Many history teachers are inspired by the work of historians and want to share their stories and arguments with students in school. Hywel Jones found Malcolm Gaskill’s *Witchfinders* ‘gripping and intriguing’. He decided to use the fascinating personal stories within as a tool to get Year 8 thinking about narratives of change. The resulting scheme of work raises some big questions, particularly concerning the need for historical specificity and the relationship between macro- and micro-history in the classroom. His findings are particularly relevant to those seeking to use personal stories in the classroom in order to elicit a broader, more nuanced understanding of historical change.

Over the past few years, I have become increasingly interested in how stories about individual characters from the past can inform, shape and illuminate a macro-analysis of change and continuity within and across historical periods. This interest has coincided with an aspiration to incorporate into my planning at Key Stage 3 a greater emphasis on the subjective experiences of people in the past. More specifically, I wanted to focus on the witchcraft trials of the seventeenth century, partially prompted by reading Malcolm Gaskill’s *Witchfinders*. Using the life stories of Matthew Hopkins, John Stearne, William Dowsing, John Lowes and many others, Gaskill develops a narrative of village in-fighting, personal opportunism and human tragedy within the context of broader religious and social changes and schisms in East Anglia from 1641 to 1647. The narrative is gripping and intriguing, and the personal stories within it fascinating. How might we offer students in Year 8 a similarly textured and rich flavour of the dislocation of the Civil War years?

I developed this scheme of work as part of a practical assignment for a professional development course for experienced history teachers. The course required action research in school. The following account sets out the story of how and why I developed my enquiry and evaluates it in relation to the students’ response.

**Forming an enquiry**

My aim was to develop a scheme of work which would challenge students to trace and analyse the changing nature of several people’s lives between 1641 to 1647, and from the micro-analysis of these personal stories construct a narrative analysis of macro-changes ravaging East Anglia at the time. The initial enquiry was centred on the question: ‘Were the Witchcraft Trials in seventeenth-century East Anglia a tragedy for everyone?’

There were two rationales for this particular enquiry question:

1. ‘East Anglia’ focuses the question specifically on the regional phenomenon.
2. ‘Tragedy’ centres the enquiry on the changing personal fortunes revealed in the stories of the period, emphasising the schismatic nature of the changes.

This original enquiry question foregrounded diversity through the use of the words ‘for everyone’. My intention was that through the exploration of each personal story a diversity of experience of change would emerge, enabling students to understand and construct a textured narrative of change.

**Change and continuity: current practice**

Over the last two years, professional debate surrounding change and continuity has proliferated as more and more practitioners have experimented with, and evaluated, different approaches. These diverging approaches have all shared a similar aim: how do we enable students to think *historically* about change and continuity in the past?
At the crux of this issue are the following problems:

1. How can we balance macro-narrative and micro-narrative approaches in our teaching of change and continuity enquiries within the history classroom?
2. Is it possible for students to analyse a personal micro-narrative, and from this construct a meta-narrative structure?

One kind of solution to the first of these problems is offered by Ian Dawson, whose ‘thematic stories’ approach has focused on four constructed tours through major historical events. Although these ‘thematic stories’ are certainly not intended to be prescriptive, Dawson’s suggestions obviously reflect his judgements about significance. He is effectively offering a predetermined framework of the past. Events such as the Civil Rights movement in the USA, the Holocaust, and women’s suffrage are pre-selected on the grounds that they should inform the historical understanding of any Key Stage 3 student. These topics are then linked by themes such as ‘power and democracy’, ‘movement and settlement’, ‘empires’ and ‘everyday life’. He summarises the rationale for his approach on his website:

*It’s not defeatist but setting out a more achievable objective — that by the end of KS3 students will be able to tell individual thematic stories across time i.e. some or all those identified in the 2008 History programmes of study — stories of power and democracy, everyday life, empires etc. Dealing with these as individual stories doesn’t preclude making links amongst them (especially if we develop good explicit strategies based around children’s ‘sense of period’) but the prime aim should be to give students an understanding of these thematic stories as individual stories and help them develop the knowledge and skills to be able to tell them.*

Such an approach has obvious benefits. First, it provides a clear structure so that students can make sense of a complex, multi-stranded past, enabling them, perhaps, to perceive and tentatively to begin to make sense of a single-story socio-political development over several centuries. Second, Dawson advocates placing an outline lesson before each depth study, which highlights the structure of the ‘thematic story’, and therefore provides a hook on which students can hang substantive knowledge gained through the depth study. Third, this approach provides a well-structured, historical narrative, particularly of socio-political change — in contrast to the de-historicised explanations of such change sometimes provided by cross-disciplinary curricula such as the Royal Society of Arts’ ‘Opening Minds’ programme. The importance of this last benefit should not be ignored. Over the past two years in England, there has been a noticeable shift at Key Stage 3 towards subsuming the teaching of history within a flattened cross-disciplinary curriculum in which students explore various cross-curricular themes. Dawson’s approach, in its effort to contextualise political events and issues within a larger time frame, thus offers a defence for the ‘relevance’ and ‘usefulness’ of history remaining as a discrete discipline on school timetables at Key Stage 3.

