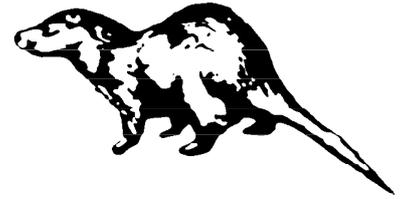


NUFFIELD PRIMARY HISTORY



KS1 THE GUNPOWDER PLOT

TEACHERS' NOTES

The Gunpowder Plot is a cracking tale for any age group, although the complex political and religious elements are difficult for young children to understand. However, we can help them to gain insights into past people's motivations and methods through storytelling, simulation and role-play. I used all three methods in the three lessons described here, with a Year 2 class in Salford.

A good knowledge of the Gunpowder Plot was essential if I was to tell the story well and plan for effective role-play. I researched several history books and adapted the story for Year 2, leaving out some of the difficult details.

Year group/class

Year 2, 29 children of mixed gender and ability.

Teaching time

Three afternoons.

Learning objectives

For the children to:

- learn key features of a past event in British history
- understand the sequence of events that led to the Gunpowder Plot
- gain some insight into the plotters' options and motivation (understand why people in the past acted as they did)
- extend their speaking, listening and thinking skills through discussion and debate
- communicate their knowledge and understanding in the form of a recount.

Key question

- Why did Guy Fawkes try to blow up the Houses of Parliament?

Resources

Large display sheet of paper with outline of Houses of Parliament drawn on it
Poster paint

The teaching: Lesson 1

Episode 1

Focus: Setting the scene; discussion and debate.

I told the children about James I and his dislike of Catholics. We talked about children they knew who were Catholic and whether James' dislike was justified. We then discussed James' actions against the Catholics and whether or not they were fair.

Episode 2

Focus: Simulation and decision-making.

In groups, the children pretended to be Catholics and discussed possible actions they might take. I allowed the arguments to rage for 10 minutes. Then, as a class, we pooled and listed all the options they proposed for tackling King James:

Beat him up.

Throw eggs at him.

Steal his crown.

Lock him in the dungeons.

Talk to him.

Kill him.

Get his mum to tell him.

Many of the groups suggested talking to him first and killing him as a last resort.

Episode 3

Focus: Discussion and evaluation of options.

As a class we discussed each of the suggestions, one at a time, and decided whether it would really work (that is, have the result that we could continue to be Catholics). Through debating each option thoroughly, the children came to realise that stealing his crown, for example, would not help their cause, and nor would throwing eggs at him!

Eventually, the only two options we were left with were talking to him and killing him.

Episode 4

Focus: Role-play and decision-making.

We chose a child to be James I and the other children tried to talk him into letting them continue to be Catholics. James, following instructions, always said 'No' to

any suggestions, and improvised well. When they had exhausted all their persuasive ideas the children came to the conclusion that they would have to kill him – there was no other option if they were to be free to worship as they wished.

This is where we left the first afternoon, with the children going home to think of ways of killing James.

Lesson 2

Episode 1

Focus: Review; group decision-making.

We started with me quickly reviewing what stage we had reached, questioning the children about the events of the previous afternoon. Again I divided the children into their discussion groups. This time they had to think of workable ways of killing King James. As with the previous lesson, after 10 minutes we came back together as a class and listed each group's suggestions:

Stab him.

Beat him up.

Hang him.

Lock him in the dungeons and let him starve.

Bomb him.

Shoot him.

Again we discussed each suggestion in turn, ruling out the ones that were not possible. We decided that none of the above were feasible. Shooting and bombing would have worked, but we didn't have the technology 400 years ago. The real plotters' decision, to use gunpowder, was in fact the same as the children's idea of bombing James.

Episode 2

Focus: Storytelling; listening.

I then told the children the rest of the story, explaining how the gang plotted to kill the king (they were delighted that they had come up with the same solution as the plotters); then how they were discovered, caught and punished.

Lesson 3

Episode 1

Focus: Review of learning; writing accounts (narratives).

We reviewed the story again with me questioning the children to check their knowledge of the key facts.

Then we had a brainstorming session, with the children suggesting key words, which I wrote on the board.

Children used these words to help them write an account of the Gunpowder Plot in their own words.

Episode 2

Focus: Illustrating and displaying our work.

I drew the basic outline of the Houses of Parliament on a large sheet of paper and the children painted it, adding the cellars and the gunpowder beneath the building.

We mounted the children's stories on the picture and displayed it.

Learning outcomes

The children:

- learnt and understood, through simulation, the sequence of events that led to the Gunpowder Plot
- gained an understanding of why people in the past acted as they did
- developed their speaking, listening and reasoning skills through discussion and debate
- communicated what they had learned in the form of an account.

Reflection/evaluation

Telling instead of reading the story made the children more involved and attentive. Both the children and I got much more out of it than if I had just told them the story straight and then used worksheets. As well as factual knowledge, they also gained an understanding and even an insight into the reasons behind the plot. Involving them in the problem through role play maintained their enthusiasm and enabled them to understand the situation from the inside (empathy).

This was a really successful approach, one that can be adapted to many other historical situations.

Editor's note: With the real world around them permeated by political violence, it is unsurprising that the children chose violent methods to gain 'their' political ends. There is definitely a case for following up this topic with a circle time/PSCHE discussion about alternative solutions in a democratic society.

Nuffield Primary History project

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