Making sense of the eighteenth century

Pressures on curriculum time force us all to make difficult choices about curriculum content, but the eighteenth century seems to have suffered particular neglect. Inspired by the tercentenary of the accession of the first Georgian king and the interest in the Acts of Union prompted by this year's referendum on Scottish independence, Katharine Burn explores some of the dimensions that tend to get lost, and asks how much they matter. Drawing on a range of scholarly interpretations, on the evidence around us in the period's surviving buildings and on the dazzling array of printed materials that poured off the presses once the the monopoly of the London Stationers' Company had been overturned, she offers ideas for a range of enquiries that might help to redress the balance.

Katharine Burn
Katharine Burn is an Associate Professor of History Education at the University of Oxford.

Mind the gap

I have a confession to make. Until last year, I had never really studied the eighteenth history. While I was rather ashamed of this gap in my historical education, its existence offers anecdotal confirmation of the claim that the episodic nature of young people's knowledge of the past is far from being a new phenomenon.[1] Long before the advent of the National Curriculum, it was perfectly possible to secure excellent O- and A-level – and even degree – results in the subject despite a gaping hole in the 'chronological framework' or 'narrative' which is now strongly promoted as a desired outcome of history education.[2] I suspect, however, that I was far from alone in my ignorance. While the worst excesses of 'Hitler and the Henrys' have been expunged from individual exam specifications, the most popular A-level options still tend to focus on either the early modern period or on the twentieth century. Interviewing applicants for teacher education programmes or reviewing their 'subject knowledge audits', as I now do, regularly reveals that while some history graduates may have become more adventurous at university, their curiosity most often takes them to other parts of the world rather than back to earlier or intervening periods of British history they may have missed. Indeed, so obscure does much of the eighteenth century appear to be that I have begun to turn to sources from that period in training sessions when I want beginning teachers to experience for themselves the extent to which interpreting sources and drawing inferences – 'skills' which they initially assume will be easy for pupils – actually depend on substantive knowledge of the historical context. This is a phenomenon they come to appreciate only as they begin to flounder.

Ignorance is hardly a recommended basis from which to write an article for *Teaching History*! The journal's pages attest to the wealth of knowledge – the extensive reading, thoughtful scholarship and often local and archival research – on which great teaching fundamentally depends. Yet I think it worthwhile to set out some of fruits of my very recent forays into this period precisely because so few history teachers feel confident in approaching it. Perhaps my early enthusiastic encounters might inspire them to give it a go. My aims here are, first, to acknowledge why the gap has arisen and to consider whether it really matters, given the inevitable need for selection in shaping *any* history curriculum. After explaining why I think that ultimately it does matter, I simply want to share a number of the exciting discoveries that I have made on a brief foray into the works of historians, through immersion in the exhibits recently chosen by the British Library for their celebration of all things Georgian and from a simple stroll through the surrounding streets of London. By asking, 'What matters most about the eighteenth century?' I hope I might entice the novice, new and nervous in this particular field to follow in my footsteps and encourage them to reach their own conclusions.

My confession is, of course, somewhat over-stated. There are several aspects of the eighteenth century with which I am actually very familiar. Although the third element of the 1991 National Curriculum unit 'Expansion, Trade and Industry: Britain 1750-1900' has perhaps tended to be down-played in recent years, with attention more specifically focused on the transatlantic slave trade, I was at one time well acquainted with the stories of certain eighteenth-century inventors and entrepreneurs as well as with the long campaign of the abolitionists and the horrors about which they protested.[3] It was in seeking to capture students' interest in turnpike trusts and explain how canal mania came to grip the country that I first discovered the benefits of role-play and simulation exercises. And when originally obliged to teach the history of a European turning point before 1914, it was to the French Revolution that my department turned.

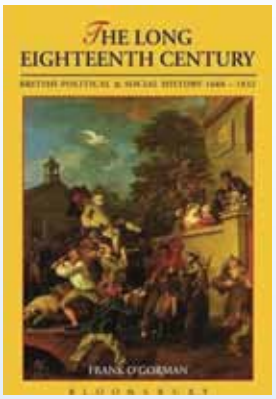
All these developments obviously took place in the eighteenth century and yet I have never really felt secure in my knowledge of the period. I was troubled by a sense of disjunction or even dislocation that seems to make little sense in the context of a National Curriculum that has (at least from 1991 to 2008) specified the inclusion of a series of British history units running from 1066 to 1900.[4] Yet certain elements were undoubtedly missing, a fact highlighted by Byrom's celebration of their (re)appearance in the revised curriculum for 2014, and his puzzled query as to what the Georgians had done 'to be sidelined for so long?'[5]

Why did the Georgians go missing?