Nonetheless, there are two main reasons why I feel we should be cautious about such an approach. First, there is the risk that depth studies of multi-layered change placed within the ‘thematic stories’ may end up lacking any meaningful historical specificity. Second, I am not sure that a ‘thematic stories’ approach encourages students to remain sufficiently reflexive, actually using the insights gained from in-depth evidential enquiries to interrogate and modify the original story-line. There is a risk that the ‘thematic story’ may steer students towards transplanting explanations of historical changes within, between, and across time, thus forcing ambiguous multi-stranded stories into a single pre-defined narrative strait-jacket.

The first challenge, of historical specificity, is, I think, of particular relevance within the Key Stage 3 history classroom. A pertinent example comes from the depth enquiry outlined in this article. During the East Anglian witchcraft trials of 1641–47 John Lowes, a Royalist, Laudian priest was put on trial for witchcraft, on the grounds of heresy (see Figure 2). Heresy in this specific case constituted the practice of religion in line with the edicts of Archbishop Laud, and in a way that contravened the expectations of the mainly Puritan populace in East Anglia (particularly in Suffolk). Despite the nature of the charge, the Assize Courts then gave Lowes permission to read from Laud’s Book of Common Prayer at his execution, on the grounds that they did not believe it would spark a disturbance. The historical specificity of Lowes’ trial is grounded in the schism between Puritan ideas from 1641 to 1647, and the intrigues and power struggles within Suffolk. A ‘thematic stories’ approach could, however, possibly allow or even encourage students to view Lowes’ plight as a matter divorced from its historical specificity. Without any meaningful reflexive work with evidence, and if placed within a pre-selected meta-narrative of ‘power and democracy’ as prescribed by Dawson, the incident could be interpreted by students, looking back at the end of Key Stage 3, as essentially a matter of ‘human rights’ or of the ‘right to free speech’, divorcing it from its specific historical context. In other words, the development of an idea or concept does not mean that we are talking about the same ‘thing’ across time. Therefore, to believe that you can trace a story of ‘power and democracy’ across time is, in itself, reductive. The idea of democracy was different in ancient Athens from what it is in the UK today, and the idea of democracy today in the UK is different from what it was in the early 1900s. The current Citizenship National Curriculum, which rightly highlights the moral issues surrounding human rights, does not focus on the historical development of the liberal concept of rights. Without that dimension there is a risk of students spotting universal, inalienable, formal human rights in seventeenth-century England, prior to the actual creation of the politico-legal idea.

Therefore, in order for students to be able to define, trace and plot the historical specificity of ideas and events, we need an approach that positively encourages them to do so. In some ways the political changes prioritised by Dawson in the ‘thematic story’ of ‘power and democracy’ are difficult to trace across
the periods outlined, and they risk turning a multi-stranded story into a single-stranded march through the illiberal unfolding of liberal ideas.

‘Overview lurking in the depth’

Banham has suggested that the ‘overview is lurking in the depth’.* This insight suggests a fully reflexive relationship between macro-analysis (or meta-narrative), depth study and evidential enquiry, where each informs, shapes and changes the other, offering students the possibility of tentatively making subtle and constant changes to their own ideas of historical change.

In his recent work using extended narratives of Paul Robeson’s life to explore how his life story can be used to analyse the changes in the lives of Black African Americans during the fight for Civil Rights, Banham centres the macro-analysis on the personal story.* A series of lessons allows students to trace the changing life of Paul Robeson, and his life acts as a ‘beacon’ for the changes within the Civil Rights movement. Banham cites as a clear advantage of this approach the way in which Robeson’s personal experience of a successful career can illuminate the political issue of inequality. I also think that this approach allows students to understand how the personal subjective experience of historical change can in itself contain the macro-analysis of historical change.

