

CONTENTS

REGULARS

FEATURES

Editorial 02

Letters 03

Briefing 04

06 Dale Banham

Getting ready for the Grand Prix: learning how to build a substantiated argument in Year 7

16 Gary Howells

Being ambitious with the causes of the First World War: interrogating inevitability

20 Michael Gorman

The 'structured enquiry' is not a contradiction in terms: focused teaching for independent learning

26 Ian Gibson & Susan McLelland

Minimalist cause boxes for maximal learning: one approach to the Civil War in Year 8

29 Peter Lee

'A lot of guess work goes on'
Children's understanding of historical accounts

Nutshell 33

Cunning Plan 37

Move Me On 38

42 Douglas P. Newton &
Lynn D. Newton

Knowing what counts in history: historical understanding and the non-specialist teacher

Review Essay 46

What if... Andrew Wrenn reviews *Virtual History*, edited by Niall Ferguson

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EDITORIAL



There are two reasons why I repeatedly go back to that important pamphlet, *Understanding Cause and Effect: Learning and Teaching about Causation and Consequence in History* (edited by Joe Scott in 1990). First, it clears up my thinking about what we are trying to achieve whenever we talk about pupils' understanding of 'causation'; and, second, it helps me to think about where we have gone wrong. After all the sophistication of the Teaching History Research Group's work on causation, how could we have ended up with the madness of Attainment Target 1b in the 1991 curriculum? Here was a push for a new academic rigour, and yet, in the hands of the 10-Level scale, causation became pointless and rigid skillology.

Whenever 'explanation' or 'causation' creeps into our learning objectives it is actually very difficult to identify what we want pupils to do. There are so many different types of historical 'explanation' on offer that it is dangerous to treat them as species of one generic concept. Some explanations are transparent, explicit litanies of causal factors that spring from the prose in self-conscious arrangement. Others just lurk. They skulk behind ostensibly simple assertions like, 'The bomb was dropped, not only to end the war but to begin the peace with a warning to the Russians'. Intention intrudes here, and for a moment we cannot work out whether it says more about the causes of the dropping of the bomb or the ending of the war. Then there are complex 'explanatory narratives'. Do we just need to concentrate hard and use that orange felt tip to pluck out the causal factors as we read? Or is the explanation amenable to several interpretations anyway, thus suggesting a different pedagogic game?

And all this is just a snapshot of how we can help the baffled learner by building a relationship between causal explanation and the structure of prose, just one way of looking at historical explanation for the purposes of teaching. There are so many other ways in. For example, what about the relationship between understanding of causation (whatever it is) and historical knowledge? What is so interesting about the early 1990s is that the history education community became practised at marrying content and skill in ways that have not yet been comprehensively examined. Take Colin Shephard's splendid piece, 'Degrees of Causation', in *Hindsight* (Vol.4, No.2, 1994), much photocopied by teachers ever since: "Concentrate on the role that different causal factors played. Do not fall into the trap of merely describing events", says Colin to Year 10; then, immediately after, he makes a subtle shift: "If you are putting an argument forward about how important the causes were, you must give reasons. Your reasons should be based on what you know about the relevant events." (my italics)

What will the pupil's response tell us here? Will it show ability to argue? Will it show awareness of causal relationships? Or will it be an indicator of his ability to recall relevant knowledge? It can only be all three. Indeed, these three define each other. Colin's piece systematically and with careful reinforcement en route, helps the pupil to use these issues to serve each other. The teacher needs to know this if the formulation of any assessment structure is to have any meaning or purpose at all. For is this 'causal understanding' or is it something bigger? What we are seeing here is a bit of elementary training in the substantiation of argument. This might be a better way of

defining what pupils are doing and therefore of identifying the smaller steps that pupils need to get there.

Not all the pieces in this edition are about explanation but they are all about argument. Pupils must reach for statements that they feel strongly about and that they can substantiate. They must learn to do this with whatever historical concept they are playing with - cause, change, diversity, significance or whatever. Using contrasting approaches, our teacher-authors get absolutely everybody arguing. So how do they do it? And how do they ensure that pupils avoid tidy statements about causality which are historically inaccurate or inadequate in factual grounding? Structure the enquiry, says Mike Gorman. Get them motivated by the very idea of explanation, says Gary Howells. Build their arguing around shared, simple content pieces, say Ian Gibson and Susan McLelland.

