Who can tell us the most about the Silk Road?

Historical scholarship, archaeology and evidence in Year 7

The stimulus for this article came from two developmental tasks that Barbara Trapani was set during the course of her initial teacher education programme: planning her first historical enquiry and bringing the work of an historian into the classroom. Trapani chose to tackle the two tasks together, using Susan Whitfield's accounts – both of different people's lives along the Silk Road and of the artefacts that she had used to reconstruct their stories – to help her Year 7 pupils understand how historians use sources as evidence. The enquiry was further enriched by the work of Peter Frankopan. The richly detailed account that Trapani presents of her design process and of her pupils' learning illustrates both the power of individual stories to engage pupils and the way in which using objects (rather than written sources) can effectively focus their attention and build their knowledge of the process of evidential thinking.

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At the beginning of the spring term of my initial teacher education course, I was given the task of finding at least one opportunity to bring professional historians into the classroom. This was intended to make us engage with historical scholarship and through doing so, plan and teach better enquiries (a sequence of lessons governed by a carefully crafted historical question, as defined by Riley).[1] We were introduced to four different ways in which we might bring professional historians into the classroom: as an interpretation, as a source of substantive knowledge, as a 'hook', or as a model for pupils' own writing. My initial reaction, like most of my fellow trainees, was that I wanted to use historians' accounts to teach historical interpretations.

At the same time, we were asked to develop a four- to six-lesson enquiry with a clear second-order conceptual focus to teach in our placement school. I was particularly interested in exploring and investigating the concept of evidential thinking. We had recently had a training session on using objects and museum collections run by Richard Woff (former Head of Schools and Young Audiences at the British Museum) and I had just finished reading Peter Frankopan's book *The Silk Roads*.[2] Richard Woff had demonstrated to us the power of objects in the classroom to foster engagement and excitement among the pupils, and Frankopan's book opened up a world (quite literally) of opportunities to explore the curriculum from different geographical perspectives.

I started looking for other examples of historical scholarship on the Silk Road and I was given a recommendation: Susan Whitfield's books *Life Along the Silk Road* and *Silk, Stupas and Slaves: material culture of the Silk Road*.[3] Both were ideal for my twin purposes. Not only did they offer a clear line of enquiry, they offered a rich history of the Silk Road in a form I could immediately imagine would be perfect for engaging Year 7 pupils. *Life Along the Silk Road* was structured as a series of stories about individuals associated with the trade route, while each chapter of *Silk, Stupas and Slaves* explored a different artefact as a source of evidence. This approach, when combined with the accessibility of the prose, made the evidential work of the historian explicit to teacher and pupils alike.

I decided to merge the two tasks I had been given: developing an enquiry focused on evidence and bringing the historian into the classroom. This article is an account of how I planned and taught an enquiry that sought to engage pupils directly with the work of a professional historian (Susan Whitfield) and how this helped to develop their evidential thinking.

Defining curricular goals for work with sources

Howson argues that 'the importance of understanding the evidential basis for claims about the past is a fundamental principle for a history education.'[4] While there may be a broad consensus around the goal that pupils should understand history not simply as a body of knowledge but as a form of knowledge, there is less agreement about how this understanding can and should be developed. In particular, history educators have long debated the curricular goals of asking pupils to work with sources, as outlined in the recent 'What's the Wisdom on… Evidence and sources'.[5] There is also a wealth of literature that explores practical approaches to teaching pupils how to read, interpret and use sources to ask and answer questions.[6] As I wrestled with these issues in my early teaching, I found myself increasingly reflecting on the challenge of how pupils can be taught to read and interpret sources for themselves. Reisman, Kitson, Wineburg, Shemilt and Lee all agree that working directly with historical sources is foundational to historical thinking, but they

Figure 1: Enquiry overview: 'Who can tell us the most about the Silk Road?'

