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# Investigating Narrative Forms Of History Pedagogy In Primary Initial Teacher Education In England

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*Narrative forms of history may have a controversial status amongst professional historians, but the evidence for using narrative approaches in primary history is principally based on educational psychology and research into pedagogy. The literature review summarised the main arguments for narrative approaches as increased pupil engagement, a starting point for enquiry, an introduction into the complexity of history and the promotion of historical imagination. This project employed two narrative techniques, 'powerful stories' and 'event framing, with non-specialised undergraduate primary trainees in an English university. Evidence from focus group interviews and online questionnaires suggest that if asked to conduct narrative based activities, trainee teachers respond enthusiastically and recognise some of the challenges and educational outcomes of story based activities.*

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Engagement and imagination, England, Focus group interviews, Historical imagination, Initial Teacher Education, Narrative, Primary history, Questionnaires, Story approaches

## INVESTIGATING NARRATIVE FORMS OF HISTORY PEDAGOGY IN PRIMARY INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION IN ENGLAND

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### Abstract

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### Introduction

The principal aim of this research project was to investigate ways in which narrative approaches to historical teaching and learning could be incorporated into university sessions for non-specialist students studying for an undergraduate degree in primary education as part of Initial Teacher Education (ITE), and secondly to evaluate student responses to these sessions.

The research began in 2013 and has evolved into two principal story-based interventions: firstly a teaching input I have termed 'powerful stories' as a way of engaging interest in the past and as a starting point for enquiry; secondly, a previously researched technique termed 'event framing' (Vass et al, 2003) designed to promote historical reasoning and tests of plausibility. It is also an ongoing project in terms of evaluation and improvement as the interventions form an important part of my work with primary trainee teachers. The evidence collated was a combination of focus group interviews and an online questionnaire conducted between 2015 and 2016; and although aspects of the project have been researched before, notably by Vass, these have tended to be school-based projects rather than with trainee primary teachers.

The second aim of the project was to encourage the use narrative approaches as an acceptable form of primary history pedagogy. It can be reasonably claimed that narrative forms of history have not always been popular with academic historians; however, the concerns of professionals should not necessarily shape all aspects of primary pedagogy. Lang (2003) argued persuasively that there should be a clear separation between the pejorative intellectual attitudes towards narrative forms of history, which remain within academic history, and the stronger case for using employing narrative forms for educational purposes. Indeed the literature review for this project, revealed a number of important arguments for the use of narrative as a foundation for primary history pedagogy.

### Literature Review

Despite Green and Troup's (1999, p. 204) claim that narrative forms have often been perceived as a defining aspect of history writing, many professionals have demonstrated a rather uneasy relationship with narrative, possibly fearful of inadvertently supporting postmodernist accusations that history is little more than unverifiable stories about the past (Jenkins, 1991; Marwick, 2001).

Arguably the most important and influential postmodernist critic has been Hayden White. Beginning with *Metahistory* (1973), and developed in later essays (White, 1976; 1978; 1999), White's principal argument is his belief that historians inevitably select, shape and interpret their ideas in the form of their political and philosophical belief systems, which then manifest themselves in a number of literary and narrative genre (White, 1999, pp. 7-10); and that in essence there is really no meaningful difference between history and creative fiction since both are constructs of the mind and given shape and meaning through imposed literary forms, which then account for the huge variety of interpretations about almost any historical event.

Postmodern accounts of history have not been universally accepted; the main counterargument has been that historians, unlike historical novelists, are channelled by the historical evidence which necessarily shapes historical writing. This was Elton's (1972) main claim, and it has received support from Evans (2000), who further argued that sources demand high levels of engagement. He illustrated this point by using the metaphor of a conversation with the past rather than a simple dialogue, and one circumscribed by a complex set of rules that historians adhere to in an implicit way (Evans, 2000, pp. 115-6). As a retort to postmodernism, he concluded that historians do ultimately produce a defensible and distinct form of knowledge that is distinguishable from historical fiction (Evans, 2000, pp. 240-53).

Nevertheless, whatever the claims and counterclaims between postmodern theorists and academic historians, the link between narrative forms and historical accounts is clearly identifiable in the major historical works and should therefore be acknowledged, if not embraced. As Stone (1987, p. 74) stated, 'historians have always told stories', often using elegant, literary forms that can contain high levels of analysis. Michael Wood used his 2014 Cockcroft Rutherford lecture at the University of Manchester to explore his belief that the enduring appeal of his long and successful television career has principally been due to his ability to engage the viewer with historical narratives. Wood commented that 'history is story and we're all story tellers. I've always loved stories and found them fascinating' (Wood, 2014, p. 18). Tosh and Lang (2006, pp. 148-9) made a similar point when they claimed that the great writers of history have generally been skilled at creating 'dramatic and vividly evocative narrative'; and perhaps unsurprisingly other successful popularist historians such as A. J. P. Taylor (1983) and David Starkey (2005) have also described themselves as essentially narrative based story-tellers.

