

SECONDARY LESSON PLAN

Soldier to Healer: Sir Walter Raleigh's Medicinal Garden at the Tower (English/PSHE)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

For students to:

- Learn about Sir Walter Raleigh through the story of his imprisonment in the Tower of London and his medicinal garden
- Use Raleigh's letters to explore his mental and physical health during his imprisonment
- Write two contrasting diary entries, showing how Raleigh's outlook and focus changed in the later period of his imprisonment

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read the story of Sir Walter Raleigh's Garden (SM1) with the students
- Optional – complete the timeline ordering activity (SM3)

Room set-up

Space for pupils to discuss in groups and work independently at tables.

Additional resources needed

- A flipchart or large piece of paper

CURRICULUM LINKS

English – KS3: Reading

Understand increasingly challenging texts through:

- Learning new vocabulary, relating it explicitly to known vocabulary and understanding it with the help of context and dictionaries
- Making inferences and referring to evidence in the text
- Knowing the purpose, audience for and context of the writing and drawing on this knowledge to support comprehension
- Checking their understanding to make sure that what they have read makes sense

English – KS3: Writing

Write accurately, fluently, effectively and at length for pleasure and information through:

- Writing for a wide range of purposes and audiences, including: well-structured formal expository and narrative essays; stories, scripts, poetry and other imaginative writing; notes and polished scripts for talks and presentations and a range of other narrative and non-narrative texts, including arguments, and personal and formal letters

English – KS4: Reading

Understand and critically evaluate texts through:

- Drawing on knowledge of the purpose, audience for and context of the writing, including its social, historical and cultural context and the literary tradition to which it belongs, to inform evaluation

- Seeking evidence in the text to support a point of view, including justifying inferences with evidence
- Analysing a writer's choice of vocabulary, form, grammatical and structural features, and evaluating their effectiveness and impact

English – KS4: Writing

Make notes, draft and write, including using information provided by others [e.g. writing a letter from key points provided; drawing on and using information from a presentation]

PSHE Association - Health and Wellbeing

KS1

- How to identify and articulate a range of emotions accurately and sensitively, using appropriate vocabulary
- Strategies to understand and build resilience, as well as how to respond to disappointments and setbacks

KS2

- The characteristics of mental and emotional health; to develop empathy and understanding about how daily actions can affect people's mental health
- About change and its impact on mental health and wellbeing and to recognise the need for emotional support during life changes and/or difficult experiences

INTRODUCTION

Explain that in this lesson, students will be learning more about Sir Walter Raleigh's imprisonment in the Tower of London, and its impact on his mental and physical health. The students will also be thinking about what they could learn from Raleigh's experience to improve their own physical and mental health.

ACTIVITY 1

Raleigh's Letters

The aim of this activity is to explore Walter Raleigh's mental and physical health during the earlier part of his imprisonment, through extracts of letters that he wrote to his influential friends.

Pack resources: Activity Card 1 | SM2 | SM3

ACTIVITY 2

Raleigh in Despair

The aim of this activity is to begin to collect ideas for writing a diary entry in character as Walter Raleigh. Using his letters, students will summarise Raleigh's complaints and look for evidence of how he was feeling, as well as collecting examples of his writing style and vocabulary.

Pack resources: Activity Card 2 | AR1 | SM2

ACTIVITY 3

A Brighter Outlook

In this activity, students will look at the later period of Raleigh's imprisonment in the Tower, and explore how some of the activities he undertook during this period show evidence that his mental and physical health was improving.

Pack resources: Activity Card 3 | SM1 | SM4 | SM5

ACTIVITY 4

A New Focus

This activity is similar to Activity 2. The students will be collecting together ideas for a second diary entry, this time focused on the later period of Raleigh's imprisonment.

Pack resources: Activity Card 4 | AR2

ACTIVITY 5

Raleigh's Diary

The aim of this activity is for the students to write their diary entries in character as Sir Walter Raleigh, during the two contrasting periods they have looked at in detail. They will use their ideas from the previous activities to support them with this.

Pack resources: Activity Card 5 | AR3 | Completed AR1 and AR2 sheets

ACTIVITY 6

Plenary

In this final discussion activity, the students will relate Raleigh's experiences to their own lives and consider how they can look after their own mental health.

Pack resource: Activity Card 6

IDEAS FOR ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

These activities could be set as homework or extension tasks, or instead of one of the activities suggested in the lesson plan. You could also use them if you want to plan follow-up lessons.