Lesson and question	Substantive content	Tasks and activities
1 What was the Silk Road?	Exploration of the scope and scale of exchanges between east and west Asia between the sixth and eleventh centuries CE. Definition of the Silk Roads as a network of transcontinental exchange routes. Location of the trade networks, in particular between the eighth and twelfth centuries CE, with a focus on the routes between Samarkand and Chang'an.	The enquiry starts with an image of a ninth-century felt shoe. Pupils investigate its use and the different terrains and climates it was used for through a card sort exercise. The historians who will help us answer our enquiry are introduced.
2 Who travelled on the Silk Roads?	The significance of the Sogdian civilisation in establishing trade and exchanges along the Silk Route. The challenges and difficulty of the journey. The way that objects and relics are used by historians to reconstruct the history of the Silk Roads.	The main part of the lesson focuses on working on an extract from the tale of Nanaivandak. Pupils match the content of the extract to different images of the journey. A new artefact (a statue of two Sogdian men) is introduced.
3 What's in Nanaivandak's bag?	The commodities that were traded along the Silk Roads and the part played by different people along the Silk Roads in trading, for example providing camels and means of transportation, resourcing goods.	The lesson starts with a new artefact: another small statue found in Chang'an depicting a camel with the trade load. Pupils work in small groups to take part in a game that reconstructs the steps in trade. Debrief guided by a new extract from Whitfield (*Life Along the Silk Roads*).
4 Who did Nanaivandak meet on his travels?	The exchange of ideas and religious practices along trade routes. The existence of different religions apart from Christianity before European Middle Ages (specifically Buddhism, Manicheism and the spread of Islam from the eighth century) and the peaceful co-existence of different faiths.	At the start of the lesson, pupils review all the sources introduced so far and think about what they have in common. The rest of the lesson is based on an extract from Frankopan (part of the chapter entitled The Road of Faiths) and the story of the travels of the monk Xuanzang.
5 What did Stein discover?	The explorations and excavations of Aurel Stein and the European interest in the Silk Roads between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.	Pupils explore different excavation sites using a carousel activity. Pupils then reflect individually on the relative importance of the different discoveries made during Stein's expeditions.
6 What can we learn from arguably the greatest traveller of all times?	The Arab expansion and the spread of Islam on the Silk Roads in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, explored through the travel accounts of Ibn Battuta.	The lesson starts with an inverted 'meanwhile, elsewhere…' activity.[7] Pupils use this to situate the history of the Silk Road within an existing chronological framework of English medieval history. Pupils explore change and continuity on the Silk Roads from the sixth to the fourteenth centuries by reading an adapted extract from the accounts of Ibn Battuta.
7 Outcome task – What sources will you include in your exhibition on the Silk Road?	Outcome task: choosing three objects to include in an exhibition on the Silk Road, explaining the evidence they can yield.	At the start of the lesson pupils are given a letter written by Whitfield to them. Pupils choose exhibits from among the objects we have investigated so far and explain the evidence they provide and the reasons they deserve to be in their exhibition.

Figure 2: Adapted extract from *Life Along the Silk Road* and associated objects

The merchant's tale

The merchant Nanaivandak was from Samarkand. He had travelled several months along the Silk Road from the great trading city of Samarkand, over the towering Pamirs, and along the margins of the Taklamakan desert to Chang'an, the capital of China during the Tang Dynasty.

Preparations for the journey were elaborate and meticulously planned. It was over 3,000 miles to Chang'an from Samarkand. Nanaivandak would have to pass though Turghiz and Chinese territory, as well as city states in the Tarim basin. On the mountain pass they would find freezing temperatures, in the desert extreme heat. Special footwear and warm furs were required for the mountains and head and face covering for the desert. They carried a variety of currencies (a type of money) and they were also armed: bandits preyed on rich travellers.

Nanaivandak's family came from the city of Panjikent, about 40 miles east of Samarkand, in the region known as **Sogdiana**. Samarkand, like all Sogdiana cities, was built on a hill and fortified with thick walls.

The city of Samarkand did not stop at the walls. Outside there were many caravanserai (places for travelling merchants with space to sleep, eat, feed the animals and keep the items they were transporting). The market was held here and at any time more than ten languages could be heard as people traded silk, spices and other luxuries.

Nanaivandak wore Sogdian clothes: a Phrygian hat, conical with the top turned down, a blue knee-length jacket and narrow trousers. His clothes and heavily bearded face distinguished him from Chinese, Turks and Tibetans in Chang'an market, but he was not the only person from his community there: the Sogdians were the main traders in the Silk Roads, with large communities in all the towns along the road and their language was spoken everywhere.

Glossary:

- Merchant: a person or a company involved in trade (selling and buying).
- Elaborate: complex, involving many different parts.
- Meticulously planned: planned and prepared in all details.
- Towering: much taller.

also all argue that reading and interpreting sources requires pupils to think counter-intuitively.[8] I was especially intrigued by Wineburg's study, in which he found that the way in which historians read sources is very different from the way in which school pupils do so.[9] Through reading Wineburg's work I had discovered the Stanford History Education Group and the Reading Like a Historian project, which developed a curriculum in which each lesson revolves around a central historical question and includes a set of sources to be read and used by pupils with different reading abilities.[10] I was keen to use elements of their approach in my Key Stage 3 teaching.

As I tried to adapt their resources, keeping (as argued by Counsell) the text at the centre of the enquiry, I reflected further on how pupils could be taught to 'read like a historian'.[11] I began to wonder whether, rather than asking pupils to somehow imitate the *process* of reading in which professional historians engage, an alternative approach might be to show pupils how an historian interprets and uses sources to construct claims about the past by introducing them to the final product of that process: an historian's account.[12]

I wanted to *show* my Year 7 pupils what 'evidential thinking' looked like before they started to interrogate and use sources for themselves. In so doing I wanted pupils to understand *why* evidential processes are important to the discipline of history and how history is constructed.

How can historians be used to model evidential processes to pupils?