Of arguably greater significance for history educators, particularly primary teachers who are not necessarily subject specialists, is the relatively recent rehabilitation of narrative as a pedagogical approach from a number of educational theorists. Farmer and Cooper (1998) claimed this rehabilitation began around the late 1990s, and it is perhaps not coincidence that this was around the time Grant Bage (1999) became a powerful advocate for narrative approaches in schools. His principal argument is that children respond enthusiastically to stories from history, and therefore part of a teacher's approach should be based on these ancient and fundamental models of learning, particularly the drive to find out 'what happened next'. More specific claims include the place of narrative pedagogy as one of the main organising concepts of history (Gjedde, 2010; Levstik and Barton, 2011; Counsell, 2012) and one of the ways in which children can meaningfully engage with the past. For example one important claim is that historical accounts

that are both chronological and narrative in form allow children to see the 'big picture' of history that supports both the development of an overview combined with depth and understanding (Hake and Haydn, 1995; Riley, 1997; Barnes, 2002). The introduction of adult concepts and themes in history has often been considered to be an important barrier for children's attainment of historical understanding (Edwards, 1978, pp. 54-71), partly due to the superficial ordinariness of historical terms, resulting in teachers often making assumptions about pupils' understanding of historical language. Here too the use of story can arguably put words into a human context that children can understand (Hoodless, 2004; Little et al, 2007). Therefore history can arguably be presented in a form more understandable from a child's perspective.

There is also some support from the work of educational psychologists and theories of learning, particularly constructivist approaches. Although Piaget (1946) discussed the links between a child's burgeoning understanding of time and narrative through their mental reconstruction of events, and thus the development of an understanding of the complex links between narrative and time, it has arguably been Bruner (1996) who has considered the importance of narrative as part of his account of learning. Narrative forms, he claimed, offered an alternative to the logico-mathematical form of reasoning and testability, through offering a 'test of truth', based on verisimilitude, internal cohesion and plausibility (Bruner, 1996, pp. 90-2). Specifically considering the case of history, Bruner further argued that history offered a 'narrative construal of reality' (Bruner, 1996, p. 130), and one that imposed coherence on the past through 'culturally shared' forms of knowledge, predominately based on narrative accounts.

Kieran Egan (1997) has developed these themes even further with his 'recapitulation' account of cultural history and education. Accounting for the development of human understanding from mythic accounts to something he termed romantic understanding, he argued that very young children should be introduced to mythic forms of learning through legends that emphasise binary language structures such as good and evil, or heroes and villains, told through powerful narrative and rhythmic forms (Egan, 1997, pp. 33-70). For older primary aged children through to adolescents he argued that the approach should be based on the romantic mode, which he described as a form of Ancient Greek model of knowledge and understanding, including stories from history, mythology, the life histories of flamboyant and successful people, and significant historical events (Egan, 1997, pp. 71-103). Romantic understanding was also described as essentially chronological, certainly strongly narrative and story based, and highly emotive and dramatic in style (Egan, 1997, p. 221). At the very least Egan's account supports the idea of powerful stories as part of primary history pedagogy.

In conclusion, the postmodern critique of history as a discipline should not be seen as a barrier for the use of narrative approaches; on the contrary, White's account demonstrates how history texts often employ the same literary devices found in fictional writing. If postmodernism is not fully accepted, then there are still powerful accounts from both educational theorists and constructivist psychology to support narrative as a powerful mode of learning. It is also the case that while there is some research into using narrative approaches with children, only the work of Farmer and Cooper (1998) had previously evaluated teachers' responses to approaches, and none with trainee teachers.