Making Time

Explore how Sir Walter Raleigh was imprisoned, yet still found time to focus on activities that improved his mental health and wellbeing.

Ask students to look at their weekly schedule and plan out times and activities when they can focus on their own mental health and wellbeing.

What about Bess?

Remind students that Elizabeth (Bess) Raleigh was locked up in the Tower with her husband at times to keep him company, and had to spend much of her time bringing up their children on her own. Reread the parts of his letters where Raleigh alludes to Bess's own struggles and, perhaps, her anger at and frustration with her husband (SM2).

Ask students to write a letter as Bess to her husband during one of the times they were apart. What might she want to say to him? Students can write in a modern voice or have a go at using some of the period words and phrases used in Raleigh's letters.

Wellbeing Garden

Watch the video about the RHS Wellbeing Garden (SM3).

Ask the students to design their own wellbeing garden, including some of the plants that Raleigh used in his own garden or other plants of their own choosing. Encourage them to consider their senses (sight, smell, touch and taste) when choosing plants. This could be linked to a planting activity in school.

ACTIVITY CARD 1

Pack resources: SM1 | SM2 | SM3 (optional)

Raleigh's Letters

Introduce Raleigh and the circumstances of his imprisonment using SM1. You may want to use the event cards from SM3 to support this. Ask the students to reflect on how it would feel to enjoy all the wealth and privileges of Raleigh's position, only to have them stripped away in one fell swoop. Record some of the students' suggestions on a flipchart.

Explain that Raleigh sent many letters during his imprisonment, often begging his influential friends for help. From these letters, we can build up a pretty clear picture of his mental state at the time.

Give each student or pair one of the extracts of Raleigh's letters in SM2 to read through.

Ask them to read through the letter they have been given, try to decipher what Raleigh says about his plight, and what he asks for. They can use the glossary for each one to help them, they should underline any words or phrases they do not understand for discussion afterwards.

After they have had time to read through, ask some of the pairs or individuals to feed back to the class about what the letter says and discuss any difficult words or phrases.

Now share the modern translations with the students. How much did they get right?

ACTIVITY CARD 2

Pack resources: AR1 | SM2

Raleigh in Despair

Explain to the students that they are going to be having a go at writing diary entries in character as Walter Raleigh during two distinct periods of his imprisonment. The first will be based during the earlier phase, when these letters were written.

Hand out copies of AR1 and ask the students to look in their letter (SM2) for evidence of the following key points:

- What are Raleigh's main complaints?
- What does he want?
- How does he feel?

Model picking out key words and phrases and noting them down on the worksheet, then ask students to complete the task independently or with their partner. For added challenge, you might want to give some students copies of additional letters from SM2.

ACTIVITY CARD 3

Pack resources: SM1 | SM4 | SM5

A Brighter Outlook

Show students the short film *Soldier to Healer: Sir Walter Raleigh's Medicinal Garden at the Tower* on Historic Royal Palaces' YouTube channel and www.hrp.org.uk/superbloom-schools-learning-resources/. Recap that after the initial period of despair, Raleigh found the inner strength to begin to work and create again (use SM1 to support). He created a garden, began to make his own plant-based remedies and wrote his most famous book, *The History of the World*.

Ask students to reflect on how and why his outlook might have changed, using the following discussion prompts:

- Why do you think Raleigh's outlook changed?
- How could engaging with activities like gardening, making medicines and writing books help him?
- Can you think of a time in your life when you managed to change your outlook from feeling very negative to feeling more positive?
- What activities helped you to do that?

Establish with the students that having activities and projects to keep busy can be good for our mental health. Watch the Royal Horticultural Society videos (SM4), which explore some of the research into the benefits of gardening for mental health.

ACTIVITY CARD 4

Pack resource: AR2

A New Focus

Look at some of the examples of the students' answers to the questions in Activity 2. It is clear from the letters that his main focus was the physical and psychological pain he was experiencing, and that he was desperately looking for an escape.

Discuss what the students think Raleigh was focusing on later on in his period of imprisonment:

- What do you think Raleigh spent his time thinking about?
- What does he want?
- How does he feel?

Hand out copies of AR2, and explain that they will be using these worksheets to capture their ideas for the second diary entry. Challenge them to add words and phrases that they think Raleigh might use to describe his situation.