Teachers' purposes in engaging pupils with the work of historians vary widely: for example, while some have argued its value in introducing pupils to historical interpretations, others have explored how introducing pupils to academic scholarship can help pupils to write their own historical narratives.[13] Worth brought these different strands together with Year 7 pupils by using historians' accounts to model how and why narratives are constructed as well as the evidential processes that sit behind that construction.[14] This goal (also explored by Counsell, Hammond, Ward, Foster and Goudie among others) was exactly what I was interested in: how historians' accounts can be used to model evidential processes.[15]

On this occasion I did not want to bring historians' work into the classroom so that pupils could evaluate and compare their claims, (as exemplified by Foster), but instead so that they could see how an historical account is constructed.[16] This meant evaluating the evidential basis of the account not for

Figure 3: Felt shoe and associated card-sort activity

The shoe was sent to the British Museum in 1918, as the museum had financed part of the expedition.	The shoe was made of thick wool or felt, stitched with a scale design, reinforced with leather and lined with paper. Inside it was lined with soft red cloth and strings could close it tightly to prevent sand from entering.	The shoe was used by cameleers, Chinese, Turks or Tibetans in the ninth century AD.
The shoe was found by the archaeologist Aurel Stein in 1906 in Maraz Tagh Fort in the city of Hotan, in today's China.		The shoe must have been abandoned and buried in sand. The sand preserved it for a long time.

the purpose of critiquing it, but to appreciate how a historian uses source material to build and substantiate claims.

Why use objects as sources in the classroom?

I wondered if exploring the ways in which historians use artefacts might make the historian's evidential processes more visible and accessible for my Year 7 pupils. Some teachers, such as Haward, have argued the comparative practical advantages of non-textual sources for pupils with weaker literacy. For me however the real interest in working with artefacts lay in their potential to illuminate the very concept of evidence in history, the nature of historical knowledge and the process of its construction and the evolving nature of historiographical debates.[17]

In reflecting on how I might ask pupils to use objects I turned back to Susan Whitfield, who has explored in some detail the evidential challenges that artefacts pose to the historian. She is clear about the *challenges* of working with objects, what historians' and archaeologists' *goals* are when working with them, and the *questions* they ask of objects in order to interpret them:

> *Working with objects from the past often involves accepting uncertainty, and while new analytical techniques [..] may promise to answer some of our questions, they are unlikely to resolve them all.*[18]

> *Outside its initial context – outside the space and time in which it was created – the object might no longer invoke the narrative intended by its creator. Such is often the case with objects created for religious or ritual purposes. Historians and archaeologists seek to understand more about the context in order to try to recreate the narrative of the object, its biography or history. How, why, when and by whom was it made? Where, how and by whom was it used and for what purposes? Did it travel? Was it adapted, changed, broken, repaired? Without direct access to the original context, we have to accept that at times we might get the answers to these questions spectacularly wrong.*[19]

There are strong resonances between Whitfield's argument and the justifications that history educators have offered for asking pupils to work with objects as sources.[20] Lee and Shemilt have argued that working with artefacts offers the opportunity to move beyond a fixation with reliability and to highlight the necessity of a question if a source is to yield evidence:

> *Some sources are completely mute until they are interrogated. A midden heap in a Neolithic settlement, for example, is a relic from the past that reports nothing. The evidence it yields is conditional upon the questions posed and will differ against such questions […] relics 'say' nothing in and of themselves. Reports are more difficult to handle precisely because they do say something about what happened in the past.*[21]

Figure 4: Extract adapted from the merchant's tale, used to debrief pupils after the trading role play

Nanaivandak profited handsomely from the sale of his cargo of wool, jade, and gems in Chang'an. Most of the goods he carried from Samarkand would be traded at markets on the way, but some items, such as brass, amber and coral were destined specifically for Chang'an. Brass was used to make statues of Buddhas and by court artisans.

Amber from the shores of the Baltic and red coral from the Mediterranean were highly prized in China. In Samarkand he bought gold and lapis lazuli, both much sought after by the Tibetans, Turks and Chinese, and he would trade these on the way for wool which was to be his main cargo.

By Nanaivandak's time, silk was being made in Sogdiana and exported west to Europe, but there was still a market for the finer, more varied Chinese silk.

In Chang'an Nanaivandak also bought ornaments, jewellery and medicines to trade on his return journey.

Finally he organised presents for his wife and grandchild. He had brought with him a piece of lapis lazuli which he took to a jeweller to be made in an ornament. For his grandchild he went to a tailor to have a traditional Sogdian suit made: a shorter jacket with narrow sleeves, flared from the waist. Having completed his business, he joined his agent and others for an evening of dining and entertainment. Nanaivandak had travelled the Silk Road for twenty years so he knew Chang'an well and knew there were many Sogdian restaurants and musicians.

They went to one of the many restaurants and after ordering food the waiters appeared with silver trays full of the delicacies of the house and the wine was served in a Sogdian-style jug decorated with an elaborate pattern of a winged camel.