By building a macro-analysis from personal stories students may be able to develop a sense of the historical specificity of socio-political change. Insights from detailed evidential enquiries within, preceding or following the ‘change and continuity’ enquiry to which they are linked, can further inform and shape the students’ own understanding of historical change. This argument may be less ‘saleable’ as a response to those who question the utility or relevance of history at Key Stage 3, but I think it is a response that is sympathetic to the complexity of our discipline.

Figure 1 represents my aim to interpret, synthesise and further theorise aspects of Banham’s approach within my classroom. I wished to create a scheme of work that would allow students to probe the subjective experience of change in order to illuminate a macro-analysis of how the witchcraft trials affected people’s lives in different ways. I also wanted to enable students to make their own observations and hypotheses about the interesting concurrence of witchcraft and iconoclasm in East Anglia. The first lesson introduced students to the witchcraft phenomenon of the seventeenth century (see Figure 3 on p. 18 for details). The next three lessons leaned heavily on an approach outlined by Kitson, who used living graphs to chart the diverse and changing experiences of individual women living under Nazi rule in Germany. Kitson built outwards from individual subjective experience to enable students to generate a macro-analysis of change.10 Likewise, I placed the stories of Matthew Hopkins, William Dowsing and John Lowes at the centre of the depth analysis, using living graphs to trace and plot their subjective experience of change. The final outcome activity involved students audio-recording their argument (macro-analysis) in response to the enquiry question ‘Were the Witchcraft Trials in seventeenth-century East Anglia a tragedy for everyone?’, specifically focusing on Matthew Hopkins and John Lowes, but also using several other people’s life stories from the period.

Engagement

The points at which the students were most engaged in the enquiry were those when the life stories of the people involved were covered in depth. In particular, John Lowes’ story gripped the class, to an extent I had not encountered all year. I think that it is the very normality of many of these life stories that engage the students: the self-induced problems of John Lowes, and the self-seeking nature of Matthew Hopkins’ behaviour. Previous evidential work on the causes of the Civil War also meant that the students could make apposite suggestions about these personal stories. There was a strong sense of a narrative thread in all students’ final arguments. They all selected specific events and changes from the personal stories to illustrate how individuals were caught up in the witchcraft trials, using them to develop hypotheses as to why the trials were or were not a tragedy for different people.

I am therefore confident that students have engaged with the behaviours of the past and can make valid statements about the ways in which the witchcraft trials were a tragedy in different ways for different people. They have also engaged with the strangeness of the past, in particular in John Lowes’ story. Many students recognised and discussed the paradox evident in the execution of Lowes: that while the reason for his death was an accusation of heresy, yet he was allowed to read heretical texts at his execution. These students were enabled to generate a macro-analysis that contained within it a clear sense of historical specificity. Furthermore, many students in both the lessons and their final activity mentioned the religious and social nature of witchcraft beliefs and accusations, the mistreatment of the Royalist/Catholic minority in East Anglia, and the particularity of many Puritan social and religious views. They were engaging with the depth through the narrative thread.
Developing a sense of period and historical specificity

As the students explored a section of Gaskill's gripping narrative (summarised in part but largely unaltered), I found that they started to gain a deep sense of period. The higher-attaining students had begun to build on their earlier work on the causes of the English Civil War. For example, in the third lesson of the sequence one student observed that 'the parishioners are acting normally for East Anglia; many people were Puritans and opposed Laud's changes.' During the same lesson another student recognised that 'Lowes' death is a contradiction, he was being killed for his different religious views, which people called witchcraft, and at the same time they are letting him read out Laud's Common Book of Prayer at his execution.' It is interesting to note that students were making connections here with a source-based enquiry earlier in the term, which had allowed them to recognise the geographical specificity of religious opposition to, and agreement with, the changes made by Charles I and Archbishop Laud. It is the reflexive relationship with the earlier evidential enquiry, as shown in Figure 1, which enabled students to make such specific references, revealing the deep sense of period that emerges from consolidated substantive knowledge.

Students were also using the quirky nature of Gaskill's narrative to make valid hypotheses. For example, one student stated in reference to the unusual attempted trial by ordeal by water of John Lowes (which was banned in the region by the Assize Courts) 'they are using fakes [referring to false confessions] at this time sir, as they realise local people know the water thing [ordeal] was rubbish.' This student is clearly grappling with making specific hypotheses from linking macro-legal changes to the micro-personal story of John Lowes. The earlier evidential enquiry has provided a framework of changes, ideas and patterns which they have used to frame this change and continuity enquiry. I don't think that students would have been able to make these interesting links without this earlier evidential enquiry acting as a meta-frame for this 'change and continuity through diversity' enquiry. In order to develop a sense of period in students' minds, the careful placement and deployment of evidential depth-work can stimulate, inform and ignite a change and continuity enquiry.

