

Watch this space

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Jigsaw websites for the work-shy

ALWAYS being one for a bit of webwabbing (work avoidance behaviour on the internet) I was more than pleased when reader Melissa Stocks introduced me to one of the best procrastination websites ever. Following on the mention of the National Geographic jigsaw site in last week's column, she wrote: "The best jigsaw site is www.jigzone.com. Whereas the National Geographic's pics are 64 pieces, Jigzone has a variety of sizes and, even better, a variety of shapes for the pieces. My favourite is the set of lizards, which interlock a la Escher."

I went to see, and it is just great. I especially like the Fine Art section, where you get to put together great paintings chopped up. You can change the shapes and number of puzzle pieces - you can choose from a range of circles, polygons, tetris shapes, stars and waves, among others, and most of these are much harder than the traditional jigsaw shape. Try doing a picture of a cat while the puzzle pieces are shaped like birds, and your brain sweats.

If I were an art teacher, I'd make my students do these puzzles as homework to teach them to really look at great paintings, but I could also have them photograph and upload their own pictures, cut them into puzzles and reassemble them. It's a great way to look at your own work with a different eye.

Another interesting site for art teachers - though older students only because of the content - is the work of Canadian singer and animator Chad Vangaalen. He writes, sings and records his own songs, and accompanies some with simple but punchy animation. He seems to use the most basic of programs - something like Microsoft Paint, which comes standard with Windows - to create anarchic and fascinating images. I like him a lot, but he's not for the pure of heart. Find his song *Flower Gardens* at <http://tinyurl.com/yezflye>.

Genevieve Cutts sent in a link to another animated site, this time on the VUZU tv website (www.VUZU.tv). She writes, "Sci-fi thriller *Afterworld* has been incredibly popular worldwide and has been broadcast on TV as well as on the web. VUZU launched it on their website last month, with two three-minute episodes released each day. It's part graphic novel, part cinematic narrative, part prime-time drama." There are 130 episodes of this post-apocalyptic story in all. The graphics are great and *Afterworld* looks worth watching.