Their absence – and my sense of a gaping hole – derive, I think, from two key features of the National Curriculum, both obviously compounded by lack of time for the subject, the problem that arose when the original vision of 'history for all' to the age of 16 was abandoned. The first is the 'chunking' of British history into discrete chronological units. It takes *very* rigorous curriculum planning indeed and probably a will of iron to ensure that developments towards the end of each period receive as much attention as those at the beginning. While every history department that I have ever encountered brings enormous passion and drive to the Norman Conquest of England and to the roller-coaster ride of the English Reformation, few bring the same zeal or commitment of time to the Wars of the Roses and accession of the first Tudor monarch, or to the Acts of Union and extraordinary acts of contortion involved in securing the Protestant succession! To be honest, within the period 1500-1750, many departments chose to stop with the restoration of the English monarchy. Teachers, anxious to secure knowledge and understanding, rather than mere coverage of the curriculum, rarely found it possible go further within the time constraints of Key Stage 3.

When we came to the third of the chronological units, spanning 1750 to 1900, even those who could not muster much enthusiasm for the industrial revolution invested intensively again in the dramatic and traumatic transformations that hinged upon the slave trade and Britain's imperial expansion. Domestic politics was generally only revisited in the nineteenth century to examine the various struggles for the franchise. Here, at least, the logic of extending the story to include women's eventual victory has tended to mean that most schemes of work succeed in reaching – and surpassing – the stipulated end-date! The second feature that explains the uneven treatment of the eighteenth century thus seems to have been the thematic switch from one perspective to another, as history departments are forced to make choices about how to do justice to the range of different facets of the human past. Religious history closely entwined with political history in the early modern period is abandoned in the pursuit of economic and imperial themes that so obviously shaped the nature of Britain's engagement and interactions with the wider world. The choices are entirely defensible – and yet they militate against the construction of a coherent whole – the kind of joined-up framework that would actually allow us to see the present as fully connected to, and a product of, the past.

Figure 1: The cover blurb for *The Long Eighteenth Century* by Frank O'Gorman, published in 1997



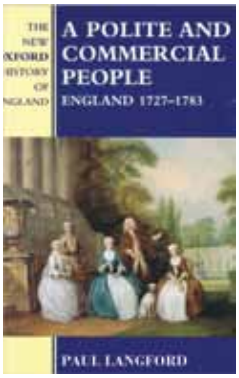
The 'long eighteenth century' in British history, the period from 1688 to 1832, defies easy characterisation. To examine its political and social history is to be struck by the complexity of its values and practices. Some of its features – the growth of towns, the demand for political, social and humanitarian reform, and the establishment of parliamentary government – anticipate the concerns of later generations and impress us with their familiarity. The huge inequalities of wealth, on the other hand, the destitution of the masses, and the harsh treatment of children are ills made remote by their sheer intensity and scale.

Acknowledging the complexities, this study identifies the key thematic patterns that constitute much of the consistency of the period. It examines the development of the internal structure of Britain and of a sense of British nationhood; the role of religion in the life of the state and of the people; the slow transition from a society of orders to a society based increasingly on class distinctions; the commercial and imperial expansion which contributed so much to the prosperity of British society; the growing role and status of Britain in Europe; and the development, albeit uneven, of liberal forms of political thought and action.

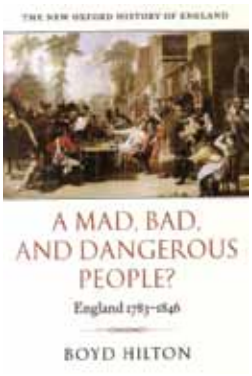
Figure 2: The contents page from *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1883* by Paul Langford, first published in 1989.

1. Introduction
2. Robin's Reign 1727-1742
3. The Progress of Politeness
4. Industry and Idleness
5. Patriotism Unmasked 1742-1757
6. Salvation by Faith
7. The Fortunate Isle
8. Patriotism Restored 1757-70
9. New Improvements
10. The Birth of Sensibility
11. Britannia's Distress 1770-1783
12. Macaroni Manners
13. Opulence and Glory
14. This Happy Constitution

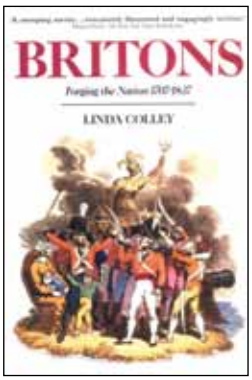
Figure 3: A selection of titles that could be used to develop initial hypotheses about what historians think matters most about the eighteenth century



A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783
Paul Langford (1989)



A Mad, Bad and Dangerous People? England 1783-1846
Boyd Hilton (2008)



Britons: forging the nation 1707-1837
Linda Colley (1992)

Georgians Revealed: life, style and the making of modern Britain
Moira Goff, John Goldfinch, Karen Limper-Herz and Helen Peden (2013)

The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political and Social History 1688-1832
Frank O'Gorman (1997)

The fact that the books by Langford and Hilton are successive volumes in the same series (the New Oxford History of England) immediately prompts the response 'What could possibly happened in 1783 to make such a difference?' or calls into question the appropriateness of Langford's choice.

How realistic is the prospect of their return?

For those like me concerned to fill in some of the gaps, 2014 looks like a propitious moment – certainly for the Georgians. Although far from being the most famous anniversary to be celebrated this year, the tercentenary of the accession of the first Hanoverian monarch falls on 1 August and the lavish exhibition now drawing to a close at the British Library is only one of a number of commemorative and educational events celebrating the fact. The torch will soon be passed to the Historic Royal Palaces, the Royal Collection Trust and the BBC.[6] The earliest years of the eighteenth century will also be brought to mind this year. September's referendum on Scottish independence will perhaps focus attention as never before on the Acts of Union, with this extraordinary chapter in the 'Making of the United Kingdom' given profound resonance by the prospect of its dissolution. For any teacher eager to help students to appreciate the contingent and shifting nature of historical significance, such events will be hard to overlook.

