

Ringling the changes: the power of Enquiry Questions that both chime and resonate

Ruth Lingard (@YorkCLIO) has a lovely way of thinking about enquiry questions. She describes them in terms of church bells. There are those that chime, reverberate and resonate by building intrigue and a lasting impression. However there are also those that thud and clunk, not quite hitting the mark and leaving a wake of slight dissatisfaction, or don't produce the intended learning. As I put this list together, Ed Durbin commented that "straightforward historically rigorous questions have more resonance," and there is a lot of wisdom in that. Perhaps the greatest advantage of using enquiry questions to structure your curriculum is that they can engage students in an academically rigorous way. The following explores these useful devices by showing how they can play different functions. Above all else, they make learning hold together and give meaning and shape to the process of studying and constructing history.

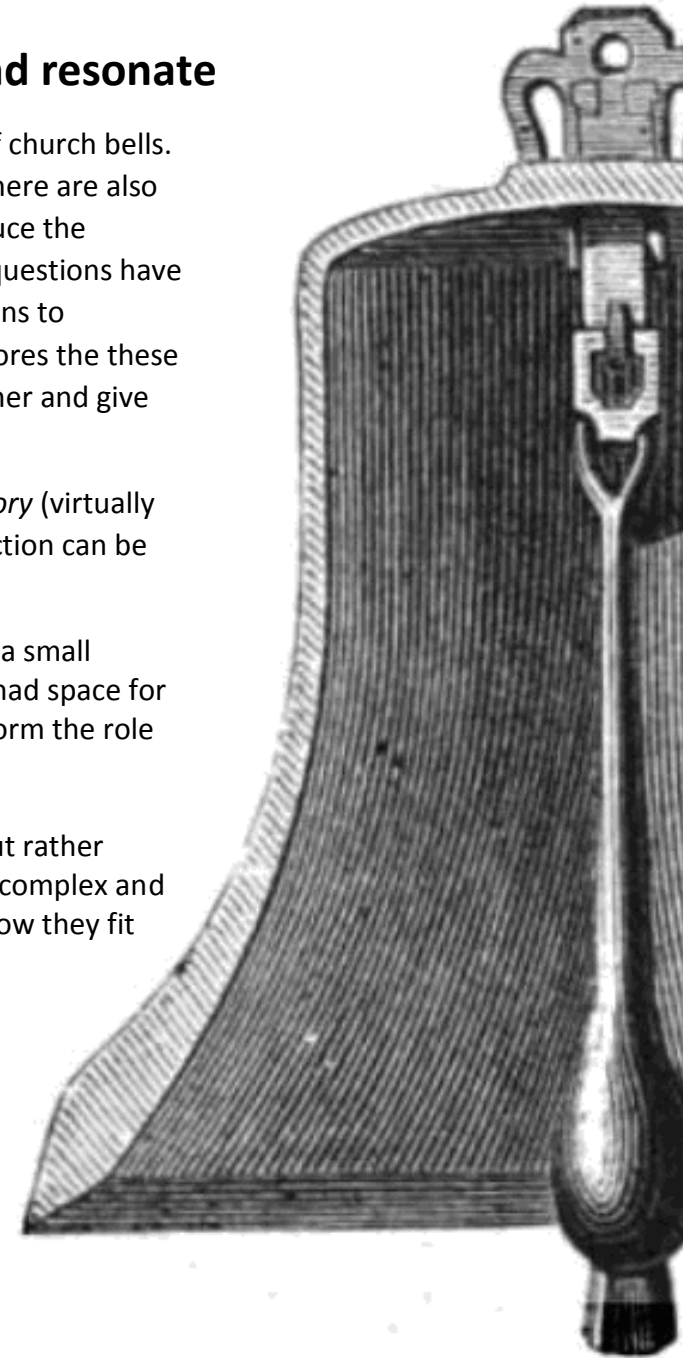
There is a good deal of very strong theorising about the use of Enquiry Questions in the pages of *Teaching History* (virtually every edition has articles that explore learning within the context of an enquiry) and a straightforward introduction can be found here: <https://onebighistorydepartment.com/2018/01/30/enquiry-questions-the-back-story/>

It needs to be noted there were hundreds of questions sent my way when I asked around of Twitter and this is a small selection – they have been included for all kinds of reasons and there have naturally been many that I haven't had space for – this collection is in no way exhaustive. Indeed, much of the joy is in choosing and shaping your own that perform the role you want them to within your overall curriculum planning.