Meanwhile Dale Banham's pupils are arguing not about causation (well, not directly) but about points of source evaluation that have a bearing upon judgements about John's effectiveness as medieval ruler. They negotiate the Good King Straight, the Evidence Chicane and that deliciously infuriating choice between the risk-takers' High Speed Hairpin and the safe route to Conclusionville. These could be misunderstood as gimmicks. But any history teacher who has wrestled long and hard with taking bored, disaffected or 'challenging' pupils somewhere worth going, will see how Banham has both isolated and combined the usual conceptual stumbling blocks and breakdown points, converting these into opportunities to lift pupils higher.

I call them 'contrasting', but there is no conflict between these teachers' approaches. This is not empty serendipity. We can celebrate professional diversity without being agnostic about common principles that emerge. All have this in common: a personal reworking of curriculum structures and components that ends up in the same place. Both Banham and Gorman emphasise different stages and levels of the planning process, but each has, independently, and from his department's practice, reached the conclusion that Key Elements 4 and 5 are of a different order from the rest. Gorman points out that you just cannot separate Key Element 4 (evaluating evidence, establishing a line of enquiry) and Key Element 5 (selecting evidence, arranging evidence, organising the resulting ideas) from everything else. Banham agrees but sees no conflict between this holism and the need to teach its constituent parts quite directly and sometimes separately. All the articles show that the Key Elements require interpretation and not mere attachment to chunks of content. This is why Doug Newton and Lynn Newton's piece on teacher knowledge is important. How can we teach history without a grasp of the structures and concepts of the discipline?

Our authors also have this in common: a determination to push back the boundaries of pupil performance. To transform understandings, to create critical dispositions and to build working knowledge in the 'low attainer', and in the child who is, culturally or socially, worlds away from us - now there lies an intellectual challenge. If this edition of *Teaching History* is anything to go by, it is a challenge that is increasingly attracting our ablest history teachers.

Christine Counsell
Editor

S till learning how to teach Kimberley

Just after I read Tony McAleavy's excellent article (TH91) on the use of sources in history teaching, I was marking some of this summer's GCSE scripts. One candidate, Kimberley, had got pretty fed up once she got past the source-based questions and told me: "How can you expect me to answer questions without sources? Our teacher didn't make history interesting or fun so I haven't learnt a thing. Our English teacher taught us the wrong set books too." She reminded me of something that did not emerge from the article: first, that any practice or method of teaching has to mean something to Kimberley, as well as to the able pupils who can grasp the whole methodology, and secondly, that the introduction on a wide scale of source-based enquiry learning helped to make history accessible to a broader range of pupils. Although SHP's rationale for bringing more sources into the forefront of history teaching was methodological, for those of us teaching at the time it gave history powerful selling points with heads, parents and pupils. History was the subject that gave pupils the skills to be critical of the messages being thrown at them by advertisers and politicians. Work on sources was also an activity in which pupils could perform positively at several levels. Levels of response mark-schemes (another SHP innovation) credited Kimberley's mum with being able to use the provenance in assessing the value of the evidence in a source, while her more able classmates went on to produce syntheses of several sources as the result of their enquiries.

It may be that Denis Shemilt was not concerned that SHP had made history "more difficult": what he meant was "more rigorous". At the time the comparison was with subject requirements to learn vast tracts of historical (or geographical, or biological, or whatever) data. Kimberley's mum did not find it more difficult; she found it more fun and more meaningful to her. What has happened, I think, is that other subjects have become even more accessible by lowering their demands for either extended recall or extended writing.

Tony ends his article by pointing to the new GCSE criteria which now place evaluation of reliability at the beginning of a process that leads to the production of 'reasoned and substantiated conclusions'. Fair enough, but if this year's scripts are anything to go by, the fusion of contextual and internal evidence evaluation is proving extremely demanding. Many candidates seem not to have been taught the old reliability skills. Teaching pupils how to structure an answer to the new-style questions is going to take some thought as well as good communications between teachers and Examiners

about expectations and mark-schemes.