The new curriculum itself, due to be implemented from September, also invites a fresh look at the whole period. As Byrom has pointed out, the area of political study now entitled 'Ideas, political power, industry and empire: Britain 1745-1901' is about 'far more than the industrial revolution'. History departments, he advises, 'need to be satisfied that they do justice to all the aspects in the title and to the full sweep of time encompassed'.[7] The other stimulus offered by the revised curriculum is one of the 'hidden strengths' that Byrom acknowledged within the reviled first draft: its attention to the question of how students might actually use their developing knowledge by revisiting and reframing what they have already learned in the light of subsequent insights and new knowledge. The final aim of the new curriculum is that students should:

> *...gain historical perspective by placing their growing knowledge into different contexts, understanding the connections between local, regional, national and international history; between cultural, economic, military, political, religious and social history; and between short- and long-term timescales.*[8]

As this statement of intent makes clear, the development of historical perspective is no easy task. It requires three kinds of connections: between developments operating on different geographical scales; between different dimensions of human experience (and the different types of history that have evolved to make sense of them); and between different time-scales. This asks a great deal of young people – and therefore of their teachers, who need to design a curriculum that not only shifts between those different scales and dimensions of past experience, giving enough attention to each to make meaningful comparisons and connections possible, but also pauses for long enough at appropriate vantage points for students to consider what they can now see that was not visible to them before. The time pressures under which we operate become all the more acute if we are to take this injunction seriously: while we cannot possibly encompass every dimension the process of making connections becomes extremely problematic if some themes are simply abandoned at certain points in history as others are picked up.

The unfinished stories of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries

Yet this has been my experience of the eighteenth century as, I suspect it has, of many Key Stage 3 students. In taking up the themes of agricultural and industrial revolution, of commerce and conquest, they lose sight altogether of the religious and political themes that previously loomed so large. The former may be lost forever, leaving curious young people wondering why so much attention was devoted to the Reformation if religion thereafter apparently ceased to matter. Struggles for the right to be represented within parliament may be revisited in the nineteenth century, but those students whose last memory of the monarch was the restoration of Charles II, may be profoundly perplexed about how the power to which he was restored had apparently vanished. England's foreign relations may well not have been reviewed since the late sixteenth century when the ill-fated Armada focused all attention on Catholic Spain, not France. Taking seriously a commitment to developing young people's sense of historical perspective may prompt us to look again at those unfinished stories – or rather (since all stories are actually unfinished) to look at those stories in which there are such severe disjunctions between the past and the present, or indeed between different periods in the past, that students cannot see any relationship, or lines of connection between the two. Leaving such disjunctions, I fear, will tend to provoke not curiosity but rather more contemptuous dismissal of the irrelevance of the past, or of its incomprehensibility.

While there are plenty of inducements therefore to reappraise our treatment of the eighteenth century, it would be naïve to imagine that this will necessarily be easy or straightforward. The pressure of time, as Hall and Counsell lamented in their discussion of the first draft of the revised National Curriculum, remains the real problem, and is acute for those to whom only two years has been allocated for Key Stage 3.[9] Moreover, the artificial distinctions created by dividing British history into chronological chunks (a problem side-stepped by the thematic approach of the 2008 curriculum) have been reinstated, albeit with revised dates that might ensure proper attention is given to the further constitutional crises created by the Catholicism of the later Stuarts and its impact on the relationship between England and Scotland).[10] Byrom may highlight the fact that the three sections of the curriculum are not presented as 'units' to be taught as 'self-contained tidy narratives' but the temptation to see them in those ways may be hard to resist.[11] Even harder to resist, however, may be the forces of inertia, given the profound relief that all the suggested content is presented merely as guidance in addressing each of the stated headings. With the prospect of significant changes to GCSE looming, history departments might understandably choose to conserve their energies and save their budgets for the upheaval ahead. Yet the thrust of those changes, which so far seem to be intended to broaden the range of periods studied by 14–16-year-olds and to include more thematic studies over time, also seem to be inspired by a desire to enhance students' sense of historical perspective.[12] Preparation for GCSE study could well be enhanced by more careful attention to the underlying chronological framework that we have helped students to construct.

What matters most about the eighteenth century?

