**Teacher notes**

**What does the story of fairs reveal about life in Britain over time?**

Provided with these notes is a simple three pages of text with images, a task and some questions. The task for students is to identify reasons for fairs over time and to spot the changes and the continuities.

**Additional knowledge**

Fairs are a useful device to study in a particular time or over time. Their economic function was very important in the pre-industrial age. Most people owned less, mended more, and shared more. In the days before shops in every high street, the fair was a place where less everyday items could be bought and sold. Fairs were gatherings for trading, doing business, negotiating, hiring workers, sorting affairs, and, of course, there was, and still is, a social element to fairs. They bring money to an area. Over time the fair has lost its importance as a hub of economic activity, but it has kept other functions. In the second half of the 19th century the funfair became a big part of the seaside holiday. Workers could travel by rail for seaside holidays and going to the fair was part of the fun. Fairs continue to exist in many parts of the country and are part of local culture, from the Nottingham Goose Fair to the Appleby Horse Fair, and from St Giles’ Fair to Hull Fair. Gypsy and Traveller people have long been associated with fairs. The UK’s Showmen were recognised as both an occupation and an ethnicity in the 2021 national census.

**Using the text provided**

The text, task and images are fully adaptable to your setting. You can transfer them into other formats. You might:

* Use the information in separate sections as you teach the different time periods, either directly with students or just to inform your teacher talk.
* Set the work in one lesson, or as a homework, as a mini thematic context to help students link periods of learning together.
* Use the information in your curriculum to ensure that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people do not just appear as victims of oppression in history.
* Use the information as context to learning about a local fair and the local economy in your area.

**Further information**

You can find out more:

* <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/nfca/researchandarticles/historyfairs>
* <https://blog.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/2019/05/09/a-saturnalia-of-nondescript-noise-and-nonconformity-the-rise-and-fall-of-the-charter-fair/>
* <http://www.england-history.org/2012/10/fairs-2/>
* <https://www.learnenglish.de/culture/fairs.html>
* <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/nfca/researchandarticles/historyshowmensguild>
* <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/nfca/index>