ACTIVITY CARD 5

Pack resources: AR3 | Completed AR1 and AR2 sheets

Raleigh's Diary

The students have now captured ideas from two distinct and contrasting periods of Raleigh's imprisonment. Earlier on, when he felt desolate, ill and miserable and later, when he had found the strength to take on projects and he was physically healthier.

Explain that the students now need to write 2 diary entries for Walter Raleigh's diary. Discuss the success criteria with them (adapt these according to the age and level they are working at). Explain that a key focus is aiming to show the contrast between the way Raleigh felt and behaved early on and the way he felt and behaved later. Encourage them to use ideas, words and phrases that they captured in AR1 and AR2.

Model the beginning of the first diary entry, then ask students to work independently to write their own.

ACTIVITY CARD 6

Plenary

Although we cannot be certain that Raleigh's change in spirit and health can be attributed entirely to taking up gardening and the other activities that historians know he engaged in during his imprisonment, it does seem likely that it helped.

Ask the students to think about their own lives and any times when they have experienced challenges or struggles (e.g. Lockdowns during the Covid 19 pandemic). What helped them? Do they have any hobbies that contribute positively to their own mental health?

Using Raleigh's letters, note down some key points for each of the following questions. You will use these to help you to write your diary entry later on. Remember to also note down some of the vocabulary and phrases that Raleigh used, as these will help you to write in character.

What are Raleigh's main complaints?

What does he want?

How does he feel?

Consider the later period of Raleigh's imprisonment and the projects he occupied himself with. Make notes to answer these questions. Try to include vocabulary and phrases that Raleigh might use, as these will help you to write in character.

What do you think Raleigh spent his time thinking about?

What does he want?

How does he feel?

Try to include vocabulary and phrases that Raleigh used in his letters, as these will help you to write in character.

October 1st 1604

May 16th 1614



Sir Walter Raleigh was an English statesman, soldier, writer and explorer. He was one of the most notable figures of the Elizabethan era. He was a favourite in Queen Elizabeth I's court and is well-known for popularising tobacco in England.

Raleigh was born into a protestant family in Devon, in 1554. As a young man he fought as a soldier in France and in Ireland.

He went on several expeditions to explore lands that were new to Europeans. He attracted the attention of Queen Elizabeth I. He played the handsome courtier and wrote elegant poems in the Queen's honour. He was also a privateer and raided treasure from Spanish ships (most of which he gave to Elizabeth). The Queen rewarded Raleigh with land, property, business opportunities and a knighthood.

In 1585, Raleigh was granted a patent to colonise North America, sending a large expedition to Virginia (named after Elizabeth, who was known as the Virgin Queen).



In 1591, Raleigh married Bess Throckmorton, one of the Queen's maids of honour, in secret and without the Queen's permission. When Queen Elizabeth found out she was furious and imprisoned them both in the Tower of London. This imprisonment was short lived and, after playing a major role in defending England from the Spanish Armada in 1596, Raleigh was back in the Queen's favour.