### **Project 1: Engagement through Powerful Stories**

The project began with the use of powerful stories leading up to the 2012 Olympic Games in London. This technique was principally employed in undergraduate sessions, in the second year of a three year primary ITE course, and assessed at second year undergraduate level. I also conducted a number of in-school sessions for qualified teachers. Over the years I have used

many different examples of powerful stories from history, covering many aspects of the English National Curriculum for history. One story I have developed is based on eye witness accounts of the Great Fire of London in 1666 (which has long been one of the recommended units for infants in the English NC); a second has been based on Howard Carter's discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922 (which fits with the junior focus on Ancient Civilisations). But to coincide with an acknowledgement that many schools spent time on cross-curricular work leading up to the Rio Olympics in 2016, I developed powerful stories linked to the history of the games. I would argue that the history of the Olympic movement (ancient and modern) offers so many well-known examples of narrative that it is difficult to narrow them down, but in order to draw out broader themes, including aspects of social history and citizenship, tended to alternate between Jesse Owens at the 1936 Berlin Games, and Ron Clarke at the 1968 Mexico City Games. But for the purposes of this project I solely focused on the Clarke narrative.

This story is essentially about Emil Zatopek's gift of his 1952 10000 metres Olympic gold medal to the Australian runner Ron Clarke. In the usual narrative, Clarke the dominant distance runner in the 1960s, after setting 17 official world records with distances from 2 miles to 20000 metres, had failed to win a gold medal at either the 1964 Olympics or the 1966 Commonwealth Games. In the eyes of many commentators he should have been the clear favourite for both the 5000 and 10000 metres in the 1968 Olympics, particularly the latter after setting an epoch making mark of 27:39.4 (Incidentally, this is a time that is still considered world class today). However, the selection of Mexico City as host city for the 1968 Olympics, with the stadium situated at an altitude of 2,700 metres, arguably reduced the chances of low-altitude trained athletes like Clarke. The outcome was that after trying to dominate the field, Clarke collapsed at the end of the 10000 metre race in 6<sup>th</sup> position, with some accounts claiming that his life had been in danger such was his level of oxygen debt and exhaustion. Reportedly after stopping off in Czechoslovakia to meet with Zatopek on his way back to Australia, Zatopek gave him a small gift as they parted, along with the words "Look after this. You deserve it.", followed by further instruction that it was not to be opened until the aeroplane was airborne; inside was the aforementioned Olympic gold medal. This brief summary only features some of the detail that Farmer and Cooper (1998, pp. 41-2) argue is essential to gain children's interest, but it gives a flavour of the important elements.

When I tell this story I usually establish the record breaking credentials of both athletes, empathising that they similarly set a slew of world records and dominated their respective eras, while Zatopek was equally successful in two Olympic Games winning four gold medals and a silver. By deliberately finishing before the final part of the narrative, and therefore creating the powerful human desire to find out what happened next, Bage's (1999) main point, I asked for predictions about the nature of the gift, and generally there is a clear sense of what the package contained, presumably because this story contains so many classic narrative elements. I also specifically covered the reliability of the sources of information surrounding this story and the corresponding danger of distortion due to subsequent retelling both orally and in writing. In the case of Clarke and Zatopek there is no real doubt about the underlying veracity of the story, as many print and online accounts confirm, but somewhere over time the 'true' story, that the gift of the medal actually occurred after Clarke's silver medals in the 1966 Commonwealth Games, transmogrified to follow Clarke's dramatic collapse in the Mexico Olympics of 1968. With a little reflection it is possible to consider why this change might have occurred: Clarke's 'failure' in 1968 was demonstrably more brutal and public; there was the sense that he had been disadvantaged, cheated even, by the high altitude of the Mexico games; and by then in his early thirties it was considered to be his final opportunity to win a gold medal at a major games. In fact it was not even Clarke's last chance to win a championship gold because he subsequently competed in the Commonwealth Games of 1970 in Edinburgh, where he won a silver medal.

Like the alleged Hitler 'snub' of Jesse Owens<sup>1</sup>, mythology can take over from the bare facts; in other words accuracy is often traded for greater dramatic effect and emotional impact and this can provide a strong rationale for assessing alternative accounts, examining the reliability of the evidence and adopting high levels of criticality. Indeed, the differing accounts of Zatopek's Olympic medal story is a strong example of the argument made by a number of theorists (Husbands, 1996; Banham, 2000; Hoodless, 2004) for the efficacy of detailed narrative accounts as an effective mode for introducing young children to relatively complex ideas while still engaging with evidence in a critical way; and that some children may begin to understand why historical events nearly always involve controversy and confusion. A slightly less optimistic tone was adopted by Lang (2003) who argued that children require careful guidance from their teachers concerning the rules of evidence and plausibility; while Levstik's (1995) research similarly demonstrated that young children often accepted narrative accounts uncritically, thus requiring teacher interventions and careful selection of historical accounts. Thus narrative approaches in the form of powerful stories may help children *begin* to understand the complex organising concept of historical interpretation if teachers choose their stories carefully, understand the some of the complexity surrounding the narrative, and are prepared to introduce some of the contested elements as I did with the gift of the medal.