The arguments advanced by historians

It doesn't take long, even for a novice, to recognise the enormity of this question, which is eloquently summed up by the publicity for Frank O'Gorman's work in Figure 1.[13] But simply asking it serves as one way of helping students to see that studying the past is not simply about the past; it involves a series of choices about what we think it is most important or worthwhile to learn and even the most straightforward choices are much more difficult than they first seem. Before we decide *what*, we might even have to decide *when*. The National Curriculum originally split the period in two, less concerned with political precision than with the economic and social changes heralded by industrialisation. The slight shift from 1750 back to 1745 acknowledges perhaps a concern with British nationhood. But even those seeking a more holistic approach to the eighteenth century have adopted different start and endpoints. The editors of the Oxford *Very Short Introduction* decided in their selection of Paul Langford's work that little sense could be made of the period without starting further back, with the overthrow of James II in 1688.[14] Perhaps to compensate for the early start, but equally mindful of the symmetry in terms of the monarch's fate, Langford concludes early too with the overthrow of the French king, Louis XVI, just over a century later. O'Gorman, who shares the view that 1688 makes a more natural starting point, effectively declares parliament to be his dominant theme by opting for *The Long Eighteenth Century* and continuing his book until the Great Reform Act of 1832.[15] Linda Colley, however, whose theme is the 'forging of the nation' chooses the Act of Union between England and Scotland in 1707 as her starting point and extends her account as far as the accession of Victoria in 1837.[16] It is obviously easier for those who have chosen to use labels conventionally derived from the monarchs themselves, but that provides another kind of framing altogether, starting with the accession of George I in 1714 and ending with the death of his great-great-grandson, George IV, in 1830. Asking students to find out what happened in the opening and closing years that each has chosen and inviting them to speculate about what the author's choices might reveal about their particular historical perspective could help them to see how a change in vantage point can shape or reflect the way in which we actually see the past.

Figure 4: Using Colley's argument to develop possible enquiry questions

The central argument of Linda Colley's *Britons: forging the nation 1707-1837*

[One intention is] to show that it was during this period that a sense of British national identity was forged, and that the manner in which it was forged has shaped the quality of this particular sense of nationhood and belonging ever since, both in terms of its remarkable strengths and resilience and in terms of its considerable and increasingly evident weaknesses.

What made these themes, mass allegiance on the one hand and the invention of Britishness on the other, so central during this 130-year long period was a succession of wars between Britain and France…. (p.1)

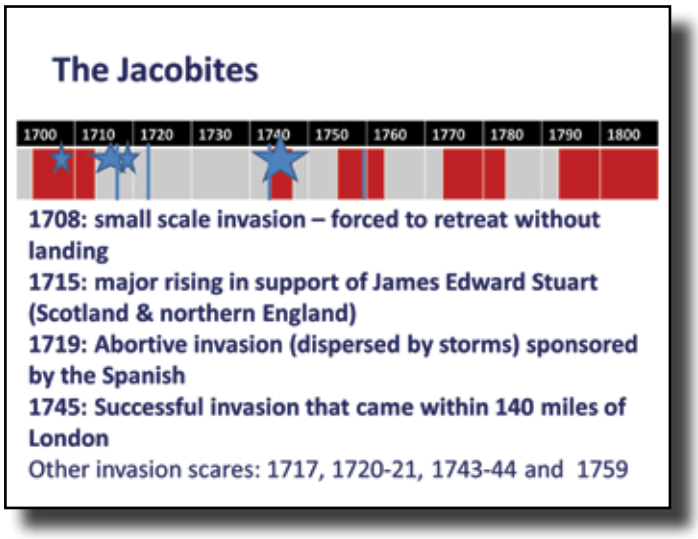
It was an invention forged above all by war. Time and time again, war with France brought Britons whether they hailed from Wales, Scotland or England into confrontation with an obviously hostile Other and encouraged them to define themselves against it. They defined themselves as Protestants struggling for survival against the world's foremost Catholic power. They defined themselves against the French as they imagined them to be, superstitious, militarist, decadent and unfree. And increasingly, as the wars went on, they defined themselves in contrast to the colonial peoples they conquered, peoples who were manifestly alien in terms of culture, religion and colour… They came to define themselves as a single people not because of any political or cultural consensus at home, but rather in reaction to the Other beyond their shores. (pp. 5-6)

Questions prompted by Colley's thesis

- How did the experience of war shape the people of Britain?
- For how long did religion go on shaping political life in Britain?
- How can we explain the (changing) relationship between Britain and France?
- Was the defeat of the Jacobites inevitable?

Stimuli to provoke students' curiosity about these questions

- A simple time-line with the periods of war marked out – but not labelled as such – provides an intriguing way into the long eighteenth century. What might the shading represent?
- Once the explanation is given, students can be asked how that experience might be expected to have shaped people's lives and ways of thinking.
- If the timing of the various Jacobite rebellions is then added, what can we infer about how they operated and the likelihood of their success?



