



Historical Association

The voice for history

Teaching primary history through concepts

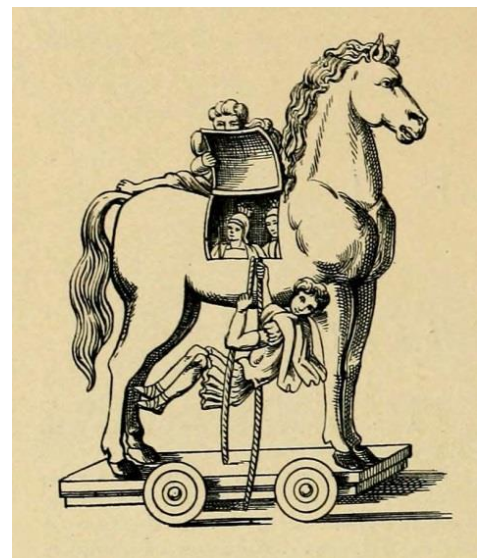
Andrew Wrenn

Teaching history in schools is quite new (it's only been in the National Curriculum for English state schools since 1991), but the discipline of history as a subject is very ancient. People have always tried to create records of their past. Early cave painters depicted hunts on their walls; poets and storytellers shaped fictional myths, possibly based on real past events; and religious writers such as Christian monks detected God's hand in the events of their time.

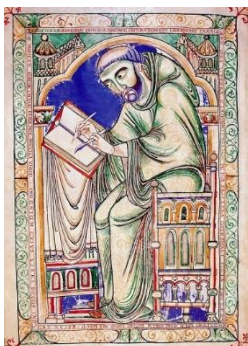


Prehistoric cave paintings completed in the Stone Age in Bulgaria

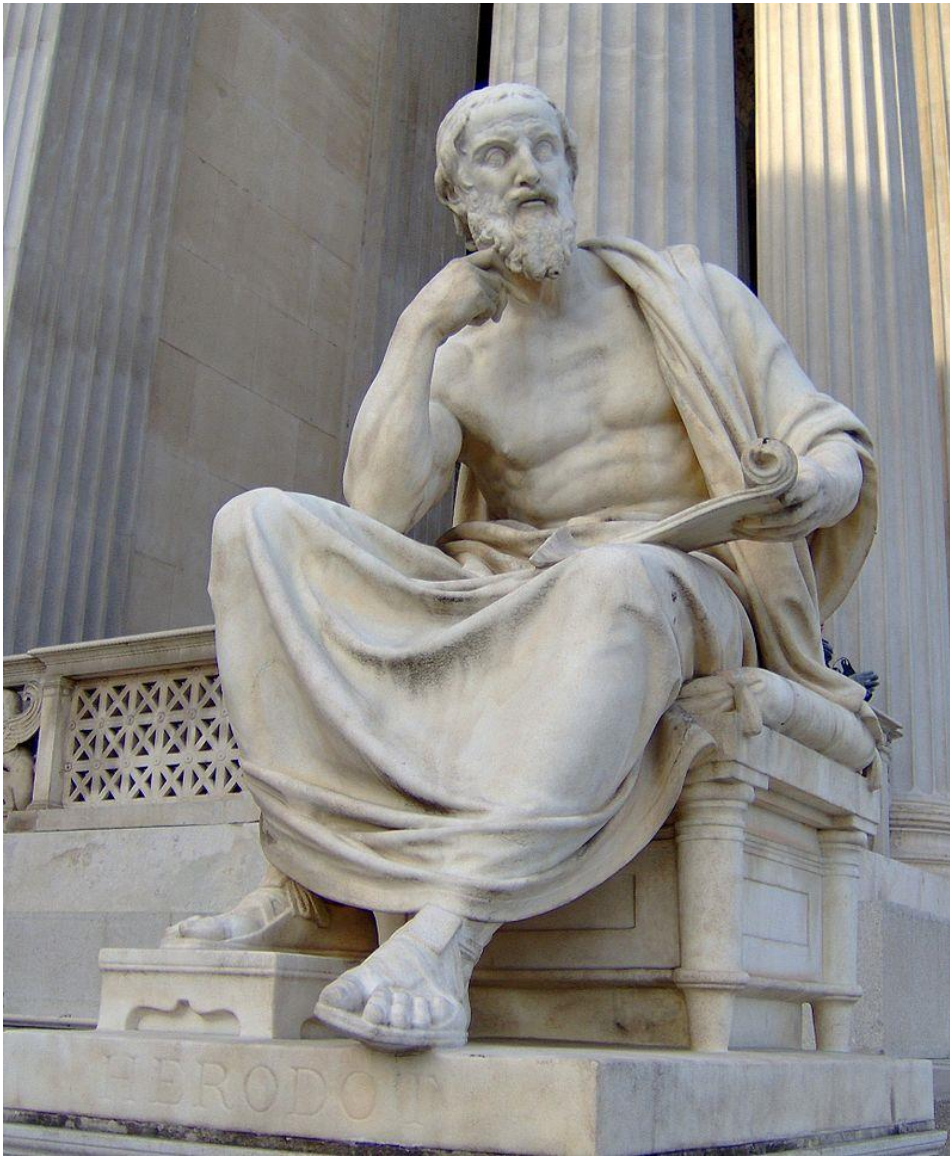
But these well-intentioned people were not historians in the modern sense. Thinking and writing in a recognisably historical way can be traced back to the ancient Greeks. Herodotus, an ancient Greek writer, collected stories of the past that were available at the time at which he lived. But what sets his writing apart was the way in which he treated his sources of information. He actively researched, seeking out new material, but said, *'I am bound to report what I have heard but not in every case to believe it.'* In other words, he claimed to sift the available evidence critically, checking his sources thoroughly as a good modern journalist should (in fact, his writing includes some pretty obviously tall stories, but his attitude towards the available evidence was marked by healthy scepticism).



Ancient Greek poets and storytellers like Homer created heroic myths such as that of the siege of Troy; here, Greek soldiers sneak out of the legendary city of Troy from their hiding place in a wooden horse



Medieval Christian monks portrayed saints in the best possible light, embellished their accounts with reports of miracles and described their enemies and critics as sinners



The ancient Greek writer Herodotus of Halicarnassus (484–425 B.C.), sometimes referred to as the ‘father of history’

He termed his investigations ‘enquiries’, implying a process of research where different evidence was weighed and evaluated and a conclusion reached. This process of enquiry informed all the history that Herodotus wrote, and still shapes the way in which history is taught in schools. Two and a half thousand years ago he was striving for objectivity, a quality under threat in our own time of instant commentary and fake news.

Some inhabitants of Veles, an obscure town in Northern Macedonia, made money circulating deliberately fabricated news stories online during the 2016 US presidential election



'Teaching should equip pupils to ask perceptive questions, think critically, weigh evidence, sift arguments, and develop perspective and judgement.'

Extract from 'Purpose of study' in the 2013 history National Curriculum programmes of study

So if primary teachers (and their pupils) form part of that ancient community of enquiry, which embraces everyone who studies history in the present (and stretches back to Herodotus himself), then they need to be aware of the tension at the heart of the discipline between telling the story (and stories) of the past and doing so in a critical way, striving for objectivity. This

ancient tension is reflected in the current debate around the role of knowledge in schools, partly prompted by the 2019 Ofsted framework.