Additionally, if teachers do know the narrative elements in all its complexity and detail, and then tell it well, Farmer and Cooper (1998) argued that children will develop an increased sense of the teacher's authority. Christine Counsell (2011, pp. 110-20) made a strong case for the use of historical narrative to engage pupil interest; she further suggested that once pupils' interest has been piqued by powerful stories, this curiosity should then be followed up by effective questioning strategies, and also allowing sufficient time for pupil reflection. Therefore in my university seminars I generally allowed trainee teachers time to examine some of the evidence for the Zatopek story, and then I have challenged them to come up with a range of possible questions, lines of future enquiry, and the identification of historical elements and themes they could then use in sessions to direct pupils' follow up work. Over the last three years I have provided computers within the sessions to enable them to carry out their research. Perhaps the strongest argument for this approach is that the human aspects to the Olympics, including consideration of moral themes such as generosity, magnanimity or the occasional unfairness of competition, will engage the curiosity of primary aged pupils far more than general overviews and accounts of the Olympic movement or specific games.

### **Research Findings**

After initially conducting focus group interviews to gain student perspectives and feedback, I extended the evaluation of the session. Requiring more detailed research data, I developed an online survey designed to be completed relatively quickly and easily, yet to provide insight into student attitudes. The survey contained three 5 point Likert scale questions along with an invitation for further comments. At the end of the 2014–5 academic year I sent out an online survey, using a well known commercial provider, to all 97 undergraduate trainee teachers on the module via their university email address. The following year I sent out the same survey to all 106 undergraduates. In 2015 I received 25 completed forms, although only approximately half of these completed the open question (13 from 27). In 2016, with more emphasis on the usefulness of completion and a follow up email, I received 32 completed forms, though with a slightly lower

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<sup>1</sup> Although the truth of the 'snub' has been subjected to many claims and counter claims, it seems likely that Hitler initially declined to congratulate the Afro-American high jump winner Cornelius Johnson.

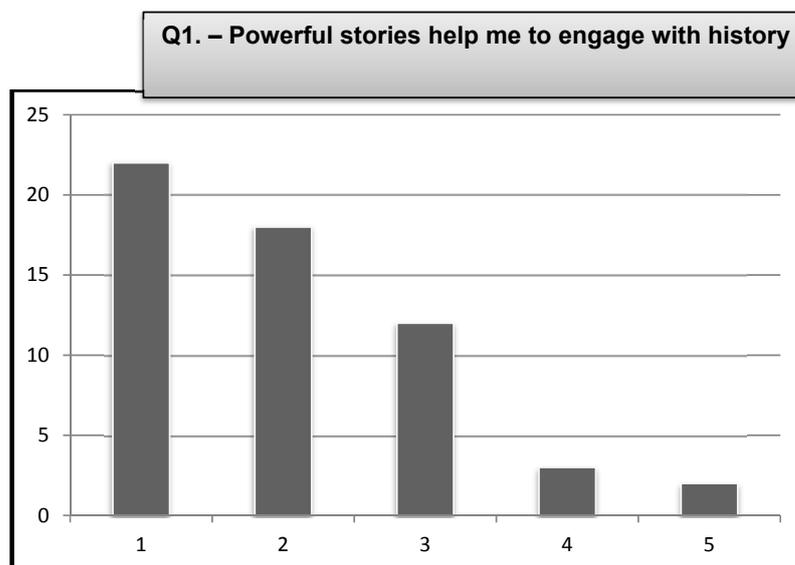
proportion of open comments (12 from 32). In both cases the email was sent out approximately a week after the final session in early December.

The first 3 questions were:

1. *Powerful stories help me to engage with history;*
2. *Narrative approaches help me to understand the complexity of history;*
3. *I will use narrative approaches when planning and teaching history sessions.*