(Adapted from *Life Along the Silk Road* by Susan Whitfield)

Kitson built on this argument by showing how using artefacts can encourage more constructive evidential thinking by moving the focus away from reliability to developing a disposition towards evidential thinking, focusing on the meaning of the object (its purpose, use and relationship with the people who made, used, found and studied it).[22]

Practical strategies for using objects in the classroom to develop evidential thinking have been developed by the project Teaching History with 100 Objects (an online collection of a hundred objects linked to different parts of the curriculum).[23] Richard Woff, who led the project at the British Museum, argues that pupils can be encouraged to look in depth at objects, and not to read past them, by asking questions about their origin and purpose, the process by which they were made, their material and their use in order to explore their meaning.[24] In arguing this, Woff suggests that the goal of such an approach should be to rebuild the biography of an object. He also recommends introducing people progressively into the biography of the object: both those who interacted with the object when it was made and used, and the people who subsequently sought to interpret it as an artefact. This can include historians, teachers and pupils who are using it.

As I prepared to plan my enquiry, I therefore had two challenges: how to make pupils read and want to read the work of an historian, and how to make the evidential work of historians visible to them. Whitfield's work provided the answer. In both *Life Along the Silk Road* and *Silk, Slaves and Stupas* she builds a compelling, highly readable account of the history of the Silk Road by using traces of material culture:

> *Movement of objects – including people – is essential to the concept of the Silk Road (…) This book seeks to take account of more recent discussions of 'things' to include their interactions with humans, the usual approach to material culture, but also the interdependence of things and humans – their entanglement.*[25]

Planning the enquiry

My goals were ambitious. I wanted to explore if it was possible to incorporate in one enquiry an exploration of evidential processes, the joy of reading, and the building of substantive knowledge by bringing an historian into the classroom, rather than telling pupils that *they* were the historians in the classroom.[26]

Finding a structure

As demonstrated in Kathryn Elsdon and Hannah Howard's recent 'Triumphs Show', artefacts can be a powerful starting point from which to develop an enquiry.[27] I was looking for an enquiry question that would allow me to introduce the history of the trade routes and the people who traded along them; objects connected to the route; the evidential processes of an historian and their account. Fortunately, I found guidance on how to bring these elements together (as well as how to select substantive content from a more than thousand-year history spanning several continents) in *Life Along the Silk Road*. The book is organised around the tales of ten composite characters, all taken from contemporary sources dated between the eighth and tenth century CE. Each tale revisits historical events already introduced in previous chapters from the perspectives of different people (a merchant, a monk, a princess, a soldier, an artist and so on) and each tale is accompanied by illustrations of the objects that were used to construct it, as well as the written sources used.

With the book by my side, and an emerging line of enquiry, I contacted Susan to ask for her help. She agreed to meet me and directed me to a multitude of resources, including

Figure 5: Objects used in the enquiry

A traditional Sogdian suit, woven in silk with a traditional Sogdian design.

A late seventh-century or early eighth-century Sogdian jug, made from silver.

A figurine excavated in China. It was made during the Tang dynasty (618–907 CE). It depicts Sogdian musicians playing their instruments atop a camel.

the International Dunhuang Project.[28] Susan also agreed to interact directly with the pupils, which proved central to the success of the enquiry. As a result of my reading and meeting with Susan, I developed the following enquiry question: 'Who can tell us the most about the Silk Road?' (Figure 1).

Scaffolding pupils' work with historical accounts

At this point I had two options: I could digest, summarise, and re-organise several tales in the book or focus on one or two to make it feasible for the pupils to read the historian's account itself. I decided on the latter approach, choosing the tale of the merchant and the monk and asking pupils to read extracts from the book in every lesson (Figure 2). I decided to plan a seven-lesson enquiry. After the first lesson, in which pupils would be given an overview of the Silk Road as a transcontinental network of trade routes, pupils would be introduced to a new individual's tale in each lesson. We started with Nanaivandak (the merchant) and Xuanzeng (the monk) from the tales in *Life Along the Silk Road*. To put into practice Woff's approach of building a biography of an object I decided to introduce pupils to two characters not included in Whitfield's book. The first was Sir Aurel Stein, the archaeologist who found many of the objects that pupils

Figure 6: Susan Whitfield's letter to pupils

> I have so many questions when I see these.
>
> ... and many more.
>
> We will probably never find answers to most of these questions but they are worth asking anyway so we can understand more of a soldier's life far away from his home.
>
> I hope you've enjoyed learning about the Silk Road and that some of you go on to learn more about it and find objects of your own.

would be studying. The second was Ibn Battuta (arguably the greatest traveller of all time), who wrote an account of his travels that I wanted pupils to compare to the account of the monk Xuanzang. I also planned to explore how the historian helped us at each step (telling us more than either of the others about the Silk Road!).

I was uncertain about how the extended reading would be received, so I wanted its repeated use over the course of the enquiry to build to a crescendo. Thus, at the beginning of the enquiry pupils were introduced to extracts from the account in a very structured and supported way, using a small card sort to reconstruct the biography of the object used to launch the enquiry: a felt shoe (Figure 3). In subsequent lessons, guided reading activities were disguised through games. I also developed a role play based on the journey of Nanaivandak (the merchant in the first tale), which was followed by reading an extract from Whitfield's book in order to reflect on the pupils' own experience of completing the merchant's journey (Figure 4).

