

Becoming a Historical Association Teacher Fellow

Lisa Bell

When applying for the Age of Revolutions Teacher Fellowship Course, the first thing my headteacher asked me was, 'How will this benefit the school?' I hadn't really thought about it in that much detail. It was a history course with a residential, it would be an excellent CPD course for me and would only cost the school my day and a half in cover. What's not to like? So then I had to think, how will this benefit my school?

History like most other non-core subjects is often squeezed in when there is time. In my school we work on the principal of topics and we are lucky enough to center much of our English work around these topics, with a cross-curricular approach. So how would the Age of Revolutions benefit my school? We are trying hard to engage our boys, particularly with writing. What could be more exciting than writing about the Napoleonic Wars, the change in industry, the political changes in Britain, revolutions in France, the guillotine and the deaths of so many aristocrats. Thankfully, I convinced my head!

Part of the course was that we had to develop our own resource that could be used with the topic the Age of Revolutions. How could I produce a resource that would be useful, encourage my pupils and hopefully be of interest to others? I wanted to give history more status in my school and help children to develop their thinking, enquiry skills and a deep love for the subject. Could my resource tap into these criteria?

Primary Teacher Fellows in a snowy Waterloo



However, before I could even begin to plan my resource I had to complete the course. One cold day in March 2018 I boarded the Eurostar and travelled to Waterloo in Belgium. I must admit I was a little apprehensive. I was about to spend four days with a group of people I had never met, I was travelling to a foreign country on my own and wasn't quite sure what to expect. What followed was an intense four days of lectures, primary sessions and site visits to teach us about the Age of Revolutions. It was a fantastic experience, working with like-minded people who all wanted to improve themselves and pass that knowledge on to their respective students. As a primary teacher I was part of a small, elite group who had sessions apart from the secondary. I found these sessions particularly useful as we could share ideas and were led by Karin, an experienced history teacher. We visited the site of the Battle of Waterloo, the Medical Museum, full of gruesome instruments and paintings, the British headquarters and the fantastic panorama.

Primary teachers So good at cutting and sticking! Sharing viewpoints of the Georgian period



During our visit to the top of the Butte de Lion, I was given a musket ball to hold and I couldn't believe its weight. It was great to have some experts on board to explain questions we thought of during these site visits.

There followed an eight-week online course to complete. I struggled at first, having broken my elbow in the snow, but managed to catch up. It was an intense few weeks trying to complete two tasks as well as the normal day-to-day life at school, but there was interesting research and resources to discover. I enjoyed both types of course material, the historical and the methodological. We learnt about turnpikes and how to use Old Bailey records as well as investigating paintings and images.

It was fabulous to see how many different ideas there were from games, sheets to aid enquiry, hand-made uniforms and schemes of work.

I had decided to create an art scheme of work focused around the Waterloo Panorama, but like all teachers, at 4:00am one morning just two weeks away from deadline I had a better idea. Out went the scheme of work I was having trouble with and in came a starter lesson. Boxes full of different sources and the odd artefact thrown in, and questions for the children to ask of their box. What did the sources tell you? What clues were there? What could the overall theme be? I focused on the boys in my class: were they more engaged and did their writing improve? I am pleased to report that it did and it inspired lots of discussion about weaponry and what it would be like on the battlefield. My resource also fed nicely into the overall topic of the Age of Revolutions and gave the pupils a brief insight



into long historical eras while then narrowing it down to an achievable few lessons within class.

Once the work had been submitted, we waited for feedback and then the final part of our journey, did we pass or not!

Thankfully I did and feel incredibly grateful for the opportunity to keep developing my historical knowledge and in turn pass some on to my Year 5 class. I would highly recommend this type of CPD and wouldn't hesitate to complete another one!

Lisa Bell is a Primary Teaching Fellow. She works at St Thomas of Canterbury RC Primary in Mitcham, south London.