Analysing change and continuity: tension between the micro and the macro?

I had tried a similar enquiry in my previous school, using individuals' stories as a lens through which to look at the ways in which the English Civil War affected people's lives. It had proved broadly successful as students had been very engaged in the peculiarity and normality of different experiences at the time. However, although I had tried to balance the broad-brush change activities with the in-depth 'change through diversity' activities, the more textured pupil analysis had only come through in the depth activities. It had effectively been lost at the macro-level. I therefore decided in the enquiry reported above to narrow the scope to the witchcraft trials in East Anglia, focusing specifically on the changes from 1641 to 1647, and the trials from 1645 to 1647. The detail of diverse individual experiences seemed essential as a way of exploring the changes of the time. In choosing such a narrow focus I accepted that this detailed study would have to be at the expense of an overtly structured meta-analysis of the same trend, but was this really the case?

In this enquiry, the tension between engagement in the narrative and the need to create a structured meta-analysis of the broader religious changes certainly did create some difficulties for students. A number of them essentially ignored the fact that the local religious tensions playing out in East Anglia were part of much wider changes in the British Isles and Europe. Liam tried to link the execution of Lowes to the idea of human rights, ignoring any sense of period that he had acquired. He was using a pre-conceived meta-narrative, rather than remaining fully reflexive in response to the personal stories studied in depth. In doing so, he was not so much analysing the subjective experience of change, rather than forcing the personal experience of change to fit within a meta-narrative that made sense to him.

Barney, on the other hand, a very high-attaining pupil, did manage to blend the in-depth narrative used in lessons with a wider structural analysis of religious change:

However, as I said earlier the Witchcraft Trials caused much suffering amongst many people: a tragedy. One of the possible examples is John Lowes….the problem was he was a Catholic in a largely puritan area……..generally East Anglia was rivalled [sic] with supposed Witchcraft between the 16th and 17th Century. Compared to other areas East Anglia seems to be worsed [sic] affected by the Witchcraft Trials with far more accusations and deaths…..It was a tragedy for most. Reasons for this include the fact that the tests were not even believed by people at the time, people were accused due to family connections and some entire families were accused, mainly women were hunted and killed, sick/ill people were accused and killed, and nearly all witches were poor, a tragedy in sum.

Barney's commentary shows that he managed to find the overview lurking in the depth, and also showed a degree of tentativeness, qualification and caution in his commentary. Several other students also managed to produce commentaries in which you can hear a sense of a broader picture emerging. These students had remained fully reflexive in responding to the personal stories, allowing them to inform and shape their macro-analysis.

This was not, however, the experience of the majority. Most students' commentaries tended to be locked into a narrative thread describing the lives of each person without reference to the broader changes ravaging East Anglia from 1641 to 1647. I therefore tried to mitigate the effects of this tension between micro and macro-analysis by revising the planning to include a 'society line' activity. I provided students with extended descriptions of a wide variety of people living in East Anglia who were affected by the witchcraft trials at the time, ranging from an un-named orphan who was persecuted in Rattlesden, to clergy turned Assize Court judges such as the Presbyterian Edmund Calamy. The aim was to give
students very quickly a sense of the wider implications of the witchcraft trials and of the wider changes taking place in society at the time, and for them to assess – by lining up in order – the extent to which the trials were a tragedy for their particular character. Some students made really interesting comments. Declan pointed out that the trials were not a tragedy for Puritans who wanted to make a name for themselves or advance in their career (i.e. Matthew Hopkins or Edmund Calamy). Imogen recognised that the trials were often a tragedy for families, when mothers and daughters were accused purely because they were part of the same family. Timothy observed that some characters such as ‘Old man Cherry’ of Thrapston or Adam Sabie of Haddenham were being targeted not because they held heretical views but because they were poor and were a drain on the parish funds. This activity did therefore allow more students to link together the small life changes with the broader sweeping changes of the time of religious strife, poverty, village intrigue and social fragmentation.

Dawson has also reflected on how the tension between a micro and macro approach to historical change poses a problem in relation to his ‘thematic stories’:

A year or so ago my ideas about outlines tended to centre round the outline coming at the end, the product of a course, something building up across time from a number of depth studies. One obvious weakness of this is that the only time that students see the whole story is right at the end and so there are no opportunities for consolidation or for thinking about the outline as an interpretation that can be challenged or presented differently. For this and other reasons I now see them as being much more useful ‘up front’ in a course, providing in a single lesson a big picture of where students are going with any particular thematic story. Putting the outlines first also creates opportunities for integrating depth and outline in more sophisticated but still accessible ways. 12

Dawson’s purposive split between outline and depth offers a useful idea of where overview approaches are useful for teachers in the way in which they deliver a sequence of lessons. The idea of the outline is to create a macro-structure for students, on which to hang the micro-analysis of their depth enquiry. I wondered however, how helpful, or indeed how valid, the distinction between the two might be.