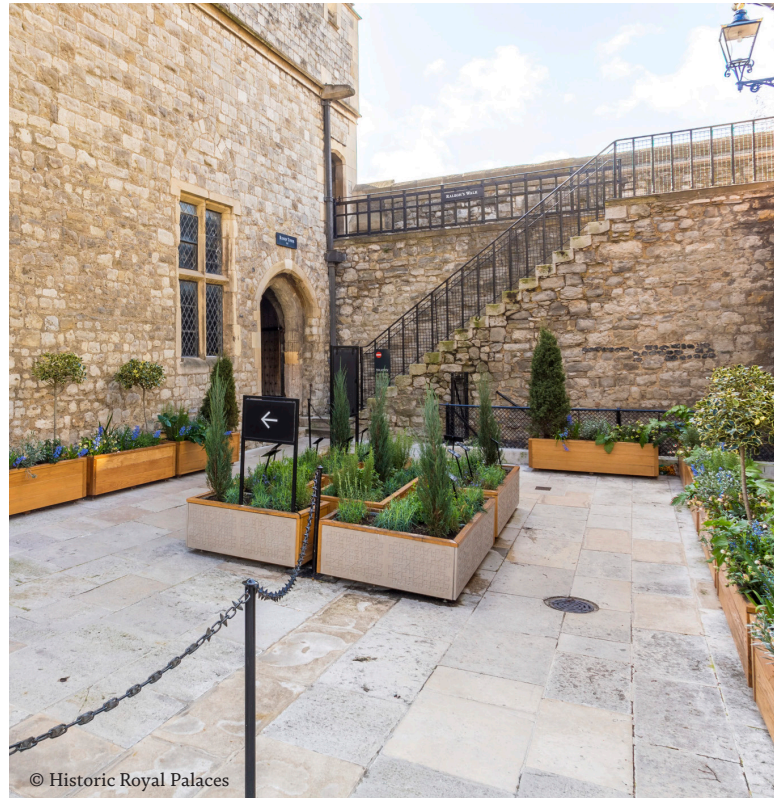
James I © Royal Collection Trust



However, when Queen Elizabeth I died in 1603, and her nephew King James I took the throne, Raleigh's luck started to run out. He found himself back at the Tower in 1603, accused of plotting against the new king. He was probably innocent.

Despite being sentenced to death, Raleigh remained a prisoner at the Tower until 1616, living in the Bloody Tower, at times with his wife and family. Their youngest son Carew was born in the Tower in 1605 while his father was a prisoner.

Living under threat of execution and frequently ill, Raleigh became suicidal. In the winter of 1604, he wrote of his 'misery drawn out into a long thread without all hope'. His poor health left him struggling to speak and temporarily paralysed on his left side, possibly as a result of a stroke.



During his imprisonment, Tower officials let Sir Walter Raleigh create his own medicinal garden. Here, he grew herbal ingredients for his medicines, including plants from the New World, such as sassafras trees and tobacco. Raleigh is credited with popularising smoking in England, much to the distaste of James I. He also converted a henhouse into a laboratory to make his remedies, including his 'Great Cordial' and 'Balsam of Guiana' using strawberry water and quinine.

Despite being a prisoner, Raleigh received regular visitors at the Tower, many of whom wanted to buy his medicines. He was allowed to talk with fellow prisoners, including Lord Cobham, Lord Grey and Henry Percy, the Earl of Northumberland. Percy was known as 'The Wizard Earl' due to his interest in alchemy and science. These men spent their time reading, writing and conducting experiments, creating a hub of intellectual activity within the Tower walls.

Eventually, Raleigh's health and intellectual spirit returned. He built up a magnificent library and wrote his greatest book *The History of the World*.

James I eventually pardoned Raleigh and released him in 1616 to search for gold in Guyana (in South America). However, the voyage was a huge failure and the King ordered Raleigh's execution.

On October 29th 1618 Raleigh was beheaded at Westminster.

1. Written in 1605 to Secretary the Earl of Salisbury

...(I) adventure once again to beseech you to remember my long suit... I lay before your Lordship the true cause of my **importunateness**. The one is (which I speak in the presence and fear of God) that I am every second or third night in danger either of sudden death or off the loss of my limbs and sense, being sometimes two hours without feeling or motion of my hand and whole arm. I complain not of it. I know it **vain**, for there is none that hath compassion thereof. The other, that I shall be made more than weary of my life by her crying and bewailing who will return in post when she hears of your Lordship's departure and nothing done. She hath already brought her eldest son in one hand and her **sucking child** in another, crying out of her and their destruction; charging me with unnatural negligence, and that having provided for mine own life I am without sense and compassion of theirs...

I **beseech** your Lordship, even as you must one day beg comfort from God and cry unto him for his abundant mercy, that you will be pleased to spare the time, and to finish and effect, in some sort, your heart's intent toward me. If I could either help or blame their cries and impatience, I would, for myself, leave all to God and your Lordship. But, if your Lordship spare one thought towards this estate I mine, I cannot but hope of some happy end; which I leave to your Lordship's goodness to resolve of, and rest your most miserable creature to do you service,

W Raleigh

Glossary

importunateness	being overly persistent, in a troublesome way
vain	a disease that killed many people
sucking child	a young baby, still breastfed
beseech	beg

2. Written in 1604 to Secretary Lord Viscount Cranborne

*Since the time that my wife was last with your Lordship I have withered in body and mind. By whom I **perceived** a sad change in your Lordship's **favour** towards me, on which all my hopes have ever lived, and made me live. Not for the discomfort of liberty only, but in that it pleased your Lordship to think that I had dealt ungratefully with you since my troubles; which, as there is a God, I never did, nor could so much as think to do...*

