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Rare books full of bright ideas illustrate value of art in class

A vibrant exhibition of school picture books, illustrated instruction manuals and anatomical models will pay homage to a generation of artists who became educational pioneers.

The display at the University of Edinburgh will explore how hand-painted visual aides were used from the 1930s through to the 1970s to make learning more engaging and effective.

How? Why? What? features a display of more than 100 objects, including a rare illustrated essay by George Orwell on what it means to be English.

Part of a *Britain in Pictures* series, it was commissioned by the Ministry of Information and published in 1947 to tell the story of the life in the UK and help boost morale during and after the Second World War.

A colourful array of illustrated books that helped children learn to read also feature in the exhibition. Used in primary schools from 1930s, they offer a nostalgic reflection on learning.

A bright yellow model aeroplane, made using instructions from a 1960s craft manual, demonstrates illustrators' skill in helping learners grasp design concepts.

Colourful dental moulds, anatomic models of body organs and a hand drawn drawing of the eye provide insights into medical training over the decades.

Exhibition curator John Brown, who is a lecturer in painting at Edinburgh College of Art Lecturer in Painting, said: "I wanted to pay tribute to artists and educators driven to make amazing images to teach. Optimism and clarity shines bright from the best of these illustrations and I hope that some can be rediscovered and re-evaluated by visitors that may have grown up with them."

How? Why? What? is on show at the University of Edinburgh's Main Library from 30 March until 30 June.

It is part of the 50th anniversary celebration of the Main Library. The listed building was designed by renowned Scottish architect Sir Basil Spence and was the largest UK university library when completed, with one acre of space on each floor.

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