Scaffolding pupils' work with sources

While I wanted pupils to read for knowledge, I also wanted them at the same time to explore how that knowledge had been constructed. I therefore used some of the objects that Susan Whitfield uses in her book to form the stories of the merchant and the monk. I introduced them alongside Whitfield's account, progressively making more explicit the evidential processes that underpinned her account. I was fortunate that the sources that formed the evidential basis for Whitfield's 'tales' offered plentiful opportunities for interest and engagement (a principle espoused by Kitson).[29] By choosing sources that Whitfield herself had used in her books, I hoped to show not just what a hypothetical historian working on the Silk Roads could learn from an object, but how a real historian interpreted and used sources to construct an account. An additional source of help in choosing the objects came from an online exhibition: *The Sogdians: Influencers on the Silk Roads* (Figure 5).[30]

The first way in which I scaffolded pupils' work with sources was by considering the selection and sequence of different source types across the enquiry. Non-textual sources provided, in the first three lessons, an interesting and accessible way of encountering the history of the Silk Roads. As the enquiry progressed, I introduced progressively more source types, such as Sogdian letters and travel accounts by the Buddhist monk Xuanzang, and by the Muslim scholar and traveller Ibn Battuta.

The second form of scaffolding concerned how pupils were introduced to different evidential issues. Following the advice of Smith, I wanted to avoid treating work with sources as a separate and discrete exercise.[31] I therefore ensured that the sources used in the lessons always had a relationship with the extracts from the historian's account. I also introduced evidential issues gradually across the enquiry – it was only from the fourth lesson onwards that we reflected more explicitly on the use of sources and discussed how historians built their accounts (in lesson four, pupils also read an extract from Frankopan's illustrated version of *The Silk Roads*).[32]

Teaching the enquiry

I taught the enquiry in three different contexts: to a Year 7 class in my second placement school; to a Year 6 class in a primary school the week before the end of the summer term; and as a first enquiry and an introduction to history to Year 7 classes in the school where I am currently working as a newly qualified teacher.

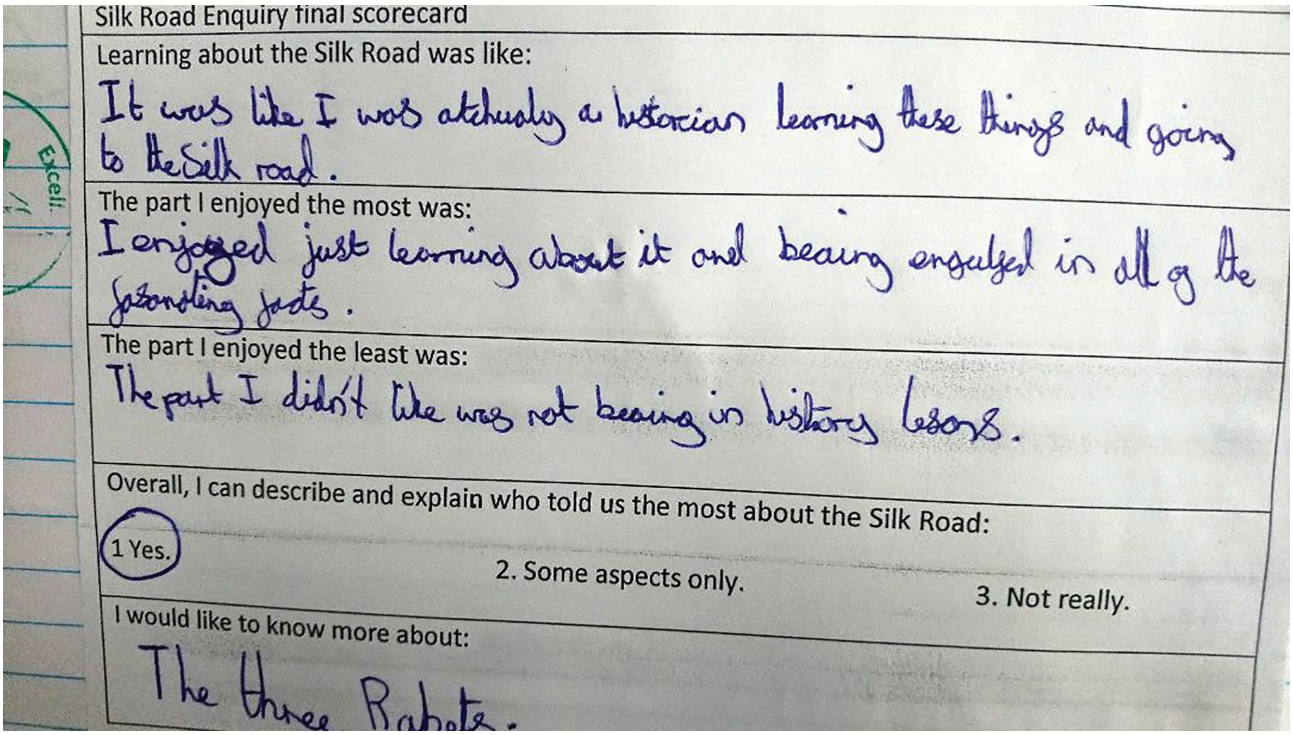
Because my goals were wide-ranging, I decided that I needed more than one form of assessment to evaluate pupils' historical learning. The enquiry question itself was directly answered through whole-class discussions which formed the conclusion of each lesson in which a new person was introduced. The final outcome task, completed during the seventh lesson, was therefore designed to explore and assess pupils' emerging disposition to think evidentially. Pupils were asked to design an exhibition about the Silk Road by choosing a specific theme (for example, ideas travelling on the Silk Road, or the people on the Silk Road) and selecting three objects to include in their exhibition from a collection of thirteen objects. This included new objects as well as those they had studied during the enquiry. They had to describe the objects they had chosen, justify their place in the exhibition and explain what evidence they could yield to address the theme they had chosen. The activity took loose inspiration from Foster and Gadd's 'Supermarket Evidential Sweep' game, although I decided to ask pupils to complete the task individually.[33] I introduced the outcome task by reading to the class an email that Susan had sent to them from New York, describing her favourite object and her reasons for choosing it (Figure 6).