**Using subjective experience to build meta-analysis**

Throughout this article, I have explicitly outlined the approach in terms of a micro- and macro-narrative split. In many ways I have used the terms ‘micro’ and ‘macro’ for explanatory purposes as they emphasise the focus on the micro – the personal stories – as a means of enabling students to derive macro-analyses, or generalisations from them. Underlying this approach is the implicit assumption that the macro-analysis is more objective – the search for fact – while the micro is purely subjective – a reflection of personal experience, and therefore equated to mere opinion. The tenor of this assumption is, perhaps reinforced by the way in which we teach our overview or outline lessons as an objective framework, thereby encouraging students to force the following ‘subjective’ depth work, to fit this structure. The assumption of subjectivity and objectivity is thus laden within the micro/macro split, or depth/outline split, but does this have to reflect the experience of teachers and students?

The subjective experience of change, of being and becoming, is always conditioned by temporality, a memory of what has happened before and expectation or fear of what may come after. In other words time is the form of human life (in an Aristotelian sense). This temporality of being and experience, must at some point end in mortality.13 This is particularly apt when considering the experience of change faced by Matthew Hopkins, his accomplice John Stearne, and the people whom he accused of witchcraft. The accusations change the ‘point’ at which each individual faces their mortality. The presence of Hopkins and Stearne in a village would have prompted concern in some and joy in others. For the marginalised, impoverished and lonely, the presence of the witchfinders could have initially made them worried, and eventually forced them to face their own mortality. The essence of change for the accused is life-threatening. However, for the opportunists in the village, the presence of the witchfinders could have given them a sense of a change of fortune, a way to further marginalise the

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*Figure 2: An anonymous pamphlet published in 1642 detailing the accusations against John Lowes*
### Homework

**Lessons 5-8**

- **Week 1:**
  1. When were the Witchcraft Trials of 1645 to 1647 experienced as a tragedy?
  2. How did Matthew Hopkins, John Lowes, and William Dowsing change from 1641 to 1647?

### History

- **Lesson 1:**
  - When did the English Revolution start?
  - What were the key events of the English Revolution?

- **Lesson 2:**
  - What were the key events of the English Civil War?
  - How did the English Civil War end?

- **Lesson 3:**
  - What were the key events of the English Restoration?
  - How did the English Restoration end?

- **Lesson 4:**
  - What were the key events of the English Glorious Revolution?
  - How did the English Glorious Revolution end?

### Witchcraft

- **Lesson 5:**
  - What were the key events of the English Witchcraft Trials?
  - How did the English Witchcraft Trials end?

- **Lesson 6:**
  - What were the key events of the English Witchcraft Trials?
  - How did the English Witchcraft Trials end?

- **Lesson 7:**
  - What were the key events of the English Witchcraft Trials?
  - How did the English Witchcraft Trials end?

- **Lesson 8:**
  - What were the key events of the English Witchcraft Trials?
  - How did the English Witchcraft Trials end?

### Teaching History

- **Lesson 5:**
  - What were the key events of the English Witchcraft Trials?
  - How did the English Witchcraft Trials end?

- **Lesson 6:**
  - What were the key events of the English Witchcraft Trials?
  - How did the English Witchcraft Trials end?

- **Lesson 7:**
  - What were the key events of the English Witchcraft Trials?
  - How did the English Witchcraft Trials end?

- **Lesson 8:**
  - What were the key events of the English Witchcraft Trials?
  - How did the English Witchcraft Trials end?
impooverished and to settle old scores. Such changes focus our minds on the temporality of experience, emphasising each individual’s mortality. Prior to the witchfinders’ arrival, even the most marginalised person in seventeenth-century society had some capacity to choose some aspects of their lives. Once accused, an individual’s sense of being changed so that they lost the capacity to choose any aspect of their lives, being effectively imprisoned in their homes, observed, checked, railroaded into a confession and eventually placed in jail awaiting trial. The presence of the witchfinders thus changes the accused’s sense of being.\(^{14}\) An explanation of change in the case of the accused is therefore premised on an experiential schism and confrontation with mortality. While some people may argue that all students need is an empathetic approach, I would argue that this is not enough. It does not matter whether or not we can empathise and imagine what it would like to be the accused. Students need to realise that the experience of change itself affects or changes each individual’s sense of being.