Sources through which to explore these questions

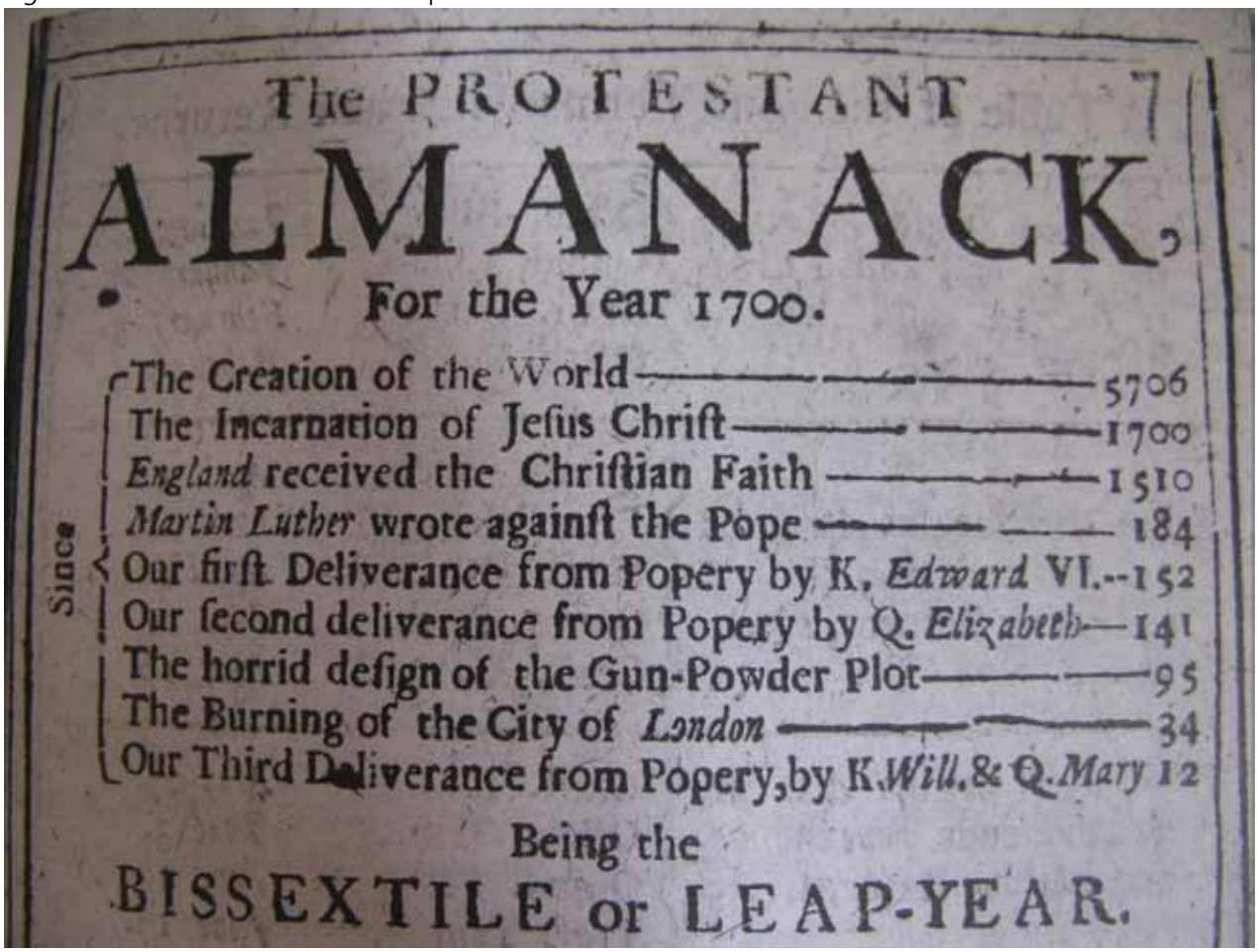
The golden age of caricature presents an enticing array of accessible images such as those opposite that repay detailed study. Easy assumptions about the strength of Francophobia can be quickly confounded by equally striking evidence of Francophilia, such as fashion plates depicting Parisian styles or the streams of visitors who flocked to Paris in the summer and autumn of 1802 during the temporary cessation of hostilities following the Treaty of Amiens.

'Politeness' by James Gillray, hand-coloured etching published by Hannah Humphrey 1779
© The Trustees of the British Museum

'French liberty British slavery' by James Gillray, hand-coloured etching, published by Hannah Humphrey 21 December 1792
© National Portrait Gallery, London

Figure 5: Illustration of 'The Burning of Katherine Cawches and her two daughters in the Isle of Garnsey, printed in the 1671 edition of *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*

Figure 6: An extract from the frontispiece of *The Protestant Almanack for the Year 1700*



Inviting students to see the dilemmas that historians face in deciding how to organise their work might also help in this respect. Langford in the preface to his eighteenth-century volume within the New Oxford History of England explains the problem brilliantly, lamenting how much easier things used to be. Fifty years earlier, his predecessor and his readers knew exactly what such a national history ought to look like: 'the demands of narrative and the hegemony of political history imposed a pattern which was widely accepted. Social, economic, religious and cultural history were treated as separate and subsidiary matters'.[17] By the late 1980s when Langford was writing, any such consensus had long since broken down and with 'no general agreement on what constitutes the proper province of the historian, let alone a ready formula for balancing the requirements of narrative and analysis' he admits that his own solution is 'something of a compromise'.[18] It involves retaining four narrative chapters describing 'matters of State' but the remainder are constructed around themes (rather than 'neatly differentiated topics or broad categories such as "social", "economic" and "cultural"'), each 'selected with reference to a major preoccupation of the time'. Since each chapter has also been given a 'contemporary expression for its title', one introduction to the question 'What matters most' could be based simply on Langford's contents list (see Figure 2), asking students what they can infer from such a list about the nature of those preoccupations, and perhaps even which *they* would be most interested in investigating.

