

BLENHEIM SQUARE

LOCAL STUDY: URBAN SPACES

VICTORIAN BRITAIN



See 'Introduction and Lesson 1' for the background to these lessons. The challenge was to bring the history of a local urban square to life and give the children an insight into life there in Victorian times.

The lessons

- 1** Victorian Leeds and Blenheim Square
- 2** Visiting Blenheim Square
- 3** Census work: Who lived in Blenheim Square in 1881?
- 4** Story-telling: living in a 19th-century house
- 5** Role play: upstairs, downstairs
- 6** **Thinking about the future**

Lesson 6 Thinking about the future

Today we revisited the Square. The focus was our third question: What would we like for the future?

Resources for Lesson 6:

Table: *Evaluating Blenheim Square*, one per child.
Outline maps of Blenheim Square, one per child.

Episode 1

Focus: Considering the future – evaluating the Square.

We told the children that on this final visit we were going to look critically at the Square with an eye to the future. We were going to decide what was good about it, and what we would like to change. What kind of Square would we like to have?

Dawn the teacher, the class and I left the school, ascended the hill and took a slow, careful walk around the Square. In contrast to our first visit, the day was clear, the grass had been cut, the Square was sunny and welcoming.

The children took the evaluation task seriously, looking thoughtfully at all aspects of the Square.

Episode 2

Focus: Discussing views of the Square.

Back in class, we asked the children to fill in the table: *Evaluating Blenheim Square* and to discuss their views with a partner.

We pooled the children's views, which were many and various, about the good and bad features of the Square. Most liked the quiet, the birds, the trees (although a couple of boys said they'd prefer a ball-playing area to trees). Some thought the Square should have a central feature such as a statue or fountain. Many also wanted amenities such as a swimming pool or climbing wall in the Square.

Episode 3

Focus: Children's plans for the future.

We told the class that we would like to put their ideas to the Parks Department of the Council. We asked: 'Would you rather we put together everyone's good ideas to make a whole-class design, or would you rather have a design competition, where you vote for one winning design?' The class voted hands-down for the latter.

We gave each child an outline plan of the Square and they all set to work, drawing their ideal Squares. Then, with 10 minutes left before break, it was time to stop (some perfectionists could have gone on for hours). The children laid their designs out on the tables. We reminded them of their responsibilities as voters: look carefully at each design, think about how realistic it is – is the Council likely to agree to put it into practice?

The children circulated, examining all the plans. Then they sat down, and recorded their votes on a piece of paper. Fortunately there was a clear winner: Lauren.

At this moment the bell rang; there was time only to congratulate the children on their work and wish them all the best in secondary school.

Leeds Urban Spaces project

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