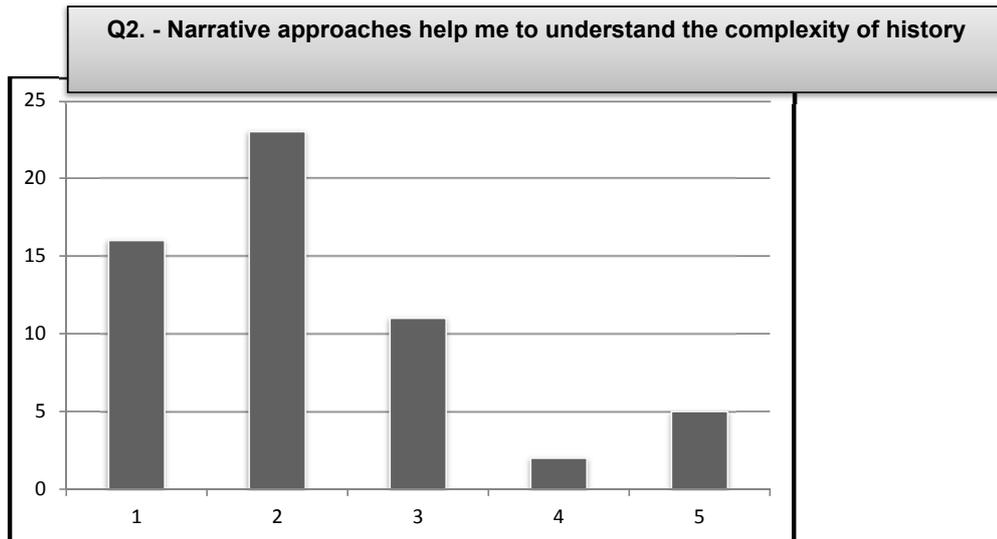
For brevity, the results of both years are combined giving a total response of 57 students from the cohort total of 203. The Likert scale employed the following wording:

1. Strongly agree
2. Slightly agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Slightly disagree
5. Strongly disagree

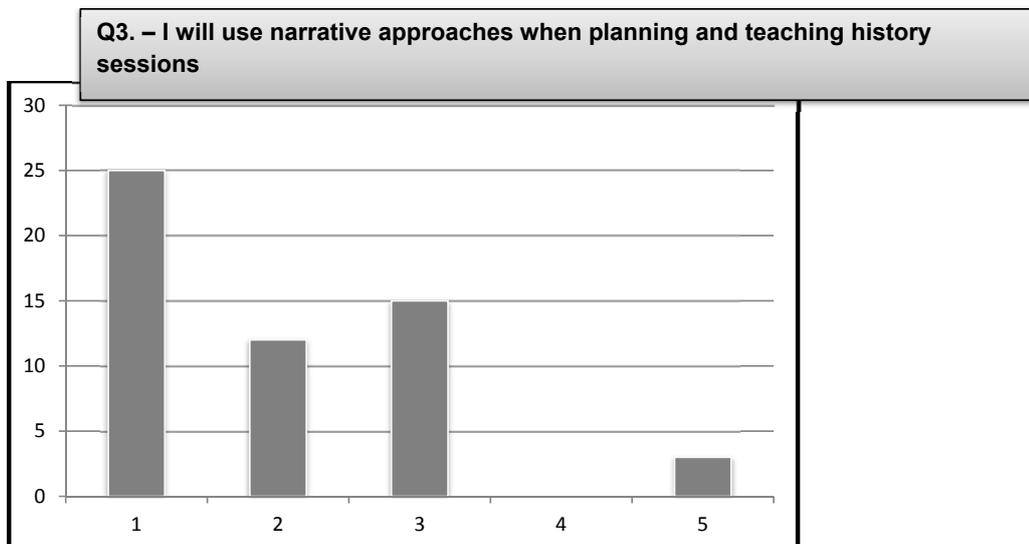


Perhaps understandably, given my emphasis on the importance of narrative approaches, the overall response was highly favourable with a total of 40 respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement that stories support engagement with history. I would like to think that this is partly a reflection my skill at telling stories; I have a deep personal interest in the history of both athletics and the Olympic movement, and I am more certain that this sense of authority comes across. Nevertheless, there were some critical responses and five comments can be summarised as a deep disengagement with the Clarke story. One thing that is important for all educators to reflect upon is that not everyone will necessarily share the same enthusiasm for certain aspects of history, or history in general. Other feedback suggested that this was seen as a 'masculine' story and not relevant or interesting for some female trainee teachers. The latter point can be counted by the fact that in other work around the history of the Olympics I have focused on the history of female competitors and the growing gender equality in the Olympic movement (in contradistinction with other major sporting events).

The response to this question was more complex. I would summarise it as a general agreement, but with less certainty that what was presented to them in a narrative form was necessarily challenging (or even that interesting). Once again, the educator must be aware of confirmation bias; simply because I find the detail and complexity of why and how a medal was given as a gift deeply fascinating is not necessarily going to engage all trainee teachers at my level of interest.