*I have presumed at this time to remember your Lordship of my miserable estate – daily in danger of death by the **palsy**; nightly, of suffocation, by wasted and obstructed lungs. And now, the plague being come at the next door unto me, only the narrow passage of the way between. My poor child having lain this 14 days next to a woman with a running plague sore, and but a paper wall between – and whose child is also this Thursday dead of the plague. So as now my wife and child, and others in whom I had comfort, have abandoned me; and in what fearful estate, the Lord knows.*

*My most humble desire is to be removed elsewhere, even to what place which God's goodness, and Charity, shall move your Lordship's heart; that I be not left alone and **remediless** as well for this visitation as for other as **lamentable** diseases which possess me.*

Glossary

perceived	noticed
favour	approval
palsy	paralysis or failure of a part of the body to function properly
remediless	without remedy, medicine
lamentable	to be regretted or mourned

3. Sent in Winter 1604-5 to Lord Cranborne

To the right honourable my singular good lord the Lord Cecil, Viscount Cranborne etc

*That life which can be of no use to others and is now also weary of me, at parting puts me in mind of those whom nature and charity commands me not to neglect – a wife and a child and a wife with child whom, God knows, have nothing else to inherit than my shame and their own misery. How to help it and to whom to complain I know not, whose fortune is over dark for the reason of the world to pierce. And I, who can neither pay old debts nor deserve new trust, cannot be so **partial** to my self but to know to press your lordship (who have already cast back unto me all I have) were either foolishness or **impudency**...*

(WISHES CECIL TO ENCOURAGE PROGRESS IN SITUATION OF SHERBORNE ESTATE)

For mine own time, good my lord consider that it cannot be called a life but only misery drawn out and spun into a long thread without all hope of other end than death shall provide for me, who, without the help of kings or friends, will deliver me out of prison...

*As there is a God I know myself bound unto your lordship, and which I would pay again if I could with a gratitude never **surmounted**.*

WR

Glossary

partial	biased, favouring one over another
impudency	rudeness
surmounted	overcome, reached the peak of

4. *Written on 5th October, c. 1611 to Sir Walter Cope*

Sir Walter Cope: you were of my old acquaintance and were my familiar friend for many years, in which time I hope you cannot say that ever I used any unkind office towards you... My desire unto you is that you will be pleased to move my Lord Treasurer (Salisbury) in my behalf, that by his grace my wife might again be made a prisoner with me, as she hath been for six years last past, she being now divided from me and thereby to my great impoverishing I am driven to keep to houses. A miserable suit it is and yet great to me who, in this wretched estate, can hope for no other thing than peaceable sorrow...

Sir, the matter is of no great importance (though a cruel destiny hath made it so to me) to desire that my wife may live with me in this unsavoury place. If by your mediation I may obtain it I will acknowledge it in the highest degree of thankfulness and rest ready in true faith to be commanded by you.

W Raleigh

Glossary

office	action or service
unto	with reference to
thereby	connected to
a miserable suit	the situation does not suit him, it is a miserable fit for him
unsavoury	unpleasant, not nice
mediation	finding a solution between two disagreeing people or groups

Raleigh's letters in modern English

1. *Written in 1605 to Secretary the Earl of Salisbury*

...I'm afraid I'm writing to you again about my ongoing situation... To be honest, things are really bad because, God knows, I feel I'm in danger of sudden death without warning [possibly fear of execution], developing gangrene [through infection and filthy conditions] or losing my mind. Every couple of nights, I lose the feeling and mobility in my hand or the whole arm, sometimes for 2 hours at a time. I don't bother complaining anymore, because I know that nobody here [at the Tower] cares. Secondly, if my wife finds out that you've left without helping me, she'll start crying and wailing and push me close to the edge. She's already been here with our eldest boy and the baby, screaming that her life and theirs have been ruined, accusing me of completely neglecting them, and of only looking out for my own comfort without noticing or caring about theirs...

I beg you, your lordship, just like you'll be begging God for forgiveness one day [after death], to take the time to help me. If I could help my family or if I could dismiss the arguments they give me for crying and being at their wits' end, I'd leave whatever happened next in God's hands and yours, but that's not the case here. If you feel even the smallest bit of sympathy for me and the terrible situation I'm in, then I can still hang onto some hope that it can be sorted out somehow. I know I sound pathetic, but if you can help, I'll be forever in your debt.

