and courage.
2. **Words for wonderful women:** Build a paperchain that celebrates positive words for women.
3. **Powerful pockets:** Sew and decorate a pocket that challenges inequalities.
4. **Everyday heroines:** Creative writing prompts to help aid reflection on heroines you know and love.
5. **Strange thoughts:** Collage your dreams/the thoughts you have before you go to bed and imagine an amazing problem-solving machine.
6. **Decorated heroines:** Create an embroidered photographic portrait of an unsung heroine.
7. **Telling a (textile) story:** Fabric or paper samplers telling a story of a place.