This also came across in some of the written comments with a fairly even balance between trainee teachers who enjoyed the challenge of this activity and those who did not understand its relevance to them as teachers. Nevertheless, I do know from my evaluation of the sessions that interesting lines of enquiry were identified and followed up with reasonably high levels of research within the each lesson. I would also reaffirm my previous point that simply providing a general overview of 'who won what and when' is far less likely to engage student (and pupil) interest as much as a deeply human and touching story which has found its way into almost every major account of Clarke's career.



The response to this question was slightly lower at 55, but remained an overall positive response. 37 trainees agreed that they would use narrative approaches, and there were only three students who strongly disagreed. Since this was one of the main objectives in developing this session then this was a significant result. It also suggests that the Clarke story may have been less successful than the overall emphasis I placed on the efficacy of narrative. It was also worded slightly more openly to reflect the fact that narrative is broader than 'powerful stories'; indeed, in focus group interviews some students admitted that they lacked the confidence to talk authoritatively about history in front of a class. In this respect trainee teachers' responses may well differ from experienced primary teachers.

### **Project 2 – Event Framing and historical imagination**

Fines (1980, pp. 3-5) was arguably the pioneer of the use of the fictional 'half story' technique to stimulate discussion and create dramatic solutions to historical questions. This involved providing children with the beginning of a historical account and then allowing them to complete it by using their imagination, thus incorporating their understanding of narrative conventions, whilst receiving guidance from the teacher about the likelihood of the outcome occurring. Vass (2004, 2005) and been a strong proponent of narrative forms of historical learning, and part of his work was to developed the half story approach into something he termed 'event framing' (Vass et al: 2003) where children would be introduced to the first part of a true story, in this case the highly censored Bethnal Green tube station disaster on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 1943, when an air raid alarm at 8.17 pm resulted in the largest British civilian loss of life in World War II with the death of 173 people alongside 90 serious injuries. Vass introduced the first part of the story then invited children to outline the subsequent events in six frames from immediately after the sirens sounded, up to the present day. The only other information that they were given was that it was officially secret until 1973. This story would have fitted strongly into the previous National Curriculum unit entitled 'Britain since the 1930s' which included a focus on the 'home front' during World War II, but in the revised curriculum it could be incorporated into a 'Theme beyond 1066' (DfE, 2013, p. 191)

Since 2013 I have adapted this session for both undergraduate and post-graduate primary teacher trainees, and my through my experiences of carrying out this session I have noted that many students, even those with 'A' level history (qualification taken at the end of school at 18 years), struggle with some of the factual elements such as the start and duration of the blitz campaign, and the balance of World War II in 1943. Certainly few recognised that the Luftwaffe bombing raids had essentially ended by 1943 and that it was allied bombing that was now destroying German cities. These observations appear to support Counsell's (2000, p. 65) argument for the importance of specific knowledge to allow children to engage with meaningful historical work; she advocated something she termed a 'fingertips' approach where patches of detailed knowledge are taught to help children with specific questions or problems. This is certainly supports my observations that without some contextual understanding, the students found it difficult to engage fully with the activity. Over the last three years the students have had access to computers in the session (with the proviso not to research the specific event under review), but in early years I had to supply the information, often through a mixture of questions to elicit the state of knowledge and to spot the lacuna in understanding that was holding them back. It was also noticeable that elements of popular culture seeped into their understanding. The most common example was the tube flooding incident in the film adaptation of Ian McEwan's novel 'Atonement' (2001), although anecdotally this has reduced each year as the impact of the film has declined, but my main reflection was that as an approach to historical reasoning it consistently promoted high levels of discussion and engagement as various scenarios were considered, debated and often rejected.