To illustrate this theoretical observation in practice, it was John Lowes’ experience of ill-treatment by the parishioners of Brandeston, that led Liam to make the remark noted above about the appearance of objective fact that ‘the parishioners are acting normally for East Anglia; many people were Puritans and opposed Laud’s changes’. A further example comes from Martin (one of the students to whom I taught a revised version of the enquiry this year):

William Dowsing had seen the churches being destroyed in East Anglia. William saw a horse being forced to drink holy water, some foul people urinated in stoupds, stained glass windows being destroyed, crucifixes being broken and the altar rails being taken out. He was responsible for these actions. William could see the Puritans fighting for a long time. William had known the life of a yeoman in Stratford and would have known about crops. He knew that the puritans wanted power, and he could get power too. He knew that he was forcing people out. He knew that he would have to change to maintain his power. William had decided to leave his farm to help the puritans. He decided to destroy the possessions of Catholics and the Catholic Church. He decided that he wanted a quieter life and went back to farming. He had decided that England needed a new church in the future.

Martin’s work illustrates in some detail how some students could use the idea that objective fact is contained within the subjective experience of the person studied, and how this analysis of subjective experiences shapes and modifies any pre-conceived ideas of objective fact established in earlier evidential enquiries. Reflexivity between any structure and depth analysis is thus essential to enabling students to develop a textured, multi-stranded – or, in Shemilt’s phrase, ‘polythetic’ – explanation of change.\(^{15}\)

To check out this claim about what makes such polythetic explanations possible I also talked to several students some time after I first taught the enquiry. Barney, looking back at his exercise book and resources, explained that there were several factors which had helped. First, he claimed to have analysed ‘closely how each person was affected by the changes, and then began to imagine how this might affect others and how they felt’. Second, he went on to explain that ‘from this I began to think very carefully about what sort of generalisations I could make from each person’s experience, what was shared and was particular to them’. The third element was that ‘I wanted to only concentrate on the past, and what the individual stories told me, and ignored what we might think about these things today’. The fourth factor that Barney identified when commenting on why other students were forcing their analysis into their own sense of structure, was that ‘other people in the class sort of looked at the issues from today that we learn about in school like inequality and human rights, they then look for something similar in the individual stories we looked at in class’.

Barney’s explanation of how he constructed his polythetic narrative framework and his wish to ‘only concentrate on the past’, points us to the idea that the experience of individuals in the past can reach into the future to inform perceptions of objective fact. Once the past (or indeed, the future) has been encapsulated in writing, that representation can be communicated to others, and can then change how others view reality – that is, their sense of objectivity. A good example of this idea is contained within Christopher Coker’s recent book *The Future of War*. Coker is grappling with how science fiction can inform the present, and how the science fiction writer’s view of the future can change directly how others perceive and act in the present:

*Another influential work of science fiction is Leo Frankowski’s A Boy and His Tank, which tells us of a group of colonists on a planet combining virtual reality with tank warfare, a world in which warriors bond with their tanks, and their tanks with them. One of the most telling lines in the book is: ‘Kid, if your tank is loyal you don’t have to be!’ [This book is] read by the current American military……and was proofread by a soldier from Company C Task Force, 1-32 Armour First Cavalry Division whilst he was deployed in the desert waiting for Operation Desert Storm.\(^{16}\)*

Such an example renders divides of subjectivity and objectivity, being and becoming, and past and future meaningless. The subjective is informing the objective (and vice versa), the future is informing the present (and vice versa). Such reflexivity in our interpretations of change within the world can be seen in the way in which personal stories encapsulated in the past shape the views of both of people then and now.

Barney’s work last year and Martin’s arguments when I taught a revised version of the enquiry this year have shown that it is possible to make generalisations about objective fact, and place them within a conceptual context, by looking at the subjective personal stories. By positively encouraging students to identify tentatively within personal stories an essence of the encapsulation of broader changes, I believe it is possible for all students to begin to discern the development of a historical phenomenon – or, again as Shemilt would say, to discern ‘what was going on’.\(^{17}\)

The main success of the enquiry was enabling students to examine the subjective experience of change through different people’s stories at the time. I envisaged that we could push this strength further, and have revised the enquiry as shown in Figure 3 to suggest how, with more teaching time, it might...
be possible to prioritise and extend the personal stories that students need, to enable more of them to make the clear and sustained insights that Barney, Liam and Imogen demonstrated.