W. Raleigh

2. Written in 1604 to Secretary Lord Viscount Cranborne

After my wife saw you last, my physical and mental health have gone downhill. Based on what she told me, I'm now afraid that your attitude towards me has become negative. Up to now, I've really depended on your support - it's given me a reason to keep going. I'm worried you think I haven't appreciated that support since I got into such trouble. That makes me feel even sicker and discomfort, in addition to the discomfort of my imprisonment. I have pinned a great deal of hope upon your support - it has kept me going.

Please don't forget the awful situation I'm in. Every day I'm at risk of dying from paralysis and of suffocation every night, due to my weakened lungs. Now the neighbours have the plague and there's only a narrow passageway between their door and ours. For the last fortnight, my poor child has had to sleep with just a paper wall between him and a woman with the plague. This woman's child died of the plague on Thursday. Everyone I felt I could turn to has abandoned me to God knows what next, even my wife and child.

Can you find it in your heart to have me moved somewhere else? You decide where – as long as I'm not left by myself without any treatment for the health problems I'm struggling with.

3. *Sent in Winter 1604-5 to Lord Cranborne*

To the Right Honourable Lord Cecil,

My wretched life is coming to an end, and I find myself thinking of my family - who I should be looking after, yet I cannot. On my death, they will inherit only shame and misery. I do not know who to turn to for help. I cannot pay old debts or gain the trust of those who do not know me and I know that asking you, who has already helped me as much as I deserve, is either rude or foolish.

(WISHES CECIL TO ENCOURAGE PROGRESS IN SITUATION OF SHERBORNE ESTATE)

My life cannot even be called a life, but rather a long unending thread of misery. There is no hope of an end except death, the only way I will get out of prison without the help of friends or kings.

As God is my witness, I pledge my loyalty to you. If you can help me, I will pay you back in endless gratitude.

WR

4. Written on 5th October, c. 1611 to Sir Walter Cope

Sir Walter Cope, you have been a good friend for many years, and I hope that you do not think I have ever shown you any unkindness. My wish is that you will persuade Lord Salisbury that on his authority my wife can again join me here in prison. She spent the last 6 years here, but we have now been separated and, as a result, my situation is much worse. I know that this is a pathetic and sorry thing to ask for, but in my situation the best thing I can hope for is quiet sadness.

Sir, I appreciate that whether my wife joins me in this disgusting place or not may be unimportant (although, by a cruel twist of fate, it is of great importance to me). If you can make this possible, I would be more grateful than I can say, and would honestly be prepared to do whatever you order me to do in return.

W Raleigh

1554

Sir Walter Raleigh was born in Devon.

1569-1580

As a young man, he fought as a soldier in France and in Ireland.

1580

Queen Elizabeth I made Raleigh a knight. He was a favourite in her court. She gave him a big house to live in and made him a wealthy man.

1585

Raleigh organised several expeditions to Virginia in North America in search of gold and brought back new plants to England.

1591

Raleigh secretly married Bess Throckmorton, one of the Queen's maids of honour, without the Queen's permission. Elizabeth imprisoned them both in the Tower of London.

1592

Bess and Raleigh were released from the Tower. In the following years, Raleigh managed to win back Elizabeth's favour.

1603

Queen Elizabeth I died. The new king, James I, suspected Raleigh of plotting against him and threw him back into the Tower!

1603-1616

Raleigh remained a prisoner in the Tower for 13 years. His mental health suffered, he became very ill and attempted suicide.

1603-1616

Raleigh created a garden beside the Bloody Tower. He grew herbs and other plants, which he used to make medicines.

1603-1616

Over the years, Raleigh's health returned. He began writing books and built up a magnificent library.

1616

King James I released Raleigh to go on an expedition to find gold in Guyana. The expedition was a failure and Raleigh was sentenced to death.

29 October 1618

Raleigh was beheaded at Westminster.

[illegible]

These videos from the Royal Horticultural Society on Youtube could be used to enhance the students' understanding of the mental and physical health benefits of gardening.



1. Gardening and wellbeing research with Lauriane Chalmin-Pui | Royal Horticultural Society (1:42)
2. RHS Wellbeing Garden (2:42)



Show your students the short film *Soldier to Healer: Sir Walter Raleigh's Medicinal Garden at the Tower* on Historic Royal Palaces' YouTube channel.