Planning for two types of historical knowledge

Dr Michael Riley, a leading history educationalist, has defined history as *'both a body and form of knowledge'*. In other words, there are at least two kinds of historical knowledge:

1. **substantive knowledge** or what Christine Counsell, another leading curriculum thinker, describes as *'the content that teachers teach as established fact'*
2. **disciplinary knowledge**, what Riley means when he uses the phrase *'a form of knowledge'*, or the concepts such as cause and consequence or handling evidence that shape the way in which content is presented and, in schools, the way in which history is taught

What has made good history teaching distinctive over the years is the presence of both kinds of historical knowledge in teacher planning, pitched at an appropriate level to be accessible to a particular age group or range of ability. If content is only taught in an uncritical way, it ceases to be history and becomes merely an account of the past, entirely shaped by the beliefs and prejudices of the writer or teacher. This can lead to the indoctrination of children, with any world view – however extreme – being accepted as truthful. It means, for example, that an anti-Semitic version of history, instilling prejudice and discrimination against Jews, could be taught as unchallengeable fact.



Jews were forced to wear yellow stars like this to mark them out during the Nazi period and the Second World War ('Juif' means Jew in French)

On the other hand, if only disciplinary concepts are taught, with no importance attached to the gradual accumulation of substantive knowledge over time, then pupils are left with, at best, a shallow understanding of history, dismissive of the validity of any source material and unable to make historical sense of the world in which they will eventually take their place as adult citizens.



New British citizens are required by law to be able to pass a test that demonstrates some historical knowledge of national history



Planning for teaching history thus needs to be approached through two lenses: the **lens of substantive knowledge** (concerning the choice, scope and sequencing of content) and the **lens of disciplinary knowledge** or disciplinary concepts (such as cause and consequence or change and continuity), which need to be revisited at regular intervals, regardless of the content being taught.

‘History is just one damn thing after another.’

This famous quote, attributed to various historical figures, by implication criticises teaching that merely consists of content coverage

The great twentieth-century educational writer Jerome Bruner once said that *‘content coverage is the enemy of understanding’*. He was criticising teaching that is solely focused on the acquisition of content where this is unaccompanied by any understanding of the content being taught. In history, this would imply teaching a vast amount of content but with the only rationale for doing so being the inclusion of as much content as can

possibly be crammed into the available time, regardless of whether pupils have actually understood any of it. Fortunately, neither the 2013 programmes of study nor the Ofsted framework endorse such an approach. The programmes of study list important terms or substantive ‘abstract terms’ concepts that children need to understand across the key stages, such as ‘civilisation’, ‘peasantry’ and ‘Parliament’. Yet in teaching such concepts, the Ofsted framework explicitly cautions schools against indiscriminate rote learning for its own sake: *‘This [(acquisition of knowledge) must not be reduced to, or confused with, simply memorising facts. Inspectors will be alert to unnecessary or excessive attempts to simply prompt pupils to learn glossaries or long lists of disconnected facts.]’*

Yet some current schemes of work in primary history have vocabulary columns overloaded with terms that children are required to learn, but which fail to distinguish how these terms might relate to each other or whether one term might be more important than another. In other cases, knowledge organisers crammed to the gills with every last detail about a study unit are issued to pupils the week in which teaching commences. Any surprise or intrigue around learning is immediately removed, and in the worst-case scenario, the knowledge organiser itself becomes the learning (and the focus of uncritical regurgitation). Consideration of the means by which substantive concepts are taught and reinforced can help to avoid such pitfalls.

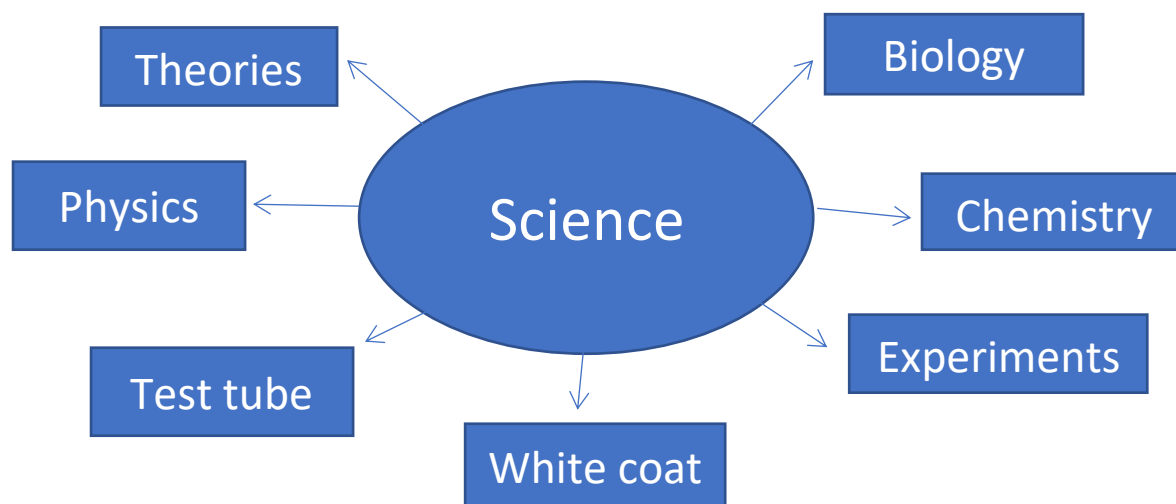
In this list of vocabulary from a scheme of work on Roman Britain, do any terms refer to bigger concepts than others? Are there some technical terms that it is less important for children to recall?



Soldier
Legionary
Barracks
Army
Centurion
Empire
Groin protector
Javelin

Cognitive load theory can inform how we learn and teach

This theory, which influenced the 2019 Ofsted framework, claims that people build schemas or mental webs of association over time. These can be stored in our long-term memories and include related terms and vocabulary linked to those terms. According to cognitive load theory, our brains contain complex systems of inter-connected schemas, from which we should be able to retrieve details relating to a particular term, such as 'government' or 'science'.



*A possible adult schema for 'science', with related associated terms
– how different would a child's schema for 'science' be?*

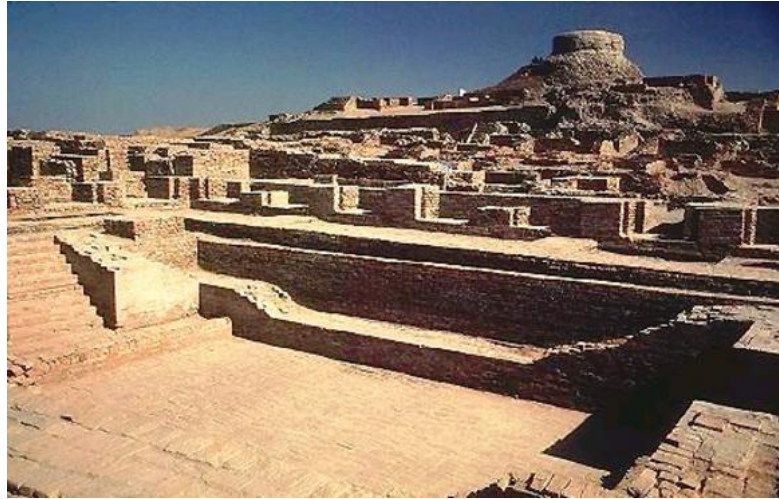
Most of the time, children have far fewer associations to recall in relation to particular terms than an educated adult would have. The educational implications of this are that children need to learn specific terms over time so that they can add to the associations connected with those terms that are stored in their long-term memories. These terms should then be recalled easily from the long-term memory without stress or particular effort. This idea of schemas, when applied to major subject concepts (both substantive and disciplinary), can help teachers to prioritise the relative importance of vocabulary and terms. For example, if a school is studying aspects of Roman life in Britain at Key Stage 2, the terms 'public health' and 'strigil' (a metal implement for scraping the skin in public baths) might both be used. Yet it is not equally important for children to learn or be able to recall the meaning of both terms. 'Public health' is an expansive concept, relevant to the study of all human history, and might well be encountered in any period. It might be a term that pupils have learned in previous study units at Key Stage 2, but it is also one that they might encounter again.