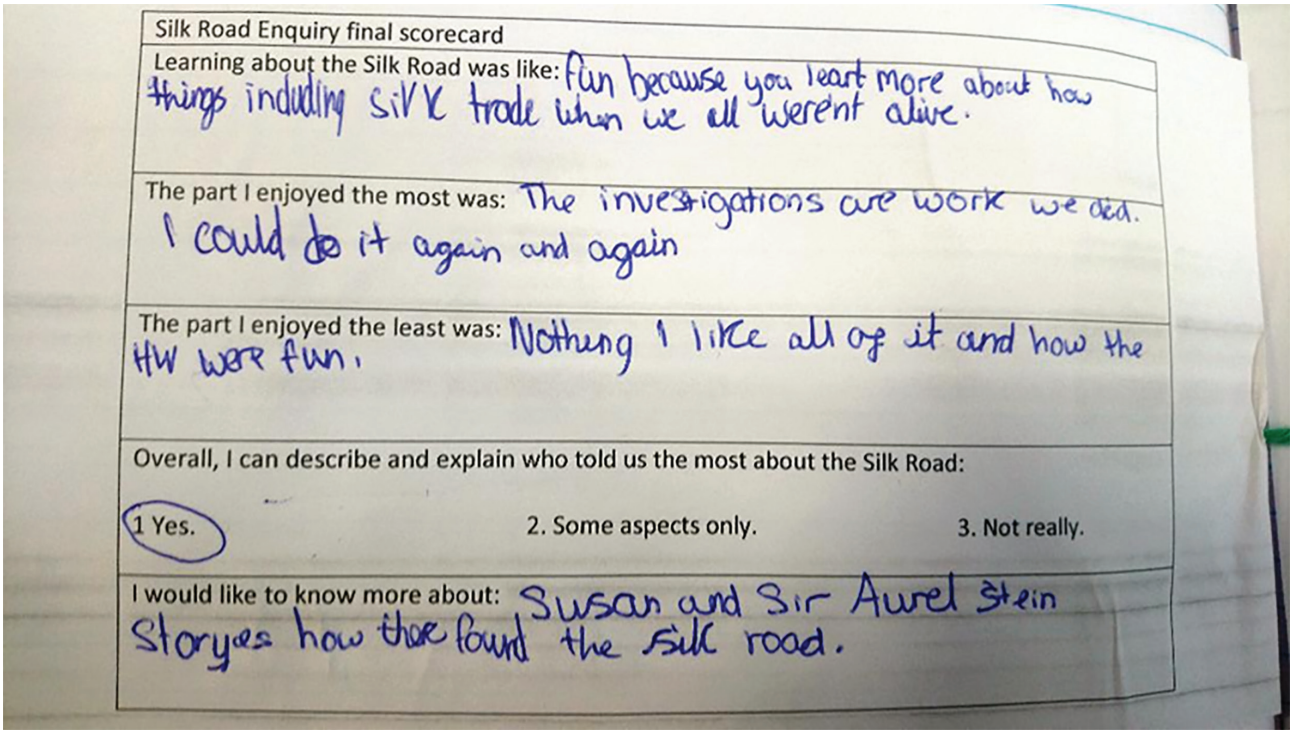
I also gave them the choice to browse the Smithsonian online exhibition on the Sogdians. This was intended to inspire them to think about how and why an exhibition's curators choose the items for display, but also to give them access to a wider range of objects than they had studied in lessons.[34]

Did it work?

