



THE STORY OF JESSIE GAVIN

Depth Training CIC

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This pack has been created to support schools, students, and community groups in exploring the remarkable life of Jessie Gavin — a bold Victorian artist from Oxton, Wirral, who became known locally as “Oxton’s First Gentleman Jack.” Through her art, identity, and love for pioneering architect Eileen Gray, Jessie defied Victorian expectations and carved her place in creative circles alongside figures like Oscar Wilde and Picasso.

This project combines live theatre with heritage learning, celebrating both local LGBTQ+ history and the power of creativity.



HOW TO USE THIS PACK

Teachers and facilitators can use this pack in classrooms, workshops, or as independent reflection. Each activity is flexible — adapt the time, age group, or format to suit your setting.

At the end of each section, you'll find Discussion Prompts to help spark conversations.

JESSIE GAVIN & LGBTQ+ HERITAGE

Jessie Gavin's life story highlights themes of:

- Identity and self-expression in restrictive times.
- LGBTQ+ heritage often hidden in mainstream history.
- The importance of art and creativity as a form of resistance.

Discussion Prompts:

- Why do stories like Jessie's matter today?
- How do LGBTQ+ histories connect to broader local heritage?
- What barriers still exist in creative industries or society today?



CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

This pack is designed to link with the following curriculum areas:

- History – exploring Victorian society, hidden histories, and LGBTQ+ heritage.
- English – discussion prompts, debates, and reflective writing.
- Art & Design – costume design, symbolism, and self-expression through visual media.
- PSHE / Citizenship – identity, equality, diversity, and inclusion.
- Teachers can adapt activities for Key Stages 3–5. Differentiation suggestions are included in activity notes.



CREATE A COSTUME DESIGN

Task: Research Victorian fashion and sketch a costume for Jessie or Eileen Gray. What colours, patterns, or symbols would show their personality?

How does what we wear express who we are?



DEBATE - THEN & NOW (EQUALITY & RIGHTS)



Task: Debate the statement: “Society today has fully embraced LGBTQ+ equality.”

- Split into two groups, for and against.
- Share reflections afterwards.

What progress has been made since Jessie’s time? What still needs to change?

DIFFERENTIATION & ADAPTATION



Each activity can be adjusted for age, ability, or setting:

- Younger students (KS3) – focus on creative tasks (drawing, group discussions).
- Older students (KS4/5) – develop extended written reflections, debates, or research-based projects.
- SEND learners – use visuals, scaffolded sentence starters, and flexible timings.



SUPPORT & RESOURCES



It's important to talk about identity, heritage, and belonging safely. If you or someone you know would like support, here are some organisations you can turn to:

- Sahir House – Local LGBTQ+ support.
 - Stonewall – National LGBTQ+ charity.
 - The Proud Trust – Youth support organisation.
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SAFEGUARDING

Facilitators should ensure that conversations about identity and equality take place in a safe and respectful space. Where sensitive topics arise, signpost learners to appropriate support organisations (listed above) and follow your institution's safeguarding policy.



CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

For those of who are interested in exploring a career in the creative industries this is a great activity for you to look at.

Examine the different roles that made The Story of Jessie Gavin possible — writer, director, dramaturg, actors, stage manager, sound/light engineer, marketing, archivist.

- Pick one role you'd like to try and explain why.
- Bonus: Write a short “job ad” for that role.

Discussion Prompt: How could you see yourself working in the creative industries?






REFLECTIONS

“Learning about Jessie has shown me how much history leaves out. It makes me want to find more hidden stories.” –
KS4 student (attended the performance)

“I loved the costume design activity because it helped me imagine how Jessie expressed herself in her time.” – Student participation

“Jessie’s story is inspiring for today — it shows how creativity and courage can change society.” – University student -
Workshop



HOW TO ASSESS LEARNING

- Ask students to write a short reflection on what Jessie's story means to them.
- Create a class display of costume designs with captions explaining choices.
- Run a debate and assess students' ability to use historical evidence in arguments.
- Encourage journal entries, blogs, or video reflections as alternative assessment methods.



THANK YOU!

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