Finally, may I make a couple of corrections to what was, I thought, the most useful and readable issue of *Teaching History* for years: the long footnote to the article discussed above suggests that SHP was responsible for introducing the famous, and now much-criticised, six key concepts. In fact it was the totally different Schools Council Project "Place, Time and Society 8-13" which picked up these Californian ideas. SHP (Schools Council History 13-16 Project) always had a much more pragmatic and, I feel, a much more lastingly useful, attitude to content selection: What kinds of History do pupils need?

May I also correct our website address (in lower case, of course): <http://www.tasc.ac.uk>.

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DIRECTOR, SCHOOLS HISTORY PROJECT
TRINITY & ALL SAINTS COLLEGE, LEEDS

Keep the teaching focus on real interpretations and real interpreters

I enjoyed the article on interpretations in the last edition of *Teaching History* by Rob Williams and Ian Davies. I am sure that they are right in saying that this is an area of history teaching that requires further explanation. I was impressed by their suggestion that, if not properly undertaken, work on interpretations could lead to an 'accidental postmodernism'. There is a danger that over-emphasising the provisional nature of interpretations can encourage a high level of either confusion or scepticism on the part of students.

The example Williams and Davies give on teaching about interpretations of Cromwell is interesting. It certainly sounds like a worthwhile piece of work. The students are asked to produce an interpretation of Cromwell using prior knowledge and source material. Of itself, this task is good history but it will not necessarily give students insights into the nature of interpretations. The crucial aspect of the work is, therefore, the discussion after the event when the students stand back and think about themselves as interpreters. Encouragingly, the more thoughtful ones are not only able to reject simplistic views of Cromwell but critically they show an understanding on the way evidence underpins valid interpretations. What I would like to know is: what happens next? How can we build upon pupils' reflections upon their own interpretations in order to give them wider insights into the way interpretations are constructed by others: historians, film-makers, museum curators, politicians?

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Getting ready for the Grand Prix: Learning how to build a substantiated

Dale Banham's Grand Prix race has helped many history teachers in Suffolk to think freshly about metaphors and images that will inspire and enable pupils (especially under-achieving boys) to write analytically and at length. In this article he explores the reasons for the race's success. His first theme is the importance of giving pupils time to prepare for written argument. Eleven year-olds should not attempt extended written argument 'cold'. His second theme is a fascinating response to a problem that many history teachers have identified. Whilst it is obvious that a key emphasis in Banham's teaching is the requirement for pupils to confront, self-consciously, the organisational problem of composition (all kinds of creative 'sorting' crop up again and again), what is striking is the way in which he keeps up a concurrent emphasis on helping pupils to find the language of argument through the use of writing frames. Unlike so much poor use of writing frames, he manages to use them in such a way that they do not detract from the work of getting pupils to play with structure and organisation for themselves. This approach assisted him in achieving the learning objective which he discusses in his third main theme - the integration of evidence evaluation skills into extended writing. This is another way of achieving the integration of Key Elements 4 and 5 discussed by Mike Gorman, but Banham makes that integration explicit to the pupils. He reminds his pupils that the language demands are problematic through his winning device, 'the evidence chicane'.

Dale Banham

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Understanding the 'Key Elements' of the National Curriculum for history