Dictionary definition of public health:

1. The health of the population as a whole, especially as the subject of government intervention and support.
2. The branch of medicine dealing with public health, including hygiene, epidemiology and disease prevention.

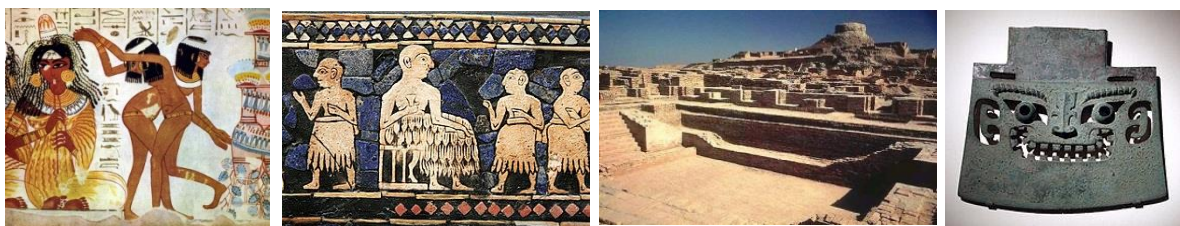


A Roman strigil



The Great Bath at Mohenjo-daro, an excavated city of the Indus Valley Civilisation in modern Pakistan. Archaeologists date this public bath to the third millennium B.C., centuries before the development of Roman baths. It may be evidence of a public health system in this ancient civilisation, showing that the concept of public health is not limited to one period.

‘Strigil’, on the other hand, is a technical term that might be useful for understanding Roman ‘public health’, but it is restricted to a particular period. It might form part of the schema that children recall in relation to ‘public health’ as a concept, but it is surely less important to recall as a term than the concept of ‘public health’ itself. It should be helpful, then, for schools to decide which overarching concepts are important for children to build schema around, accumulating more associations with them as they progress across the key stages. A direct example can be drawn from the 2013 programmes of study, the concept of ‘civilisation’.



Key Stage 2 requires an overview of ancient civilisations, including an in-depth study of Ancient Egypt, Sumer, the Indus Valley Civilisation or the Shang Dynasty in China

Teaching the substantive historical concept of ‘civilisation’

Prior to teaching or planning a course, a teacher needs to have a clear understanding of what terms mean, particularly if there are multiple meanings.

Dictionary definition of civilisation:

1. The stage of human social and cultural development and organisation that is considered most advanced.
2. The process by which a society or place reaches an advanced stage of social and cultural development and organisation.
3. The society, culture and way of life of a particular area.

The word 'civilisation' comes from the Latin *civilis*, meaning civil, related to the Latin *civis*, meaning citizen, and *civitas*, meaning city or city-state.

A primary history leader can decide where pupils will first encounter the concept of civilisation, and pupils' schemas can be deepened by deliberately building understanding of the term as they progress through the curriculum.

What Key Stage 2 pupils could be told about the meaning of civilisation:

1. The way in which a group of people live, how they are organised and what they believe in where they live.
2. A way of life that is better or more advanced than another way of life.

The word 'civilisation' in English comes from the Latin (Roman) word *civitas*, which means city or city-state (a government or country based on one city).

For example, pupils might specifically focus on the term 'civilisation' as a result of learning activities within a medium-term plan when studying the Ancient Egyptians as a depth study within the lesson sequence. If so, lessons can follow long-established good practice in history teaching of converting a content title into an enquiry question, which can reflect a substantive or disciplinary concept. Christine Council has said that '*concepts turn content into problems*'. What she meant by this is that enquiry questions can be devised to address a particular concept. In turn, such enquiry questions can help to set up intriguing dilemmas or puzzles linked to a particular concept, which should help to motivate pupils to solve that problem.

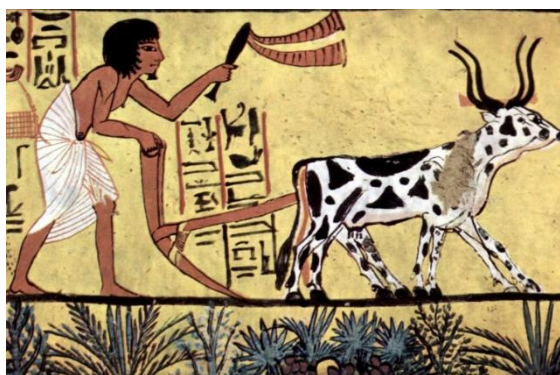
An example of a medium-term plan or enquiry on Ancient Egypt:

Overarching enquiry question: What do we owe to the Ancient Egyptians?

1. What does evidence tell us about Ancient Sumer, the Indus Valley Civilisation and Shang China?
2. What can the treasures of Tutankhamun tell us about Ancient Egypt?
3. How did Egypt change from the first pharaoh to Queen Cleopatra?
4. Why did Ancient Egyptian civilisation last for 3,000 years?

For example, instead of the content heading 'Ancient Egyptian civilisation', the content heading is converted into a question: 'Why did Ancient Egyptian civilisation last for 3,000 years?'

The following enquiry questions could form part of separate medium-term plans taught in different year groups and drawn from different periods across the key stages but which might nevertheless allow children to build their schemas of the substantive concept of 'civilisation', accumulating more knowledge to add to their understanding over time. These questions track a potential pathway across the primary history curriculum, reinforcing this major substantive concept.



Ancient Egyptian agriculture was totally dependent on the annual inundation of farming land by the River Nile, usually producing rich harvests, which provided Egyptian rulers with a predictable surplus for trade. This helps to explain why Egyptian civilisation lasted for so long.

A 'civilisation' pathway across the primary history curriculum

Key Stage 1

How do we know what life was like in London in 1666?

In the course of their study of the Great Fire of London, pupils use maps, images and artefacts to learn about the characteristics of Stuart London as an overcrowded and insanitary settlement, full of fire hazards. In doing so, they will also be introduced to the word 'city' for the first time, a term that they will encounter again in Key Stage 2 when studying civilisations that developed from living in cities, such as Rome – remember that the word 'civilisation' comes from the Latin *civitas* for city or city-state.



Key Stage 2

How much did Ancient Sumer, Shang, China and the Indus Valley Civilisation have in common?

As pupils compare the characteristics of these early civilisations, they will be building their knowledge of the features that they share – for example, common development along the fertile banks of great rivers, an agricultural surplus that could be used for trade, and urban dwellings concentrated in built-up towns and cities. Some of this knowledge would be built on prior learning about the nature of living in a city, first encountered in the study of seventeenth-century London in Key Stage 1.

How different was Ancient Egypt compared to Ancient Sumer, Shang China and the Indus Valley Civilisation?

Pupils will compare the characteristics of Ancient Egyptian civilisation with their prior learning about the features of civilisation in Ancient Sumer, Shang China and the Indus Valley. In doing so, they will be deepening their knowledge of the concept of 'civilisation' itself.

How free were people in Ancient Athens and Sparta?