Please also note this is not intended to be instructive – this is not suggesting what should be in a curriculum, but rather aiming to inspire us to make really good curriculum decisions that explore the histories of the world in all their complex and contested forms. It is therefore deliberately mixed up, as we are interested in the questions here rather than how they fit together.

Finally, a huge, huge *thank you* to everyone who sent me questions, it has been a real joy to put this together, it is genuinely the product of One Big History Department! It's never going to be a finished list, if there are additions you have to suggest, please do send them in!

Hugh Richards
@Misterhistory



Section 1: What can really good enquiry questions do?

Clearly, these elements can be, and have been, combined. **Please note** these can operate at a range of scales, and for a range of learning purposes, from a lesson to a full sequence. The most satisfying, and usually most effective, questions are those that you arrive at and pull together yourself because you understand the thinking that is going on behind them, but if you're here looking for some inspiration for an approach to a particular issue, then read on!

Role the Enquiry Question could play	Example of Enquiry Question	Shared by: (not always original author!)	Comments and notes
Explore a first-order concept	What did 'revolution' mean in the Age of Revolutions?	@mrwbw	At the SHP Conference 2019, Will Bailey-Watson explored this idea of putting a first-order concept at the heart of the enquiry, allowing students to explore the 'flexibility, fluidity and fertility' of it in different contexts or at different times. For even more EQs on the revolutions topic: https://ageofrevolution.org/
	What did 'Privy Council' mean at different points in Elizabeth's reign?		
	How did the nature of 'government' change in Britain, 1600-1900?	@MisterHistory	
Explore a second-order concept	Why did the British Empire end?	@TIJenner	A look at how interpretations of Norman Conquest have been shaped by the time periods they were constructed in.
	Why have different people told different stories about the Norman Conquest?	@MisterHistory	
	To what extent was Britain changed by the Industrial Revolution?	@HistoryKSS	
Cover a topic or theme in breadth	Is British History after WW2 a story of decline?	@TIJenner	
	How did religion change the life of ordinary people in 16 th century England?	@sehartsmith	
	To what extent have women achieved equality since 1918?	@apf102	
Delve into a narrower topic in depth	Why do Historians still disagree about why people went on the First Crusade?	@apf102	
	"Reform that ye may conserve." How far does this describe the 1832 Reform Act?	@Kate_Smee	
	Should Wilberforce House be renamed?	@Misterhistory	Reconsidering the name of a school pastoral house in light of the complexity of Abolition.
Unlock a rich and meaningful sense of	How did the Black Death affect Walsham?	@RachelFoster08	This excellent enquiry is based on the work of John Hatcher and looks at one village and the experience of the Black Death to

period			explore how a medieval community responded to a crisis.
	What change could the Victorian poor see?	@Rachelfoster08	This might help students move beyond the headline appearances of change and explore the realities of the life of the poor, complete with its real continuities.
	Are people right to be so negative about the Middle Ages?	@BearWithOneEar	Ian Dawson has a superb discussion of EQs to develop periodisation here: http://thinkinghistory.co.uk/MedievalArticles/Periodisation.html
Change approach to improve diversity	Where was the Early Medieval Period a Golden Age?	@TIJenner	
	What did 'colonisation' mean to different countries as the British Empire grew?	@mrwbw	
	How important were women in the Wars of the Roses?	@MisterHistry	
Using scholarship to bring students into the work of Historians	Does Ian Mortimer's <i>Time Travellers Guide to Medieval England</i> challenge our narrative of the Black Death?	@AndrewSweet4	
	Did the world go to war by 'accident' or 'choice' in 1914?	@Misshuckfield	Drawing on Margaret MacMillan's work.
	How does the Historian, Yasmin Khan, use evidence to reach conclusions about experiences of the Second World War?	@JITodd1966 & @Zaiba_	Shared at SHP conference 2019, a brilliant enquiry looking at how historians handle evidence to build a history.
Explore local history	Sweet Men and Railway Kings? What was the truth about Industrial York?	@MisterHistry	Both of these enquiries look to unpick the popular understanding of these cities in the Industrial Revolution. It is interesting to ask parents, via pupils, to find out what the broadly held understanding is...
	"A perfect wilderness of foulness" Is this the best way to describe Victorian Leeds?	@apf102	
	How should we remember the 60s in Bristol?	@Kate_Smee	