**Language of change**

In order to enable students to understand that change itself is about individual experience and shifts in people's sense of their own being, we need to develop a language of change that is of use to students, and that encompasses this sense of temporality and finality. We also need to devise activities that will allow students to experiment with and refine this language. In many ways, I think I am merely rearticulating the point made by Shemilt that there is a 'distinction between what happened' and "what was going on". Students need to be equipped with a language to explain change as 'what was going on' in people's lives.

Christine Counsell once advised me to read VS Naipaul's *The Enigma of Arrival* for an insight into how one author explores change by bringing out the temporality of subjective experience. Throughout this semi-autobiographical novel, Naipaul reiterates the words 'I saw' and 'I knew' to explain changes he experienced in a Wiltshire village. These verbs are used in a past, present and future sense, to capture a sense of instances of 'objective' change in the past from his own subjective account. We too could perhaps use these verbs as a starting point for developing a vocabulary of change. They could be applied to John Lowes' experiences, if we asked students to explain experiential changes during the witchcraft trials of 1641 to 1647 from a third-party perspective. Figure 4 uses such language to illustrate how students could tentatively explain how Lowes might have thought about the past, present and his future.

I have been experimenting with Figure 4 as a 'Change Language Mat' with my current Year 8 class this academic year. Students used the mat to create an A3 'Personal Stories Sheet' for four different individuals studied, which enabled them to explore, from a third-party perspective, the change of being for each character in terms of 'seeing', 'knowing', 'judging' and 'hoping' for change.

At first students found this difficult. The first personal story took time, and considerable support was needed for students to begin experimenting confidently. Most seemed happy to explain the 'seeing' of change, the 'judging' of change and the 'hoping' for change. The biggest obstacle was the idea of 'knowing' change – that is, the social construction of knowledge at the time. I am not convinced that many really understood this despite several analogies that I drew. However, students really got hooked into the idea of 'seeing' change and were able to construct convincing and detailed narratives. A few students started to use the idea of 'knowing' change and really began to build a language of change showing that it was indeed possible to do so. Part of Richard's analysis of William Dowsing shows a real sense of being and becoming, and makes a subtle reference to the intersection between iconoclasm and the witchcraft trials:

> *He taught himself about scriptures, when he went against the Catholics he had become a celebrity in the Puritan community...he had destroyed a church before Matthew Hopkins arrived.*

The greater success, however, was that students in this second class were much more successful than those of the previous year at accessing the idea of change as a confrontation with one's own mortality. This, I think, was achieved by focusing on what a tragedy might be for an individual. One student offered the example of a person losing their own life, or the loss of a loved one, crucially in circumstances outside their control.

While no member of the class used Heidegger's terms to refer to 'being' or 'existence', nor had an inkling of phenomenological philosophy, they were accessing its meaning. Furthermore, I think that because I was more certain in my mind what tragedy as a form of change meant phenomenologically, I was able to ask pertinent questions in order to model its meaning. It was interesting that one student, Molly, displayed this language in her account of the accusation of Margaret Moone:

> *She was found guilty when she was accused by Matthew Hopkins...Her hope was to remain alive. When she was forced to move out of her home [i.e. accused] her life changed.*

**Playing with enquiry questions: foregrounding change**

As my course tutor pointed out once I had taught the enquiry for the first time, the question that I had used – "Were the Witchcraft Trials in seventeenth-century East Anglia a tragedy for everyone?" – foregrounded the issue of diversity. Yet, as this article has made clear, my interest was increasingly focused on developing students' understanding of change. This observation encouraged me to think more clearly about what I wanted to achieve, summing up my aims in three points:

1. I want students to be able to create a multi-stranded narrative of change, based on the personal stories and experiences of people from 1641 to 1647, with a particular focus on the Witchcraft Trials.
2. I want students to explain change as a phenomenological process, especially as changes in people's sense of being from 1641 to 1647.
3. I want students to develop a language of change that enables them to successfully encapsulate change as a phenomenological process.
Diversity remains important, as my concern with a multi-stranded narrative confirms, but I needed a question that more strongly highlighted the issue of change. The enquiry question that might successfully achieve this is ‘When were the Witchcraft Trials of 1645-47 experienced as a tragedy?, which from my subsequent experiments has been more successful in eliciting complex and meaningful responses from students. Changing the question has certainly focused students’ attention on to the idea of people’s experience of change in terms of ‘seeing’, ‘judging’ and ‘hoping’ for change. The further experimentation has also confirmed the difficulty of enabling all students to develop precise and detailed substantive knowledge at the same time, revealing the complex pedagogical demands that this places on us as teachers, and the need for us to continually revise and move our own respective enquires forward.