As part of their study of life in both locations, pupils will be contrasting the forms of government of the Ancient Greek rival city-states of Sparta (a military dictatorship, where power lay with military leaders) and Athens (a democracy, where decisions were made by elected leaders accountable to an assembly of male citizens). This will build on their prior learning about earlier civilisations. For the purpose of a deliberate focus on the concept of 'civilisation', this will include their knowledge of the forms of government that characterised Sumer, Egypt and Shang China (absolute monarchies, where the power of the sole ruler or monarch was total or absolute) and the Indus Valley Civilisation, whose form of government remains uncertain (archaeological evidence points to a relatively egalitarian and peaceful society). Pupils will also build on their knowledge about living in cities from the examples of Stuart London (Key Stage 1), Ancient Sumer, Egypt, Shang China and the Indus Valley Civilisation. All the above reflect the root of 'civilisation' as a term coming from the idea of living in a city or city-state.

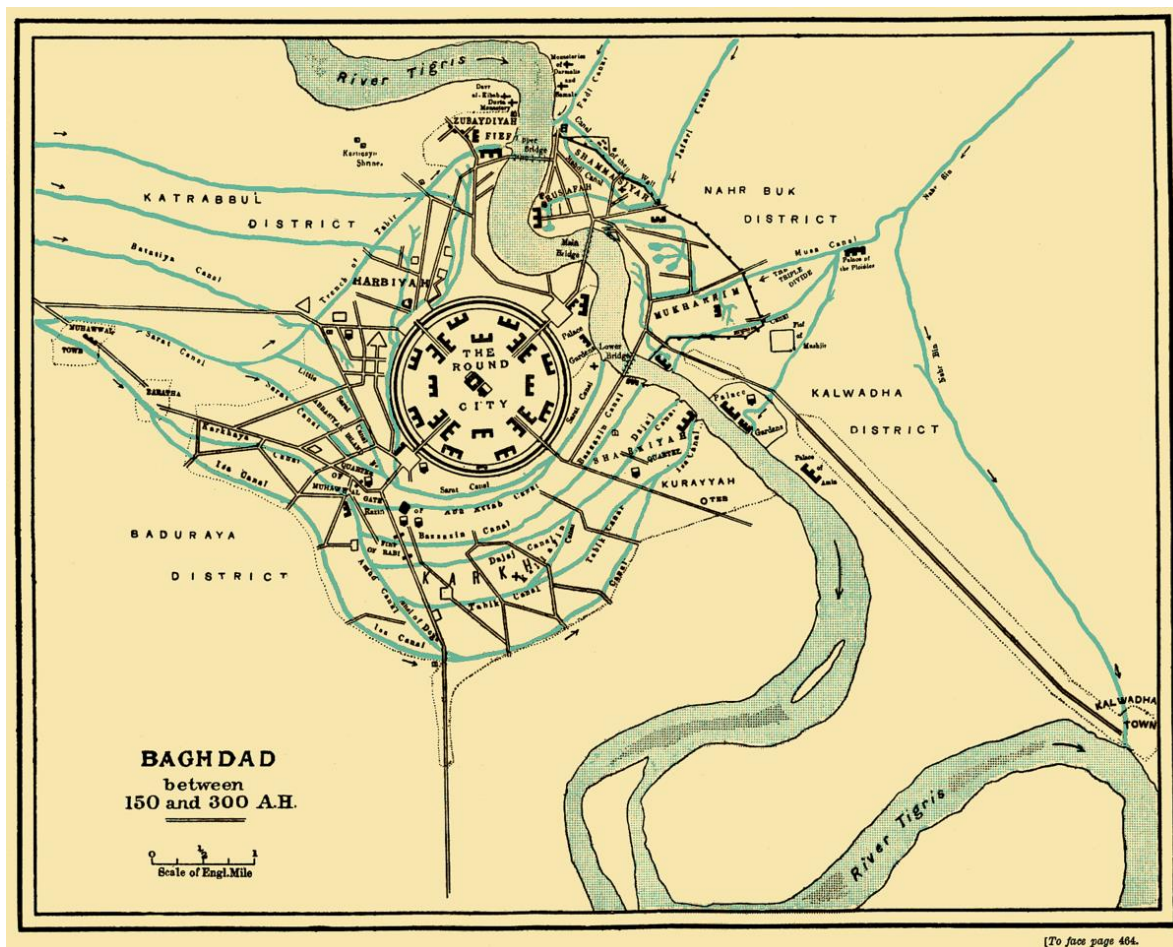


The ruins of the Parthenon in Athens, Greece

What have the Romans ever done for us?

In studying the legacy and significance of Roman civilisation, pupils would be learning about its different features (such as its form of government), building on prior learning about earlier civilisations, e.g. comparing the rights of Roman citizens with those of Ancient Athens and Sparta – the Romans admired Greek ideas, and their way of life was influenced by them.

How civilised were Viking Jorvik and Baghdad in A.D. 900?



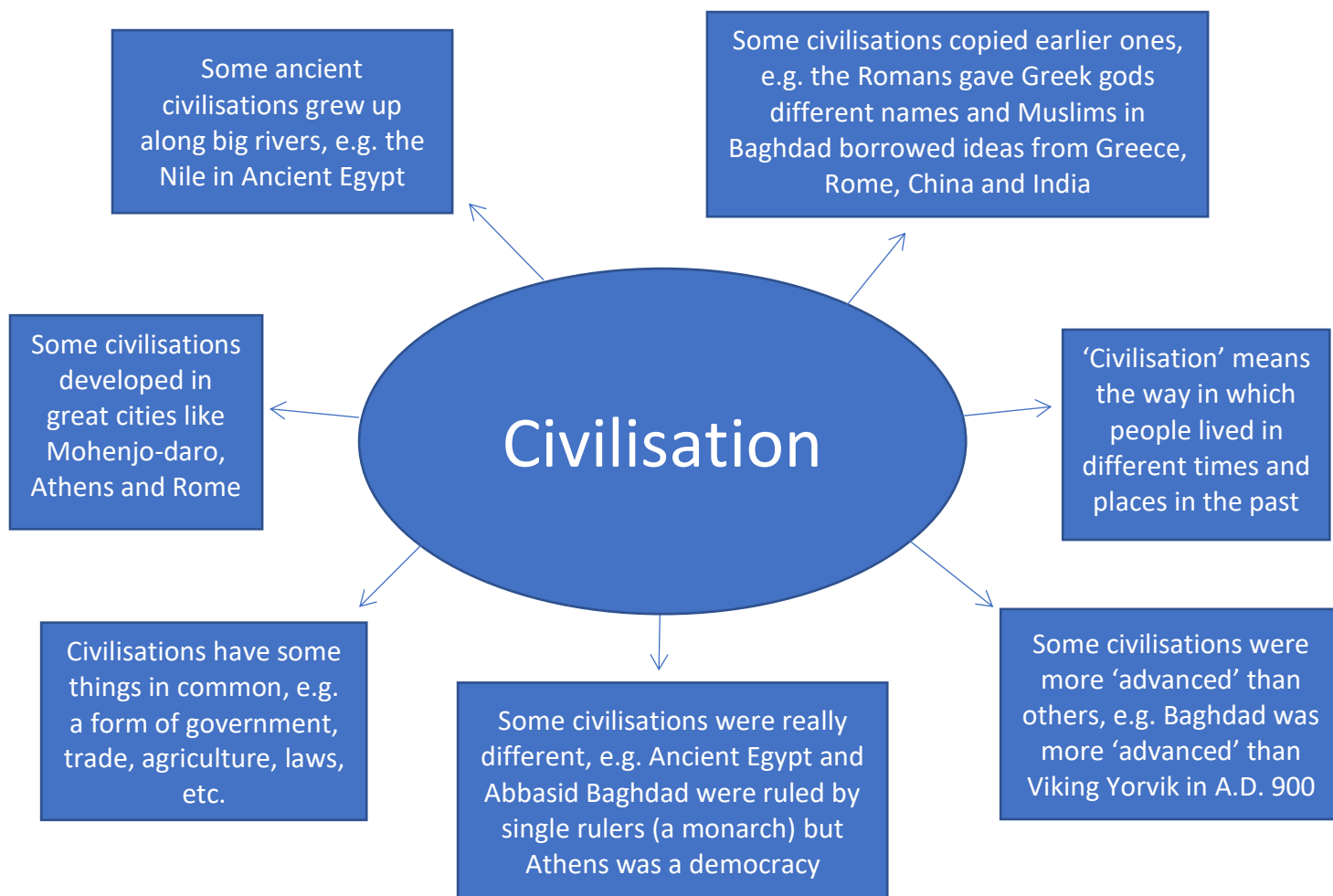
The new capital of the Muslim Abbasid Caliphate was deliberately designed as a round city, while Jorvik (Viking York) existed within the ruins of its Roman fortifications