Section 2: Traps to avoid

(Special thanks to the contributors to this section, it's so important to share mistakes we make, to stop re-invention of square wheels...!)

Ways EQs can go wrong	Example of Enquiry Question	Shared by: (not always original author!)	Comments and notes
Leading students to a moral judgement rather than a historical one	Was King John good or bad?	@SnelsonH	
	Should Neville Chamberlain have appeased Hitler?	@MisterHistry	
Clever wordplay at the cost of good history.	'Divorced, Beheaded, Burned Alive; Why was there so much at stake in Tudor England?'	@MrPattisonteach	"Another snappy title but the enquiry that followed didn't do it justice as there the timescale meant key issues needed to answer it were not dealt with in sufficient depth."
	Snack attack: How far was a sandwich responsible for a World War?		"I was really excited about this one but it failed in practice. I found it restricted the enquiry rather than inviting deeper thinking and promoted superficiality."

Section 3: A few more questions to inspire you...

Ancient	Medieval	Early Modern	Modern
<p>How did civilisation grow in Britain before 1066? @sehartsmith</p>	<p>Was Anglo-Saxon England an insignificant 'Dark Age?' @drmnolan</p>	<p>Was the Early Modern period really so different from the Middle Ages? @BearWithOneEar</p>	<p>Was everything different after WW1? @TJenner</p>
<p>Why was 'Rex' a dirty word in Ancient Rome? @TJenner</p>	<p>How far did the Normans bring a 'truck-load of trouble?' @kenradical</p>	<p>How did the Renaissance and Reformation change Europe between 1400-1700? @HistoryKss</p>	<p>How much did nationalism dictate the 20th century? @RKeoghHistory</p>
<p>How did a 'small mediocre town' in central Italy come to dominate such a huge area? (Mary Beard) @Misshuckfield</p>	<p>How far was life in England transformed between 410 and 1400? @HistoryKSS</p>	<p>What did 'Christianity' mean before, during and after the European Reformation? @mrwbw</p>	<p>Full steam ahead: How did hot air revolutionise Britain? @MrPattisonTeach</p>
<p>What have the Romans actually done for us? @gmanstorey</p>	<p>Where did power truly lie in the Medieval World? @drmnolan</p>	<p>How Glorious was Gloriana? @sehartsmith</p>	<p>How successfully was racial injustice challenged around the world after 1945? @HistoryKSS</p>
<p>How did the discovery of Pompeii and Herculaneum inform our understanding of life during the Roman Empire? @MissHuckfield</p>	<p>The Mongols, able administrators or merciless conquerors? @guernseyloashi</p>	<p>Why did Christianity break up in the 16th Century? @drmnolan</p>	<p>Who are 'The British?' @HistoryCollis – a migration through time study</p>
<p>How did the ancient world shape your life? @Snelsonh</p>	<p>'Sick to death of it; Why was Medieval England plagued by ill health?' @MrPattisonteach</p>	<p>Was Mary Queen of Scots a victim of circumstance or did she engineer her own downfall? @Bones_Carmel</p>	<p>Villains become heroes and heroes become villains. How true is this of Soviet leaders? @Bones Carmel</p>
	<p>What can Fountains Abbey reveal about the Middle Ages in Yorkshire? @apf102</p>	<p>To what extent was the Glorious Revolution 'gloriously revolutionary?' @mrwmhistory</p>	<p>How should we commemorate Peterloo? @ElizaBLWest</p>