Putting evidential work at the centre of an enquiry on the Silk Roads by bringing an historian into the classroom and maintaining attention on their use of non-textual sources, generated high levels of engagement and interest in all the contexts in which the enquiry was taught.

Figure 7: Examples of pupils' scorecards





In focus groups run subsequent to the teaching of the enquiry, pupils unanimously agreed that it had been 'like being an historian'. Being like a historian was not equated to pupils themselves reading sources and constructing claims, but instead to carefully engaging with and understanding the work of professional historians. The direct engagement with Whitfield, through the letter she sent them and their knowledge of her interest in their work, motivated all pupils, more than I had envisaged. Similarly, some pupils were fascinated by the illustrated version of Frankopan's book.

The substantive focus of the enquiry itself provided ample opportunities for engagement, and teaching it through the structure of an enquiry maximised those opportunities as it provoked growing curiosity about the topic, a strong ownership over the question and a sense of achievement in finding answers. Pupils in the focus group described the learning experience by saying it had been 'like being an astronaut and discovering a new planet, as I never knew about the Silk Road'.[35] The novelty and perceived 'exoticism' of the topic did not, however, guarantee engagement across the class: it was the ongoing engagement in evidential thinking that won over the interest of the whole group, a process also described by Barton and Levstik.[36] At the end of the enquiry, I asked all pupils to complete a final scorecard to evaluate the experience and their learning (Figure 7). The majority of pupils articulated that it had been reading the work of historians and learning how historians work that had interested them the most. In seeking to characterise the nature of pupils' achievement I noted that pupils did not improve their skills in evaluating sources, in fact they did not even attempt to do this as it was not a goal of the

Figure 8: Extracts from pupils' final enquiry outcome tasks

Ahmed:
The theme I chose is the distance of travel because people travel and exchange ideas but you would have to go there in the first place.

The loaded camel found in Tang dynasty tomb deserves to be here because it shows camels were on the silk road and that they carried a lot of items. This source provides evidence that they travel long distances because they need the camel to ride on when they are tired especially in the Taklamakan desert.

The theme is the exchange of ideas on the Silk Road because many people with many faiths and ideas travelled on the Silk Road. The source I chose is the cave of the thousands Buddha [sic] because it was found with ideas of the Silk Road. It was found by Sir Aurel Stein. It deserves to be in the exhibition because as it was full of many useful artefacts about the Silk Road. The source provides evidence of the people who travelled on the Silk Road because it has many artefacts of Buddhas.

Peter:
The theme I have chosen is the people who travelled, and traded and I have chosen this because I think [sic] know who travelled will gives us an inside on the Silk Road on a greater level. The first source I chose is two Sogdian pedlars I chose them because they are Sogdians and they were found in China reflecting the cosmopolitanism at the time.

enquiry. Rather, they demonstrated significantly improved understanding of what evidence in history is and how different sources, both textual and non-textual, can be used to yield it.

By studying the biographies of the objects, we explored how an object's *story* can yield evidence. We did not work explicitly on provenance, yet the majority of pupils explained in their outcome task the significance of where the objects had been found in determining the evidence they could provide to the historian. I did not give them a scaffold to do this, we modelled the thinking together and they replicated it.

I provided very limited structure for the outcome task. I offered a table that the pupils could work from, but only some made use of it. The sophistication of their evidential thinking varied: some pupils chose specific themes to focus on (for example, the exchange of religions and ideas, or the movement of people) and explained clearly the evidence yielded by each source in relation to their theme; others chose objects in relation to a more generic topic of the Silk Road, without defining which specific theme they illuminated (Figure 8). One pupil surprised me by flipping the lens of the enquiry: whereas I had used the Silk Roads as a way for pupils to learn about different civilisations and the encounters between them, he explained that the stories of people themselves and the civilisations of which they were a part can provide evidence about the wider networks of exchanges and trade which we call the Silk Roads. As I have just finished teaching the enquiry, it is too early to say for certain, but I hope that a disposition towards evidential thinking has been fostered.[36]

Recommendations

'Although it was undoubtedly ambitious, it appears, upon reflection, that this enquiry on the Silk Roads worked well as pupils' first encounter with Key Stage 3 history in Year 7, both because it introduced pupils to some foundational evidential principles that underpin the practice of history as a discipline and because it generated a high level of engagement and interest. Furthermore, it enabled me to model to pupils the processes of knowledge construction in which historians engage and the evolving nature of historical accounts.

Researching, teaching and evaluating this enquiry consolidated my understanding of the importance of intentionally planning for the development of evidential thinking, and particularly of doing this consistently from the start of Year 7. Developing a secure understanding of the nature of evidence in history is neither quick nor easy and certainly cannot be achieved with one enquiry. Instead, my experience of teaching the enquiry suggests that it requires sustained efforts over the long term. Exploring evidential issues through regular engagement with the work of historians might be one way of achieving this goal.

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[9] Wineburg, S. *op.cit.*

[10] Stanford History Education Group, n.d. *Reading Like a Historian*, https://sheg.stanford.edu/history-lessons (accessed 15/12/18).