**Figure 4: Reflecting on the temporal dimension of Lowes’ experience**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 Knowing</th>
<th>2 Seeing</th>
<th>3 Judging</th>
<th>4 Hoping</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past</td>
<td>Lowes knew he had a chequered past, his Laudian beliefs and litigious nature had sown seeds of doubt in the minds of the good folk of Brandeston</td>
<td>Lowes had seen how his acts of barratry made him despised</td>
<td>In his mind his past actions were for the upkeep of the parish</td>
<td>Lowes had hoped his appeal to the Star Chamber would frustrate his accusers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td>In the summer of 1645 Lowes knew when Hopkins and Stearne rode into Brandeston that past accusations would resurface</td>
<td>Lowes saw that Hopkins and Stearne would force a confession out of him</td>
<td>Lowes’ mood was one of futility. He had been kept awake for several nights</td>
<td>Lowes’ hope was that the movement of Royalist troops further east would halt the Special Comission of oyer and terminer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future</td>
<td>Lowes knew that his role in Brandeston had been negated by his parishioners</td>
<td>Lowes could see that his fate was in the hands of Serjeant John Godbolt, Samuel Faiclough and Edmund Calamy</td>
<td>Lowes’ retraction was futile, as his fate was already sealed</td>
<td>Lowes’ hope and knowledge of going to heaven did not loosen the grip of the noose</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Names of students have been changed throughout this article.

**REFERENCES**

4. For example, the RSA’s ‘Opening Minds’ Curriculum offers topics such as ‘Roman Around’, ‘World of Sport’ and ‘Out and About’. This form of curriculum innovation is also currently being encouraged by the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) as current best practice and as a future widespread curriculum model. See NCSL (2007) Leading curriculum innovation in practice, available at www.ncsl.org.uk/publications.
5. Howson, J. (2007) ‘Is it the Tuarts and then the Studors or the other way round?’ The importance of developing a usable big picture of the past in Teaching History 127, Sense and Sensitivity Edition. Howson has outlined the issue of utility faced by history in a possible general humanities format or the RSA ‘Opening Minds’ Curriculum. While there is clear value in creating dialogues with other subject departments, there is a clear justification in keeping clear disciplinary boundaries and the resultant rigour that this provides.
6. A Magazine of Scandal, a pamphlet published in 1642, emphasises the Laudian religious practice espoused by Lowes along with his numerous acts of common banality.
7. See QCA (2007) Citizenship Programme of Study for Key Stage 3 and attainment target. On page 4 it outlines in the explanatory notes section the focus for the key concept ‘Rights and Responsibilities’. It is interesting that the historical development of human rights is not specifically mentioned.
9. Banham, D. and Hall, R., ‘Telling Stories – Why all English teachers wish they could teach history!’ , Schools History Project Conference 2006. I am indebted to Banham and Hall whose advice I have drawn on extensively in developing this scheme of work. Banham pointed out that we should try to offer a sense of narrative that we might find appealing in a historians’ work.
12. Dawson, I., www.thinkinghistory.co.uk. See the section on Framework Themes and What is in it for Students? I am not sure that Dawson makes it clear whether this is a distinction he makes for pedagogical reasons or whether because he thinks it reflects the nature of our discipline.
14. I have in mind here Heidegger’s use of the terms ‘authentic (eigentliche) existence’ and ‘inauthentic (unexistent) existence’. These are the two ways for Heidegger in which human beings exist. For Heidegger our sense of being is ‘in the world’, and is inseparable from the world. While our students may not be able to access the phenomenological writings of Heidegger, that should not stop us from allowing such ideas to inform the development of our schemes of work.
16. Coker, C. (2006) The Future of War, Blackwell Manifestos. While this book may seem arcane to many, the observations made within it are illuminating. Shemilt, D., op cit. p.15. I find Shemilt’s expression ‘what was going on’ more and more useful for the Key Stage 3 classroom as a means of capturing what it is we want students to be able to explain, through concise narratives that are built on substantive knowledge, weaving several strands of argument.
17. ibid, p.16.
19. I use the word ‘phenomenological’ loosely here, as an approach which does not try to separate objective ‘worldly’ fact from change within an individual’s experience, but instead sees an individual’s experience within the world, and as an articulation of that world. I believe such an approach is a fruitful starting point in developing pedagogical frameworks for approaching change and continually enquires.