So far, my consideration of what matters most has been guided by two kinds of criteria. The first, given focus by the revised National Curriculum's emphasis on 'historical perspective', was an interest in the unfinished stories of early periods, the questions that I think are left hanging and that need to be addressed in some way in structuring a usable framework of the past. The second, to which I have also alluded, is the guidance offered by historians. If their cover blurbs and contents pages serve to illuminate the challenges they face in reducing the period to some kind of order, their titles, just as much as the time-spans on which they settle, put forward intriguing claims about what matters most. As Figures 3 and 4 suggest, historians' titles (and the illustrations that they choose to accompany them) can therefore be used very effectively to pique students' curiosity and give shape and definition to specific enquiries. While the ever-expanding collection of podcasts assembled by the Historical Association tends to adopt rather more prosaic titles (that help enormously with navigation through the period), particular phrases in an audio-broadcast can also serve to encapsulate current interpretations and stimulate significant questions. 'Was the development of Britain's imperial power in India really "an unplanned ad hoc process", as Jon Wilson claims?[19] When and how did the shift from 'profitable company to loss-making sovereign' occur? Stephen Conway turns easy causal assumptions on their head in relation to Britain's American colonies, immediately inviting listeners to wonder 'Just how unexpected was the American Revolution?'[20] Should the conflict really be regarded as a crisis of integration rather than disintegration?

Beyond the pithy and provocative claims of historians, two alternative approaches were suggested by a visit to the British Library exhibition and its accompanying book, *Georgians Revealed: Life, style and the making of modern Britain.*[21] The first was prompted by its title and the second by its encouragement to visitors to venture beyond the exhibition hall and out into the streets of London.

The preoccupations of the present

Starting with the present might be regarded as a rather unhelpful suggestion. Historians rightly warn against the dangers of presentism – the anachronistic introduction of present-day ideas and perspectives into interpretations of the past. Yet we cannot deny that it is the present that often stimulates our interest in the past, and asking students to evaluate the accuracy of claims about the origins of current phenomena could be a useful way of alerting them to the inappropriate assumptions of continuity that they might be making. The fact that the British Library's claim for the Georgians can be neatly set alongside the title of Simon Heffer's *High Minds: the Victorians and the birth of modern Britain* published the month before the exhibition opened could set up a stimulating overview question, inviting students to consider the nature of change within and between both periods, asking which, if either, had the best claim.[22] Starting from the present and asking students to suggest the key characteristics that they think define 'modern Britain' could provide an alternative route into the question, encouraging them to consider not only whether any of the elements that they have identified were present in the Georgian period, but also how similar their influence was. One of the most obvious and productive parallels is that of advances in communications. The students with whom I have tried this task all offer the Internet and the role of social media in communication as defining characteristics of modern Britain. The nature of the exhibition (not least, perhaps, because it is set in a library) leaves at least one reviewer (albeit a journalist) in no doubt that the 'printing press is the real star' of the show':

> *Unsurprisingly, given its holdings, the exhibition celebrates the role of print in the making of this busy new world. Government censorship before publication ended in Britain when the Licensing Act lapsed in 1695. Simultaneously, the London Stationers' Company lost its monopoly of publishing and presses multiplied. An explosion of newspapers, pamphlets, books, serials, advertising and ephemera was the result.*[23]

The quality and range of printed sources available (in handy postcard packs from the British Library bookshop, but also in their permanent on-line gallery) allow students to pursue the comparison exploring how the burgeoning print industry shaped the world of eighteenth-century Britons.[24] While *Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies* might evoke parallels that should not be further pursued, the availability of daily newspapers first in London from 1702 and then in the provinces offers interesting comparisons with the rise of 24-hour news coverage; other enduring influences can be seen in the outpourings of fashion magazines and the advent of catalogue shopping.[25] The necessary correction comes, however, with more detailed consideration of the output of the presses. As Colley points out, it was 'religious works that formed easily the bulk of what every printing press was producing' in this period:

> *For the subordinate classes, this must have been the aspect of the explosion in printed material that affected*

Figure 7: What can Thomas Coram's Foundling Hospital tell us about the eighteenth century?

Thomas Coram, painted by William Hogarth in 1740.

Students familiar with royal portraits – perhaps especially the 'Armada portrait' of Elizabeth I in which she sits with her hand upon a globe, the defeated Spanish ships visible behind her – can bring their decoding and understanding of inference to bear on this image of Thomas Coram. As Colley explains:

Broad, downright and ruddy, [Coram] poses confidently, his back against a massive pillar, his hair a benignant white and his own, not covered by a looped or pig-tailed wig as it should have been for fashionable society. His clothes, too, are comfortable but plain, the coat cuffs turned well back so as to free his hands for business…

Emphatically a state portrait, in the sense that it is clearly intended to be viewed by an admiring public, its subject is neither royal nor patrician. Instead, to one side of Coram is the open sea and a sailing-ship, and by his stoutly buckled shoes is a globe – an emblem of dominion – turned to show the Atlantic Ocean which he had crossed and re-crossed as a young man, plying his trade as a shipwright. Not inherited rank or broad acres, but commerce and enterprise are visibly the foundations of this man's virtue. Coram, as Hogarth paints him, is the self-made man of trade as hero.[26]

Coram, the son of a Dorset ship's captain, had worked for ten years in the American colonies as a ship-builder and salesman. When his first charitable campaign – a project to settle demobilised sailors and soldiers in the colonies – failed, he turned his attention to the fate of hundreds of the poorest children in London, particularly those born illegitimate. After 17 years of campaigning, the Charter incorporating the Hospital for the 'Maintenance and Education of Exposed and Deserted Young Children' was signed by George II in 1739.