[11] Counsell, C. (2004) *History and Literacy: building the lesson around the text*, London: Hodder Education.

[12] Lee, P. and Shemilt, D. (2003) 'A scaffold, not a cage: progression and progression models in history' in *Teaching History*, *113*, *Creating Progress Edition,* pp. 13–23. Mountford, P. (2017) 'Literacies' in I. Davies (ed.) *Debates in History Teaching*, Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 227–239.

[13] *Teaching History* dedicated two issues to the topic: *Teaching History 132: Historians in the Classroom* in 2008 and *Teaching History 170, Historians* in 2019.

[14] Worth, P. (2014) 'English king Frederick I won at Arsuf, then took Acre, then they all went home': exploring the challenges involved in reading and writing historical narrative' in *Teaching History, 156*, *Chronology Edition,* pp. 8–20.

[15] Counsell *op.cit*; Hammond, K. (2007) 'Teaching Year 9 about historical theories and methods' in *Teaching History, 128, Beyond the Exam Edition,* pp. 4–11, explored exposing pupils to historical methods and the specific role that evidence plays in conclusions reached by historians; Foster, R. and Goudie, K. (2015) demonstrated how the dialogue with a professional historian can improve enquiries and the use of contemporary sources in 'Miss, did this really happen here?' in *Teaching History, 170, Historians Edition,* pp. 16–25.

[16] Foster, R. (2001) 'Passive receivers or constructive readers?' in *Teaching History, 142, Experiencing History Edition*, pp. 4–13.

[17] Haward, T. (2005) *Seeing History: visual learning strategies and resources for Key Stage 3*, Stafford: Network Educational Press.

[18] Whitfield, S. (2018) *op.cit.*, p. 35.

[19] Whitfield, S. (2018) *op.cit.*

[20] See, for example, Chapman, A. (2013) 'Relics rock: constructing Stonehenge' (Polychronicon) in *Teaching History, 126*, *Outside the Classroom Edition*, pp. 20–21.

[21] Lee, P. and Shemilt, D. (2003) *op.cit.*

[22] Kitson, A. (2011) *op.cit.*

[23] Teaching History With 100 Objects was launched by the British Museum in 2014 and is an online collection of 100 objects linked to different areas of the history curriculum. The project is a result of a partnership between museums across the UK and the British Museum. It is funded by the Department for Education www.teachinghistory100.org/about/

[24] Richard Woff was the Head of Project for the Teaching With 100 Objects at the British Museum (www.hoddereducation.co.uk/subjects/history/history-subject-community/hodder-history-blog/december-2014/teaching-history-with-100-objects-1)

[25] Whitfield (2018) *op.cit.*, p. 3.

[26] Ashby, R. (2017) 'Understanding historical evidence: teaching and learning challenges' in I. Davies (ed.) *Debates in History Teaching*, Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 144—154.

[27] Elsdon, K. and Howard, H. (2019) 'Triumphs Show – Spicing it up: using material culture as a means to generate an enquiry on the British Empire' in *Teaching History, 176, Widening Horizons Edition.*

[28] The International Dunhuang Project is an international collaboration to bring together in an online collection all images, manuscripts from archaeological sites on the eastern Silk Road, including Dunhuang. All the resources are freely available for educational purposes and can be found here: http://idp.bl.uk/

[29] Kitson, A. (2011) *op.cit.*

[30] The exhibition is available at this site: www.freersackler.si.edu/the-sogdians-influencers-on-the-silk-roads/

[31] Smith, D. (2016) 'How one period casts shadows on another: exploring Year 8 encounters with multiple interpretations of the First World War' in *Teaching History*, *162*, *Scales of Planning Edition,* pp. 46–55.

[32] Frankopan makes it very explicit in the text of the children's edition, for example mentioning the Buddhist temples outside Kabul or the caves in Dunhuang when explaining the spread of Buddhism.

[33] Foster, R. and Gadd, S. (2013) 'Let's play Supermarket "Evidential" Sweep: developing students' awareness of the need to select evidence' in *Teaching History, 152*, *Pulling it All Together Edition,* pp. 24–29.

[34] www.freersackler.si.edu/the-sogdians-influencers-on-the-silk-roads/

[35] As the enquiry took them to new places ('the new planet') they had never explored, I accompanied it with the use of maps. They had maps from the first lesson to annotate, and we used the detailed maps contained in Whitfield's book (2018). At first, I was worried about their limited ability to refer back to the maps and to reason with them to understand, for example, the significance of a location (in terms of what we could infer from where something had been found). We however persevered and pupils started using the map more consistently. The trade game, among other activities, forced them to use the map to understand how to move and trade. It was very interesting to notice how maps were used by a pupil with EAL to make sense of the new content. In the end every pupil in the class could explain the significance of the cities of Samarkand and Chang'an.

[36] Barton, K. C. and Levstik, L. S. (2004) *Teaching History for the Common Good*, Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.