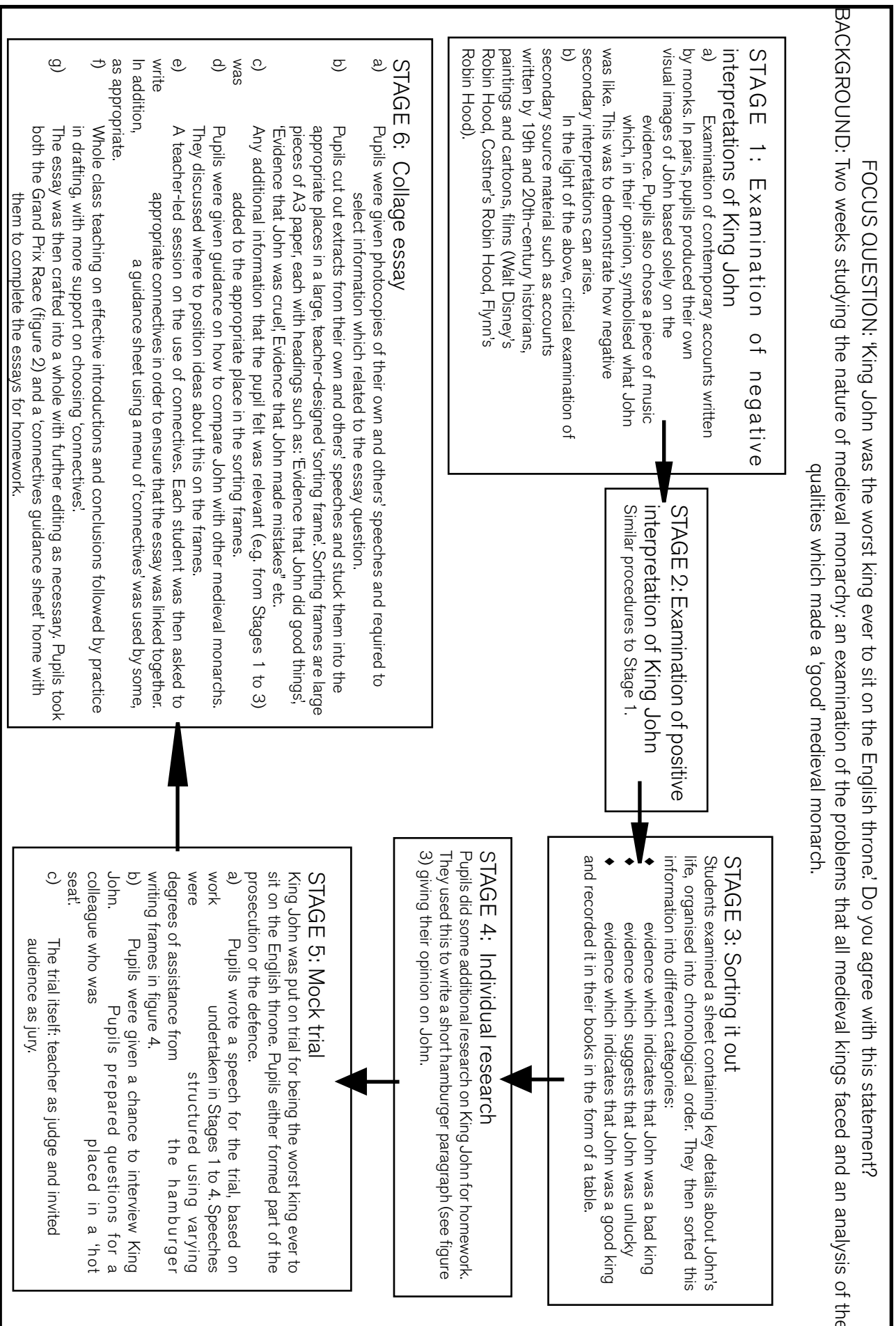
The eight week programme of work outlined in Figure 1 was undertaken with a mixed ability Year 7 class (11 and 12 year olds). A depth study of King John offers a rich context for helping pupils to understand medieval kingship and to investigate how kingship was constructed and perceived at the time. Given the hugely problematic evidence base, it is also an ideal opportunity to teach students about the methodological difficulties involved in evaluating John's reign. In what ways was John effective or ineffective? Was John a 'good' or a 'bad' ruler? Such questions are hard to tackle because the evidence is incomplete, partisan, truculent. Here was an opportunity for Year 7 pupils to deepen and extend their understanding of the many challenges involved in weighing different types of evidence. It was a chance to develop evidence evaluation skills in a rich and motivating context. This 'Key Element 4' emphasis would both feed off and feed into their period knowledge of a range of issues such as medieval social structure, political systems, values and beliefs.¹

However, the extent to which pupils could demonstrate their evidence evaluation skills, their knowledge and understanding of medieval kingship and their formulation of opinion about King John was dependent

on their ability to organise and communicate their ideas (Key Element 5: Organisation and Communication). Moreover, I wanted the eight week episode to culminate in a piece of extended, analytical writing. I wanted them to draw their understandings together and to argue a case, systematically. As a result, the areas of learning described by Key Element 5 had to be addressed rigorously throughout. Pupils of differing abilities had to be taught how to select relevant information, to organise their ideas and to write in an appropriate style.