The charity's aim was 'mercantilist as well as humanitarian': once grown, the girls were sent out as servants and the boys went to sea or worked in husbandry. Publicity techniques were both 'inventive and unabashedly commercial'.[27] Hogarth and other enterprising artists began exhibiting their paintings in the hospital's public rooms, encouraging the rich to come and gape, then stay to give.

Eventually the annual meetings of the Foundling artists – held every 5 November in honour of the Revolution of 1688, of liberty and of Protestantism – led to the creation of the Royal Academy of Art.

The Foundling Hospital moved to a new building in Brunswick Street in 1745.

Admission to the Foundling Hospital by Ballot, by Nathaniel Parr after a painting by Samuel Coram

From 1741 to 1760 16,282 babies entered the institution. There were so many applications that a system was devised in which coloured balls were placed in a bag and parents asked to make a lucky dip.

[T]he expressions of Grief of the Women whose Children could not be admitted were Scarcely more observable than those of some of the Women who parted with their children so that a more moving Scene can't well be imagined.

But this 'moving Scene was also a public spectacle' for the more fortunate social classes who came to watch. As Colley notes, while Coram's hospital might seem to confirm the moral of his portrait – a pioneering charity founded by self-made men and run by others of the same kind – 'he still had to dance attendance on the court, on Parliament and on individual patricians and their bored and elegant wives'.[28]

them the most general: the fact that Protestant theology and polemic, be it the authorised version of the Bible, or the works of Bunyan and Foxe and the like, or the more popular sermons were now broadly accessible in geographical terms, and far more accessible too in terms of price. In this sense, the freeing of the printing presses in 1695 can be seen as completing the popularising of the Protestant Reformation'.[29]

Successive reprintings of *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* – in 31 sections in 1732, in 60 cheaper parts in 1761 and 1776, and 80 even cheaper instalments in 1784 and 1795 – ensured that together with the Bible and a handful of almanacs, it came to be 'one of the few books that one might plausibly expect to find in even a working-class household'.[30] The illustration of the burning of Catherine Cawches and her daughters from the 1761 edition in Figure 5, and the example of a Protestant Almanack shown in Figure 6, reveal just how virulent anti-Catholicism and the patriotic narrative of beleaguered Protestantism was.

The richness of the available resources

While print offers one fascinating route into the world of the eighteenth century, architecture and its surviving buildings offer another. Here I am indebted to the British Library's free exhibition guide, which devoted half of its content not to exhibits within the library but to other buildings within its vicinity. A stroll along nearby streets quickly reveals another way in which the eighteenth century has helped to shape the world in which we now live. While the establishment of Wolburn Walk, London's first pedestrianised shopping street, and the architecture of surviving buildings, such as Sir John Soane's Museum, provides particular kinds of insight into the Georgian mind-set, the specific question posed by the leaflet offers a richer and more engaging enquiry by inviting visitors to consider what counted as *entertainment* for the Georgians. While admiration for artistic endeavour, exploration and education feature prominently, the notion of 'spectacle' extends much more widely. Thus alongside the objects and works of art collected by the architect John Soane, and the 71,000 books, antiquities and natural specimens that the physician Hans Sloane bequeathed to the nation in 1753 to form the basis of the British Museum, are set the anatomical and surgical collections assembled by John and William Hunter in the late eighteenth century and the process of admission to the Thomas Coram Foundling Hospital.[31] Although only the gateway and two original colonnades survive of the original 'hospital' – actually a home for illegitimate children – its story is preserved in the nearby Foundling Museum (and the charity continues to support vulnerable children and families and to lobby on policy and practice issues today). The themes drawn together in Coram's story and sketched out in Figure 7 offer another way of developing historical perspective and perhaps bridging the extremes of familiarity and remoteness encapsulated, as O'Gorman noted, in the (long) eighteenth century.[32]

REFERENCES

[1] Ofsted (2011) *History for All: History in English Schools 2007-10.* Ofsted's concern in this report was focused on the experience of primary school pupils, but the problem has been widely recognised as extending across the secondary school curriculum and was famously referred to by Labour MP Gordon Marsden as a 'yo sushi' approach to history education. See www.theguardian.com/uk/2005/dec/18/politics.secondworldwar