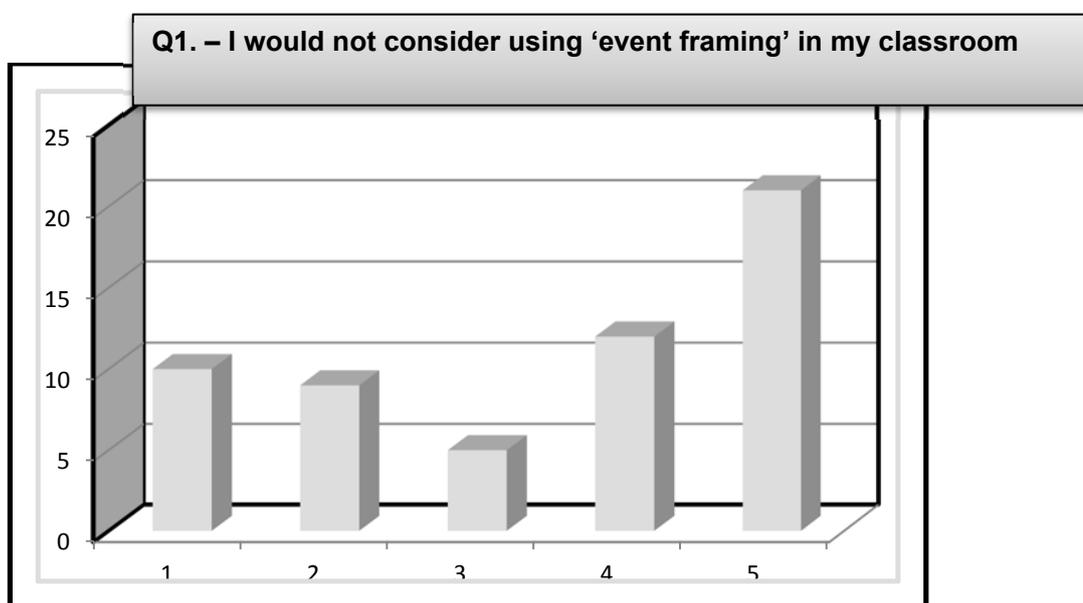
### Research findings

Student feedback over the last five years, in addition to focus group evaluations, consistently placed this session as one of the most memorable and useful elements of the whole module. Student opinion generally supported the claim that this activity engaged them in high levels of historical reasoning and collaborative discussions. This evidence certainly supported the claim that counterfactualism promotes both imagination and reasoning, but unquestionably younger children would require more input from the teacher, and ideally a considerable amount of previous work around the topic to improve their understanding of real events, and greater guidance concerning the likelihood of certain outcomes.

The same online questionnaire was used with three additional questions, and a further open question for written comments, specifically about the event framing task. The questions were:

1. *I would not consider using 'event framing' in my classroom (phrased negatively for contrast);*
2. *'Event framing' made me consider the importance of historical knowledge;*
3. *I was challenged to use my historical imagination*

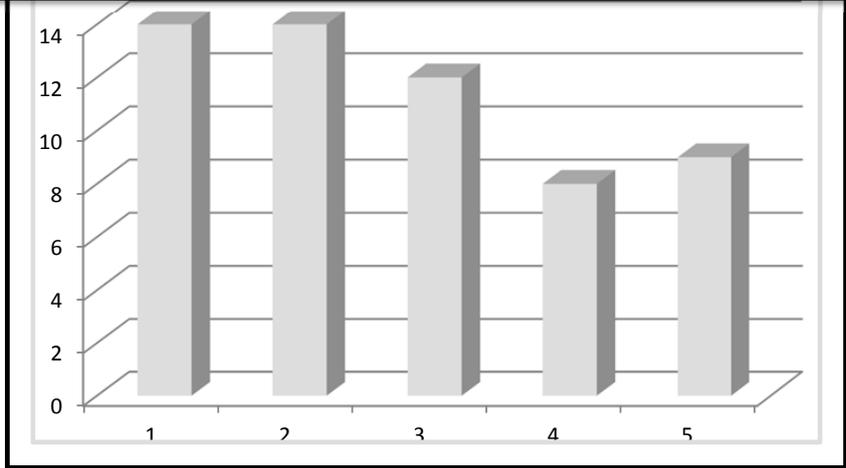
Overall I found writing questions for event framing more difficult, partly because I did not want to replicate the first series of questions, and also because I required different information, particularly the place of historical imagination. Focus group interviews had suggested varied responses to this activity, and I anticipated a slightly more mixed distribution in the data. Inevitably the choice of questions resulted in some form of subliminal messages about the importance I attach to certain elements of this activity.



The question was phrased in a negative way to ensure that trainee teachers were reading the questions carefully, and so the slightly raised levels (10 and 9 respondents) agreeing with the statement could be interpreted as a reflection on misreading the question because it did not fully reflect the positive module evaluation and focus group feedback concerning this activity. Nevertheless, like the case of the Clarke narrative, it would be a mistake to assume that the