In fact, to achieve success in all the other Key Elements pupils must constantly organise and communicate their ideas, whether they are doing 'extended writing' or not. Pupils who understand many of key historical issues can be held back because of a lack of systematic guidance when it comes to expressing themselves in written form. They can be held back, even in their historical understanding, because of a lack of systematic teaching on linking issues, on seeing relationships between issues and on naming or labelling the resulting concepts.² The following account is the story of how I kept a strong teaching focus on these Key Element 5 issues throughout the learning journey. This focus was strong not only in the extended writing exercise (the Grand Prix itself)

Figure 1: Getting Year 7 ready for the Grand Prix. An outline plan of eight weeks' preparation for an evidence-based argument in the form of an essay on King John.



**STAGE 1
PRE-RACE CHECK LIST:**

- 1: ARE YOU CLEAR ON THE QUESTION?
- 2: HAVE YOU COMPLETED YOUR RESEARCH?
- 3: ARE YOU SURE OF YOUR ARGUMENT?
- 4: HAVE YOU HAD ENOUGH EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THIS ARGUMENT?

**STAGE 3
THE GOOD KING STRAIGHT**

- PROVIDE EVIDENCE WHICH SUGGESTS THAT JOHN WAS A GOOD KING:
- (A) DESCRIBE THE PROBLEMS THAT JOHN FACED AND GIVE EXAMPLES TO SHOW HE WAS UNLUCKY.
 - (B) PROVIDE EVIDENCE OF JOHN DOING GOOD THINGS.

GO!

**STAGE 2
WRITING THE INTRODUCTION
THE FIRST BEND**

- (A) OUTLINE WHAT MADE A GOOD MEDIEVAL MONARCH
- (B) OUTLINE THE DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS OF JOHN
- (C) OUTLINE YOUR AIMS.

TIPS:
1: TRY TO CREATE A GOOD IMPRESSION RIGHT FROM THE START. AIM TO CAPTURE THE READERS

**STAGE 6
THE 2ND EVIDENCE CHICANE!**

- HIGHLIGHT PROBLEMS WITH THE EVIDENCE THAT JOHN WAS A BAD KING.
- (A) EXPLAIN WHY THE EVIDENCE MIGHT BE UNRELIABLE.
 - (B) PROVIDE EXAMPLES OF UNRELIABLE EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THIS ARGUMENT.

**STAGE 7
THE HIGH SPEED HAIRPIN**

- EXTRA RESEARCH
COMPARE JOHN TO OTHER MONARCHS.
- (A) PROVIDE EXAMPLES OF JOHN BEING BETTER THAN OTHER MONARCHS.
 - (B) PROVIDE EVIDENCE OF JOHN BEING WORSE THAN OTHER MONARCHS.

DECISION TIME!
Time is running out ...

- DO YOU TAKE THE HIGH SPEED HAIRPIN CHALLENGE AND GO FOR THE LAP RECORD?
OR
DO YOU TAKE THE SAFE ROUTE TO CONCLUSIONVILLE?

**GRAND PRIX
RACE TRACK**

“KING JOHN WAS THE WORST KING EVER TO SIT ON THE ENGLISH THRONE” (LADYBIRD SOURCE)
TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE WITH THIS STATEMENT?

FIGURE 2

STAGE 4

THE EVIDENCE CHICANE!

HIGHLIGHT PROBLEMS WITH THE EVIDENCE THAT SUGGESTS THAT JOHN WAS A GOOD KING:

- (A) EXPLAIN WHY THE EVIDENCE MIGHT BE UNRELIABLE.
- (B) PROVIDE EXAMPLES OF UNRELIABLE EVIDENCE.