[2] The revised National Curriculum for 2014 suggests that students should come to 'know and understand the history of these islands as a coherent chronological *narrative*' [my emphasis]. DfE (2013) *National Curriculum in England: history programmes of study*, available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-history-programmes-of-study. Ofsted, however, also suggest that young people need to be able to locate the separate periods and events that they study within a 'coherent chronological framework'. Ofsted, *op. cit.,* p.4. The notion of a 'framework' that young people might *use* both to construct 'big pictures of the past' and to orient themselves in time (relating the past to the present and the present to the future) has been most fully elaborated by Denis Shemilt and his colleagues and has been taken up by teachers in a variety of ways. See for example, Howson, J. and Shemilt, D. (2011) 'Frameworks of knowledge: dilemmas and debates' in I. Davies (ed.) *Debates in History Teaching,* Abingdon: Routledge, pp.73-83; Nuttall, D. (2013) 'Possible futures: using frameworks of knowledge to help Year 9 connect past, present and future' in *Teaching History, 151, Continuity Edition,* pp.33-44*;* and Instone, M. (2013) 'Moving forwards while looking back: historical consciousness in sixth-form students' in *Teaching History, 152, Pulling it all together Edition,* pp.52-60.

[3] DES (1991) *History in the National Curriculum (England)* London: HMSO.

[4] DES *op. cit.;* DfE (1995) *History in the National Curriculum (England),* London*:* HMSO; DfEE/QCA (1999) *History: The National Curriculum for* England; London QCA.

[5] Byrom, J. (2013) 'Alive … and kicking? Some personal reflections on the revised National Curriculum (2014) and what we might do with it' in *Teaching History Curriculum Evolution Supplement,* pp.6-15.

[6] For details of the range of Georgian-themed events at Hampton Court, Kensington and Kew Palace see www.hrp.org.uk/. 'The First Georgians: Art & Monarchy 1714-60' runs from April to July at the Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace. Details from www.royalcollection.org.uk/. A BBC4 series 'Hanoverians: The First Georges' presented by Dr Lucy Worsley will explore 'how this unlikely new dynasty secured the throne – and how they kept it'. See www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2013/two-four-new-commissions.html

[7] Byrom, *op. cit.,* p.12.

[8] DfE (2013) *op. cit.*

[9] Hall, K. and Counsell, C. (2013) 'Silk purse from a sow's ear? Why knowledge matters and why the draft History NC will not improve it' in *Teaching History, 151, Continuity Edition,* pp.21-26.

[10] The National Curriculum for History (England) published in 2007 for implementation from 2008 was originally published online by QCA. Since being discontinued the website has been archived and it has been made available online by the National Archives at http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130802151252/ www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/curriculum/secondary/b00199545/history The new curriculum to be implemented from 2014 breaks the curriculum for British history into three sections – 1066-1509, 1509-1745 and 1745-1901 – which ensures that the defeat of the last significant Jacobite rising (although not the Battle of Culloden) would fall within the second section.

[11] Byrom, *op. cit.* p.12.

[12] DfE (2013) *GCSE History subject content and assessment objectives.* Available online at www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/206146/GCSE_History__final.pdf

[13] O'Gorman, Frank (1997) *The Long Eighteenth Century,* London: Bloomsbury.

[14] Langford, P. (2000) *Eighteenth Century Britain: a very short introduction,* Oxford: Oxford University Press. The text by Langford was first published in 1984 as an edited chapter within O'Morgan, K. (ed.) (1984) *The Oxford Illustrated History of Britain,* Oxford, Oxford University Press.

[15] O'Gorman *op. cit.*

[16] Colley, L. (1992) *Britons: forging the nation 1707-1837,* New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

[17] Langford, P. (1989) *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783,* Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. ix.

[18] *Ibid.,* p. x.

[19] Wilson, J. *The British Empire in India* (Podcast) Historical Association. Available online at www.history.org.uk/podcasts/#/p/45

[20] Conway, S. *The British Empire: relations with the American colonies* (Podcast) Historical Association Available online at www.history.org.uk/podcasts/#/e/249

[21] Goff, M., Goldfinch, J., Limper-Herz, K. and Peden, H. (2013) *Georgians Revealed: life, style and the making of modern Britain,* London: The British Library.

[22] Heffer, S. (2013) *High Minds: the Victorians and the birth of modern Britain,* London: Random House.

[23] Vickery, A. (2013) 'From wigs to Whigs: uncovering the Georgian era' in the *Guardian,* 25 October. Available online at www.theguardian.com/culture/2013/oct/25/whigs-wigs-uncovering-georgian-era

[24] www.bl.uk/learning/histcitizen/georgians/georgianhome.html

[25] *Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies or Man of pleasure's calendar* was published annually from 1757 to 1795.

[26] Colley, *op. cit.*, pp.57-58

[27] *Ibid.*, p.59

[28] *Ibid.*, p.61.

[29] Colley, *op. cit.,* p. 42.

[30] *Ibid.,* p. 26.

[31] Sir John Soane's Museum can still be visited in Lincoln's Inn Fields. For details see www.soane.org. Details of Hans Sloane's bequest can be found on the British Museum website at www.britishmuseum.org/about_us/the_museums_story/sir_hans_sloane.aspx The Hunterian Museum, which now forms part of the Royal College of Surgeons, can be found at www.rcseng.ac.uk/museums/hunterian/history For information about the Foundling Museum see www.foundlingmuseum.org.uk

[32] O'Gorman, *op. cit.,* cover. (See Figure 1)