To answer this enquiry question, pupils would be building on their knowledge of city living from earlier study units, e.g. Stuart London (Key Stage 1), Mohenjo-daro (Indus Valley), Athens and Sparta. In studying the archaeological evidence of life in Viking York (Jorvik), pupils would be making an informed value judgement about the degree of civilisation compared to the wealth, sophistication and learning of Abbasid Baghdad at the height of its power.

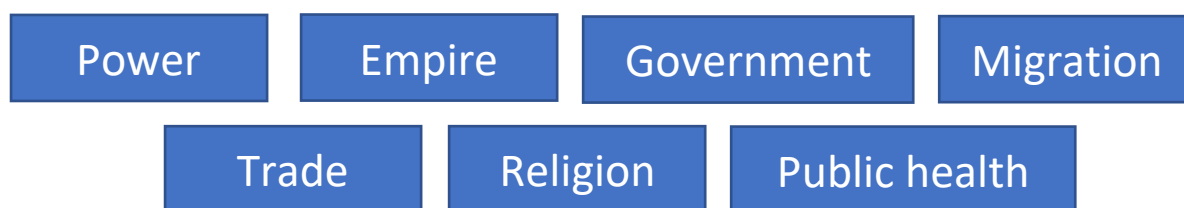


The Muslim Arab writer, traveller and Abbasid official Ahmad Ibn Fadlan reported extensively on the culture of the Vikings settled in the Volga region of Eastern Europe in the tenth century; while he admired some Viking traits, such as physical strength, he deplored and despised others

By the end of Key Stage 2, a pupil schema (as expressed in the form of a mind-map or spider diagram) might look something like this, drawing on their accumulated knowledge across the key stages.



Other substantive concepts that could be planned for and tracked across the key stages include:



Planning through the lens of disciplinary knowledge



The second order concepts that shape how history is taught as a discipline have been present in different versions of the history National Curriculum since 1991. The 2013 programmes of study describe them as follows in the ‘purpose of study’ statement, which covers expectations for all three key stages from ages five to 14:

- *‘understand historical concepts such as continuity and change, cause and consequence, similarity, difference and significance, and use them to make*

connections, draw contrasts, analyse trends, frame historically-valid questions and create their own structured accounts, including written narratives and analyses

- *understand the methods of historical enquiry, including how evidence is used rigorously to make historical claims, and discern how and why contrasting arguments and interpretations of the past have been constructed'*

There is no definitive, developed version of these concepts with official approval, but the following guidance follows good practice in assuming that:

- medium-term plans convert content within a study unit into strong enquiry questions across the lesson sequence
- each enquiry question focuses on a particular disciplinary concept within the medium-term plan (there is always some overlap so that a question aimed at cause and consequence may also deal with change and continuity, for example)

If we return to the medium-term plan on Ancient Egypt featured earlier, it can be seen that enquiry questions can be formulated to address disciplinary knowledge as well as substantive concepts such as 'civilisation'.

An example of a medium-term plan or enquiry on Ancient Egypt:

Overarching enquiry question: What do we owe to the Ancient Egyptians? (Predominant disciplinary concept: significance)

1. What does evidence tell us about Ancient Sumer, the Indus Valley Civilisation and Shang China? (Predominant disciplinary concepts: handling evidence; similarity and difference)
2. What can the treasures of Tutankhamun tell us about Ancient Egypt? (Predominant disciplinary concept: handling evidence)
3. How did Egypt change from the first pharaoh to Queen Cleopatra? (Predominant disciplinary concepts: change and continuity; cause and consequence)
4. Why did Ancient Egyptian civilisation last for 3,000 years? (Predominant disciplinary concept: cause and consequence)

Across the key stages, the disciplinary concepts are revisited with greater difficulty, regardless of content, on the basis of a spiral curriculum – a classic curriculum idea that we owe to Jerome Bruner. (Note: It is not always possible to include an enquiry question on all the concepts within a single medium-term plan.)

However, if disciplinary concepts are revisited at regular intervals, then curriculum pathways may be created through the key stages, ensuring that pupils build schemas around them as well as around substantive knowledge or content (remember that

disciplinary knowledge or concepts help to ensure that content is taught critically and with understanding).

A 'change and continuity' pathway across the primary history curriculum

The concept of 'change and continuity' can be described as '*understanding how and why change occurs in history, why and how things stay the same and analysing trends across time*'.

The following are examples of enquiry questions from different study units or medium-term plans across Key Stages 1 and 2 that focus primarily on change and continuity.

Key Stage 1

How much have I changed since I was born?

Pupils compare photographs of themselves from babies to the present, placing them in chronological order and commenting on how and why they have changed.

How did the coming of the railways change Britain?

The coming of the railways speeded up the transportation of goods and people around Britain at the height of the Industrial Revolution, resulting in specific changes that pupils can compare, such as the creation of a single time zone for the whole country.



St Paul's Cathedral, designed by Sir Christopher Wren

What stayed the same in London after the Great Fire?

Pupils discover that while much of the ancient city of London was destroyed, certain landmarks, such as the Tower of London, remained intact and other buildings, like St Paul's Cathedral, were rebuilt while retaining the same name and on the same site.

Key Stage 2

Why did Ancient Egyptian civilisation last for so long?

Pupils are taught that the inundation of the River Nile each year partly explains the continuity of a sophisticated civilisation along its fertile banks, which successive conquerors admired and tried to emulate, thus preserving Egyptian culture.

How did Greek ideas outlast the ancient Greeks?

Pupils learn that the Romans admired Greek civilisation and adopted many ideas from it. After the fall of the Western Roman Empire in the fifth century A.D., Greek ideas were preserved in the remaining Eastern Roman Empire, in Christian monasteries in Western Europe and in the flourishing Islamic world, from where they eventually returned to Western Europe, still influencing us today.

How did bronze and iron change Britain?

Pupils study how the introduction of bronze and iron ushered in the Bronze and Iron Ages respectively, improving the technology and sophistication of tools and weaponry.

Who changed Britain most: the Romans, Anglo-Saxons or Vikings?

Pupils examine how each people left their own mark on Britain and debate who changed the country most.

A 'cause and consequence' pathway across the primary history curriculum

The concept of 'cause and consequence' can be described as *'the identification and description of reasons for and results of historical events, situations and changes studied in the past'*.

The following are examples of enquiry questions from different study units that focus primarily on cause and consequence.