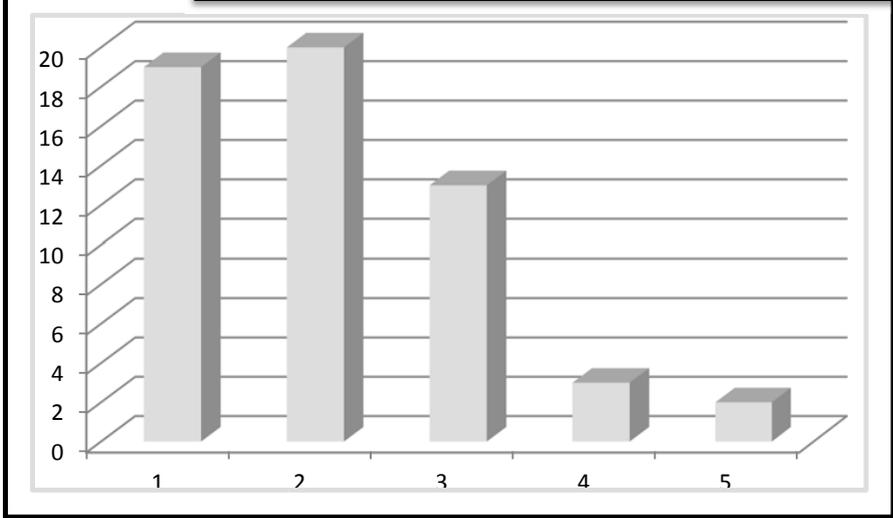
overwhelming majority of trainee teachers are engaged with this period of history despite the highly human elements to it.

**Q2. – ‘Event framing’ made me consider the importance of historical knowledge**



Given the previous discussion about the importance of specific and powerful knowledge at start of an activity, it is perhaps not surprising that the majority of respondents (28 agreed or strongly agreed with the statement) thought that historical knowledge was important to allow full engagement with this task. This certainly reflects my observations about this session, where group discussions frequently tested the plausibility of ideas, and were often reined in by the knowledge held by some group members. Not only were these discussions a reflection on the importance of historical evidence when framing narrative accounts, to return to Evan’s (2000) point, it arguably supports Hirsch’s (1988) claim that culturally shared knowledge is essential for

**Q3. – I was challenged to use my historical imagination**



student engagement. Hirsch's point was more about understanding texts, but I would argue that the group discussions demonstrated a similar relationship between knowledge and engagement, and that this was something the majority of trainee teachers recognised. There were a small number of written comments, three in total, which specifically mentioned the fact that this session made them realise how little they knew about one of the most important events in British and World history.

My personal observations and focus group discussions all indicated that this aspect of the session was usually very animated and indicative of high levels of interest. The narrative elements seemed to shape the discussion with a clear sense that they had to construct an important series of events that had to be plausible and match with their knowledge of bombing raids. In this sense the activity does seem to support Bruner's (1996) claim that narrative forms of understanding imply a certain form of logic, or 'test of truth'. The usual format was that certain group leaders would suggest ideas, possibly taken from aspects of popular culture outlined earlier, and then these would be tested through discussion. These observations appear to have been recognised by the students when responding to this question; 39 students agreed or strongly agreed, and only five students disagreed or strongly disagreed. Although no written comment specifically mentioned the use of historical imagination, there were also a small number of written comments which reflected that some trainee teachers found it a very interesting activity and would be willing to use it as a teaching approach in their own classrooms.

### **Conclusion**

Inevitably there are limitations to the project's findings: its small scale; elements of confirmation bias due to my personal beliefs and enthusiasm for narrative approaches; the comparatively small response rate (and almost certainly unrepresentative responses from students who are more receptive to my teaching methods); and convenience sampling in one teacher training institution, result in a lack of generalisability.

However, the research findings do offer limited support for the claim that if non-specialised primary teacher trainees are given an introduction to narrative approaches to history they will respond with reasonably high levels of engagement and enthusiasm. Whilst there can be no claim that the interventions outlined in this paper will ultimately influence their practice, it is reasonable to assume that they will be influenced by activities that they carried out in university sessions. Secondly, although the popularity of narrative approaches in primary history lessons may have waxed and waned over the decades, a strong case can be made, and arguably supported by this small project, that historical stories have a role to play in primary pedagogy.

The research presented here also offers limited support for a number of previous projects. The event framing activity does seem to support Counsell's claim that detailed, specific historical knowledge is required for meaningful historical discussion and engagement with ideas. Teacher trainees also appeared to recognise the power of enquiry for generating historical interest; and they also seemed to appreciate the complexity of historical events including the necessity of challenging historical sources and accounts. Although the key historical concept of interpretation was omitted in this project, it is possible to see how this aspect of history can be incorporated in narrative accounts. Primary trainee teachers should also understand that narrative approaches to history are supported by many researchers within educational psychology, with further evidence from a range of educational theorists.

Above all a case can be made, and it has been introduced in this paper, that historical stories engage children's interest in history and satisfy the natural human desire to know 'what happened

next'. However, above and beyond the desire to know what happened is the potential to induct children into adult modes of thought and to allow them to engage critically with the nature of historical evidence and reasoning, particularly through examining complex stories and accounts.

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