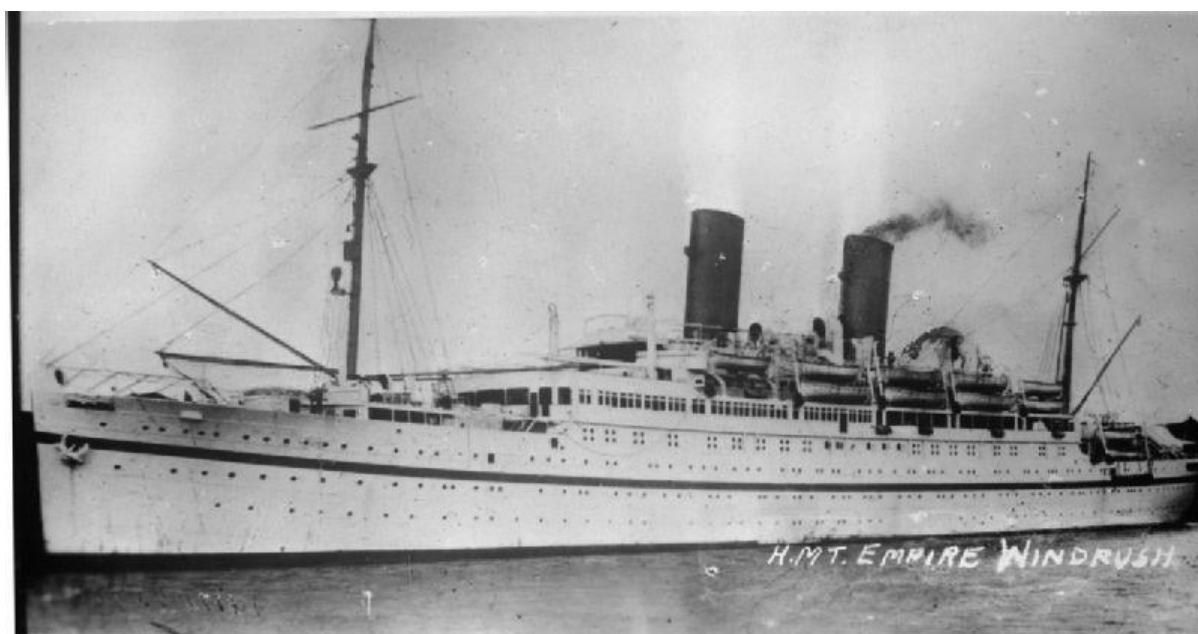
Key Stage 1

Why did the Great Fire of London spread so quickly?

Pupils study how a mix of factors working in combination explains the rapid spread of the original fire from Pudding Lane in 1666, including the wind direction and poor firefighting techniques.

Why did people from the Caribbean come to Britain on the Empire Windrush in 1948?

Pupils learn how, after the Second World War, Britain suffered a labour shortage, and people from its Caribbean colonies were invited to fill vacant jobs, despite facing racist discrimination.



The Empire Windrush brought Afro-Caribbean subjects of the British Empire to work in the often hostile environment of post-war Britain

Why did the wheel change how people travelled?

As part of a study of the history of transport, pupils learn how the invention of the wheel in around 3000 B.C. made it possible for people in ancient times to transport goods, people and animals faster and more easily.

Key Stage 2

Why was Stonehenge built?

The late Stone Age/early Bronze Age stone monument in Wiltshire was probably built for religious rituals, but archaeological evidence is incomplete so there is always room for pupils to debate its original purpose or purposes.

Why did Greek culture spread so far?

Pupils discover that it spread so far because rival Greek city-states first colonised the Mediterranean and Black Sea coasts and then the Macedonian king, Alexander the Great, conquered the Persian Empire, taking Greek culture to the borders of India.

Were Viking people pushed or pulled from Scandinavia?

Historians suggest that Vikings were pushed from Scandinavia by factors such as overpopulation, but were also attracted away from it to other lands (pulled) by factors such as the desire for plunder. Pupils compare different examples of Viking exploration and conquest to identify push and pull factors in each case.

Why did punishments change from 1066?

The severity of legal punishments has changed over time, influenced by such factors as humanitarian concern and the attitudes of particular English and British governments to crime and its causes. Pupils could identify turning points over time.

A 'similarity and difference' pathway across the primary history curriculum

The concept of 'similarity and difference' can be described as '*the ability to identify and explain similarities within and across periods and societies studied*'.

The following are examples of enquiry questions from different study units that focus primarily on similarity and difference.

Key Stage 1

How similar and different were Rosa Parks and Emily Davison?

Pupils compare and contrast the lives of both these female activists. They find out that Parks was an African American in the 1950s who sparked the civil rights movement in the Southern United States, while Davison was a British suffragette campaigning for votes for women, who died after throwing herself under the King's horse at the Derby horse race in 1913.

How much did Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole have in common?

Pupils learn that these were nineteenth-century British nurses who volunteered to treat British soldiers in the Crimean War during the reign of Queen Victoria.

How different were toys when my gran was young?

Pupils learn that the design of many toys has remained the same within living memory, but that changed materials and technology have made them more complex and sophisticated, dependent on power supplies such as batteries. Entirely new toys are possible now that were undreamt of two generations ago.

Key Stage 2

How similar was life in Ancient Sumer, Shang Dynasty China and the Indus Valley Civilisation?

Pupils learn that the people of all three civilisations lived in towns and cities that grew up along great rivers and that they shared features in common such as trading systems and organised religion.

How different was life in Britain after the Romans left?



Pupils study the withdrawal of the last Roman forces in around A.D. 410 from the province of Britannia and its abandonment to gradual conquest by Anglo-Saxon invaders. Roman culture survived among the native Celts for some decades, but towns and cities decayed and the early Saxon way of life was less sophisticated.

How similar was life in Ancient Greece and in the Roman Empire?

Pupils learn how Romans admired and emulated Greek culture and ideas. They understand how many aspects of Roman culture were recognisably Greek, ranging from religion to architecture, but that Romans prided themselves on improving on Greek ideas and surpassing them in practice, such as through road building and engineering.

Were people healthier in the Middle Ages or during Queen Victoria's reign?

During a study of public health from 1066, pupils find out that public health was very poor in medieval Europe and that medical knowledge was weak, although it was strengthened by ideas from the Islamic world. They learn that arguably people were healthier in Victoria's reign but that the early Victorians also suffered from terrible diseases such as cholera, and that it took decades to build up-to-date sewers and means of supplying fresh, clean water.

A 'handling evidence' pathway across the primary history curriculum

The concept of 'handling evidence' can be described as '*understanding the methods of enquiry for finding out about the past from historical evidence and how these can be used to make historical claims*'. (There is some overlap with the study of historical interpretations, since they also count as evidence, but the main thrust of this concept relates to original evidence – sources dating from a particular period or event or within the lifetime of a person.)

The following are examples of enquiry questions from different study units that focus primarily on handling evidence

Key Stage 1

How do we know what life was like when my gran was young?

Pupils explore history within living memory by handling examples of original evidence from their grandparents' childhoods, such as photographs and toys, inferring from sources and building a picture of life then. This might inform the generation of questions for the interview of a grandparent.

How can artefacts help to prove that the Titanic really did sink?

Pupils infer from and cross-refer images of original artefacts that support an account of the sinking of the ocean liner by an iceberg in 1912. This evidence will include images of passenger tickets, newspaper reports and artefacts excavated from the wreck on the seabed. Pupils might also handle replica artefacts.

What can evidence left behind on the moon tell us about Neil Armstrong and the moon landings?

Pupils make inferences from original evidence left behind on the lunar surface (e.g. a US flag, scientific equipment, personal mementos, bags of human waste, etc.) about the astronauts who abandoned them. They then cross-refer these artefacts with other surviving evidence, such as film, photographs and eyewitness accounts.

Key Stage 2

How did people live in Skara Brae during the Stone Age?

Pupils make inferences from archaeological evidence about the lifestyle and diet of Stone Age people, through a virtual visit to a Stone Age site at Skara Brae in the Orkneys and examining the artefacts excavated there.



The conserved Stone Age dwellings at Skara Brae in the Orkneys, an original source of historical evidence like other heritage sites

What can a buried village tell us about the Maya?

Pupils make inferences about the lifestyle and diet of Maya people from archaeological evidence excavated from the village of Ceren in El Salvador, buried by volcanic ash in around A.D. 600 AD.

Who was buried at Sutton Hoo?

Pupils compare original sources from the Sutton Hoo ship burial in Suffolk for evidence of who might have been buried there – the modern consensus is that it is probably Raedwald, an early Anglo-Saxon king of East Anglia.

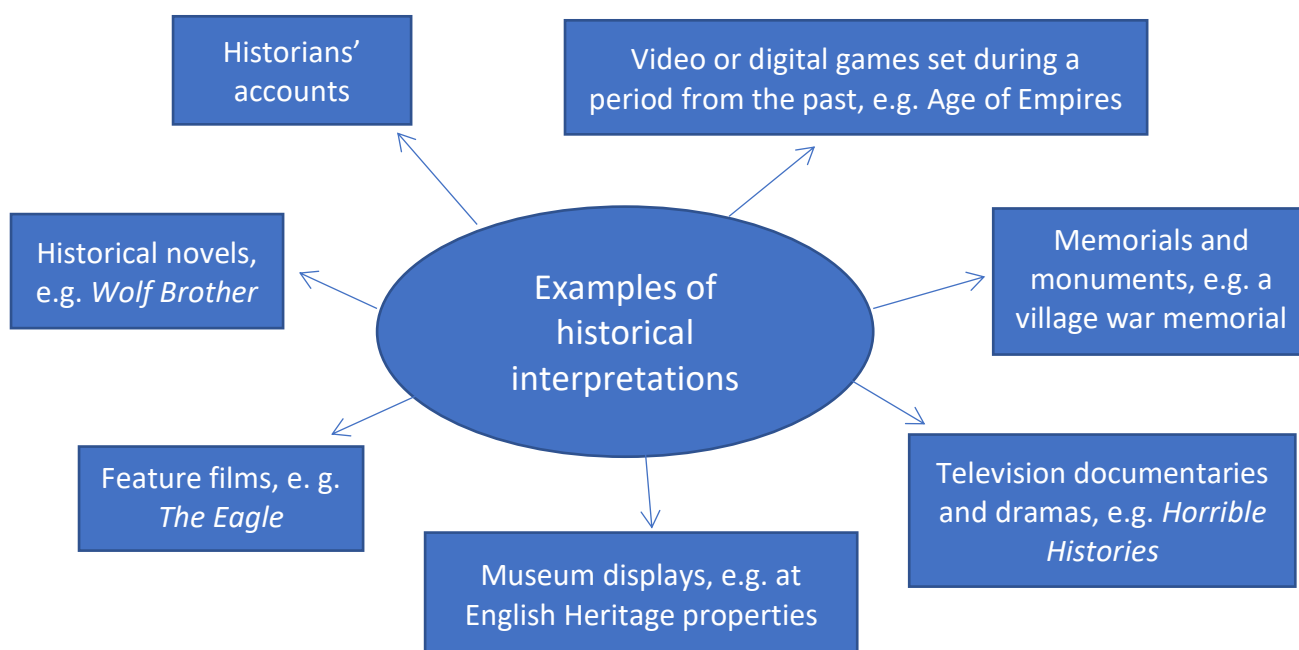
Why is it difficult to prove that there was a 'Blitz spirit' in Britain during the Second World War?

Pupils debate the existence (or otherwise) of a Blitz spirit during German bombing, using original sources such as newsreels, letters, diaries, photographs, mass observation reports, etc.

An 'historical interpretations' pathway across the primary history curriculum

The concept of 'historical interpretations' can be described as '*the study of historical evidence dating from after an event, period or the lifetime of a person, reflecting back on it or them from the perspective of a later time. This includes understanding how historical interpretations have been constructed and suggesting reasons why they may differ.*' Tony

McAleavy, a local authority humanities advisor who helped to define this concept for the original National Curriculum orders for history in 1991, described historical interpretations as always consisting of a mix of *'fact, fiction, imagination and point of view'*. By this, he meant that historical interpretations are based on fact and original sources (like the writing of Herodotus and other historians) but are also shaped by the point of view of the writer and the time at which they wrote, and involve an element of fiction and imagination, since the writer was not necessarily an eyewitness to an event and may have lived long afterwards. Historical interpretations encompass a whole range of evidence, including historians' accounts, biographies, fictional feature films set in an historical period, artists' reconstructions of the past in a guide book and tea towels promoting a heritage organisation, such as the National Trust. All these have been produced for specific and sometimes differing motivations and reasons. They are always useful as historical evidence because they can help to explain how an event, period or person has been viewed at a later time, however factually inaccurate the interpretations may be.



The following are examples of enquiry questions from different study units that focus primarily on historical interpretations.

What can a window tell us about how Edith Cavell is remembered?

In the course of studying Edith Cavell, a British nurse shot by the Germans for alleged espionage in 1915 during the First World War, pupils analyse the stained-glass window from a village church in her native Norfolk that deliberately depicts her as a medieval Christian saint. They participate in discussion about features of the design and why the designer might have chosen to show Cavell in this way; the intention was to indicate that she died as a religious martyr.



This stained glass at North Swardeston Church depicts Edith Cavell in her First World War nurse's uniform but as a Christian martyr. Florence Nightingale and Joan of Arc form part of the same window in the medieval style, erected in 1917, two years after Cavell's execution.

Why was the Monument to the Great Fire of London changed in 1830?

Pupils study a simplified transcription on the Monument to the Great Fire of London (completed in 1677) that blamed Catholics for starting it (this could build on knowledge about the difference between Catholics and Protestants, studied when looking at Guy Fawkes and the Gunpowder Plot). Pupils participate in debate about why this part of the inscription was removed in 1830 (by 1830, anti-Catholic feeling in Britain had subsided and it was accepted by then that the blaze had begun accidentally in Thomas Farriner's bakery in Pudding Lane).

Why is Queen Boudicca remembered in different ways?

Pupils compare Roman written accounts of Boudicca from after her death with depictions of her from later centuries, participating in discussion about why they show her in contrasting ways, and taking into account the fact that no original evidence of her appearance from her lifetime has survived, and that succeeding generations have chosen to depict her as a heroine.

What did the makers of Horrible Histories: The Movie – Rotten Romans and Ben Hur want us to think about the Romans?

Pupils analyse clips from *Horrible Histories: The Movie – Rotten Romans* and *Ben Hur* (a 1960s feature film) and participate in debate about the intentions of the filmmakers and why they depict Romans differently (one is a humorous film for children, the other a drama for general consumption, and the historical accuracy of both is limited).

How should we describe the journey of the Benin Bronzes to the British Museum?



British soldiers seized beautiful bronze artefacts during their conquest of Benin in 1897. Many were sold to cover military costs and some were given to the British Museum. European art experts were amazed at the quality of this African art, which helped to challenge assumptions that European art was superior.

Pupils check how the British Museum describes its controversial acquisition of the Benin Bronzes as a result of a British colonial military expedition against the Kingdom of Benin in West Africa in 1897. They write a letter from the new Royal Benin Museum in Nigeria, criticising the way in which the British Museum acquired the bronzes and justifying their return to Africa.

What should Norfolk Museums Service say about the Normans in their new display at Norwich Castle?

As part of a local focus in Norfolk, pupils are commissioned to design a new public display on the Normans at Norwich Castle, debating how to describe them for the general public and justifying what information to include or exclude about them.

What did the makers of The Battle of Britain want British people to think of Britain and Germany in 1940?

Pupils analyse the film trailer for *The Battle of Britain* (a 1969 British feature film) and discuss how and why the British and the Germans are portrayed in different ways (the film harks back to 1940 as a time when the plucky British, as amateurish underdogs, defied the might of Nazi Germany alone).

An 'historical significance' pathway across the primary history curriculum

The concept of 'historical significance' can be described as '*understanding and suggesting reasons why events, periods, societies and people may be considered historically significant*'. Significance has been developed as a concept for teaching in different ways, but this model written by Christine Counsell is particularly rigorous:

'An event/development is significant if they are:

- **Remarkable** – *it was remarked upon by people at the time and/or since*
- **Remembered** – *it was important at some stage in history within the collective memory of a group or groups*
- **Resulted in change** – *it had consequences for the future*
- **Resonant** – *people like to make analogies with it; it is possible to connect with experiences, beliefs or situations across time & space*
- **Revealing** – *of some other aspect of the past*'.

The following are examples of enquiry questions from different study units that focus primarily on historical significance.

Key Stage 1

How significant was the first aeroplane flight in 1903?



The American Wright brothers are credited with the first controlled, manned flight

Pupils participate in discussion about the first aeroplane flight by the Wright brothers in 1903, considering its relative consequences such as faster travel, the eventual development of aeroplanes as weapons and the current contribution of air travel to climate change.

Who was more significant, William Caxton or Tim Berners-Lee?

Pupils compare the legacies of Caxton, England's first printer in the fifteenth century, and Berners-Lee, the inventor of the Internet in 1992. This will involve considering which had the greater impact on access to information – it took centuries of print production to widen access to learning, while now nearly half the global population can use the Internet after only 30 years since it was invented.

Who was our most significant individual from history?

Having studied a number of historically significant individuals, pupils participate in a structured discussion about an order of significance in which to place them.

Key Stage 2

How significant was Tutankhamen?

Pupils contrast the Egyptian pharaoh's significance as a briefly reigning ruler who died young, a minor king among 31 dynasties in 3,000 years of Egyptian history, with the impact on popular history of treasures from his tomb, the only complete royal Egyptian burial of the ancient world to have survived looting into the present.

Which were the most significant London Olympics?

As a local history focus in London, pupils compare and contrast the nature and impact of the British Olympics of 1908, 1948 and 2012, taking into account factors such as the extent of media coverage, the number of participating countries, etc.

Who were the most significant people to invade Britain?

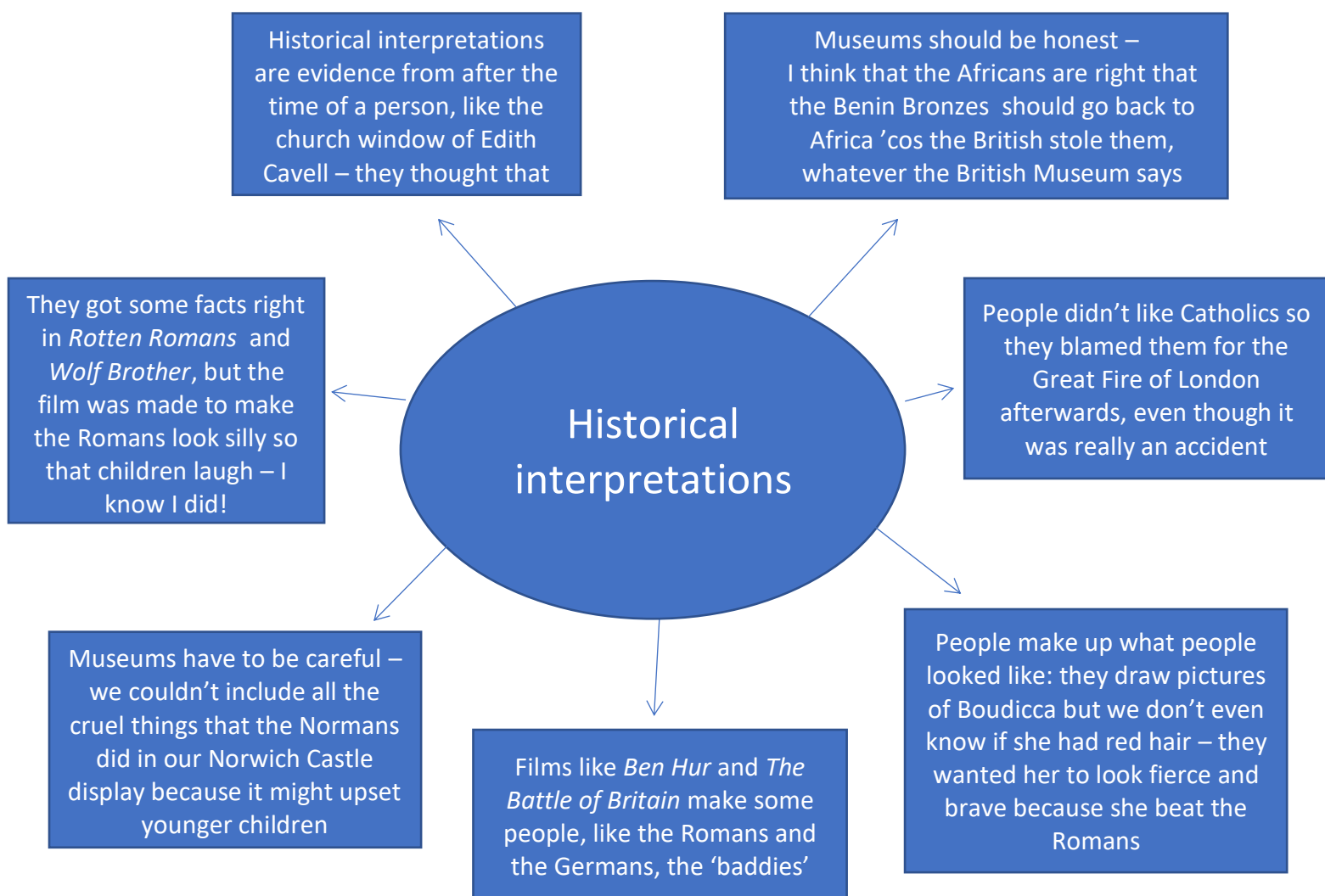
Pupils debate the relative significance of the legacy of the Celts, Romans, Anglo-Saxons, Vikings and Normans by participating in a debate where each people will be voted out of a notional balloon in turn, leaving the most significant people as the only 'survivors'.

Was the Battle of Britain a significant turning point during the Second World War?

Pupils debate the significance of the Battle of Britain as a turning point of the War, comparing it with other possible turning points such as the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in June 1941 and the dropping of the atomic bombs in 1945.

Building a Schema

By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils should have built up schemas relating to the concepts of disciplinary knowledge, and which should include examples of knowledge that they have accumulated over the key stages. If pupils had followed the pathway for ‘historical interpretations’ detailed above, for example, the following diagram might be the kind of schema that they could draw upon when interviewed:



The influential psychologist Daniel Willingham comments: '*Students can't learn everything, so what should they know? Cognitive science leads to the rather obvious conclusion that **students must learn the concepts that come up again and again – the unifying ideas of each discipline.***' (D Willingham, *Making Knowledge Stick*)

This is true of an ancient discipline like history as much as it is of science or mathematics.

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