5

STAGE 5

THE BAD KING STRAIGHT

PROVIDE EVIDENCE OF JOHN BEING A BAD KING.

- (A) GIVE EXAMPLES OF JOHN BEING A CRUEL KING.
- (B) EXPLAIN HOW JOHN MADE MISTAKES.
- (C) PROVIDE EVIDENCE THAT JOHN WAS A WEAK RULER.

STAGE 9

THE FINISHING STRAIGHT

REVISING AND EDITING. 10 TOP TIPS

CREATIVE SUGGESTIONS:

- 1: DO YOU THINK THE WRITING IS INTERESTING/ENJOYABLE?
- 2: IS THERE ANYTHING MISSING IN THIS PIECE? HAVE YOU SUPPORTED YOUR ARGUMENTS WITH EVIDENCE?
- 3: IS THERE ANYTHING WHICH IS NOT CLEAR OR ACCURATE?
- 4: HAVE YOU ANSWERED THE ACTUAL QUESTION?
- 5: IS YOUR WORK NEATLY PRESENTED? DO YOU WANT TO DESIGN A FRONT COVER OR ILLUSTRATE YOUR WORK?
- 6: SPELL CHECK.
- 7: FULL STOP CHECK.
- 8: CAPITAL LETTER CHECK.
- 9: PARAGRAPH CHECK.
- 10: SENTENCE LENGTHS. IT IS ALWAYS WORTH CHECKING YOUR SENTENCE LENGTHS. PUT IN SOME SHORT, SHARP SENTENCES. THEY ADD VARIETY AND INTEREST.

9

FINISH

8

STAGE 8

THE FINAL BEND

WRITING A CONCLUSION

- (A) REACH A JUDGEMENT ON KING JOHN.
- (B) WEIGH AND CONSIDER THE RELIABILITY OF THE EVIDENCE AND USE IT TO EXPLAIN WHY YOU HAVE COME TO THIS CONCLUSION.

WAS JOHN A BAD KING?

WAS HE THE WORST KING EVER?

TIPS:

YOU MUST REACH A CONCLUSION. DO NOT SIT ON THE FENCE! YOU ARE NOW AN EXPERT. HAVE THE CONFIDENCE TO GIVE YOUR OPINION.

**ORST
THE
OU
ENT?**

but in the journey that led to it. Getting reading for the Grand Prix was as important as the big race itself.

Allowing time for extended writing; a way of saving time

One and a half hours a week over an eight week period may sound like a long time to spend on a depth study on King John. However, the length of time spent leading up to and producing the piece of extended writing was one of the key contributing factors to the success of the project. Interviews undertaken with pupils after the project showed that they welcomed the opportunity to investigate a topic in depth. The work that they produced at the end of the eight weeks was enhanced by detailed knowledge. Pupils felt confident because they had a large pool of knowledge on which to draw.

Teaching students how to produce extended pieces of analytical writing takes time. All history teachers are faced with the dilemma of how to cover content specified in the National Curriculum in limited time. It could be argued that, given these time constraints, lengthy depth studies that develop key study skills over an extended period of time are unrealistic. However, recent pieces of work undertaken with the pupils involved in the project have indicated that a concentration on key thinking and writing skills in the short term can actually save time in the long run. Pupils have transferred the skills learnt during the King John depth study to subsequent pieces of work, thereby accelerating the speed at which other topics can be taught. They were also, inevitably, deepening their knowledge about other areas of medieval history that would serve other parts of the Study Unit, 'Medieval Realms'.

Preparing for the Grand Prix - the various warm-up activities

The race track or 'Grand Prix race' (see fig.2) offers much guidance but it would never be enough in itself. During the eight week build-up, all kinds of preparatory activities were used to build knowledge, to develop skill in evidence evaluation and, through all of these, to enthuse and tempt pupils with the exciting challenge ahead. These included lively oral activities such as speech making and discussion, the evaluation of very stimulating source material, sorting and categorising activities, mini-writing exercises using different types of frames and so on (see fig. 1). Pupils were also introduced to a variety of subsequent interpretations and representations of King John such as scholarly interpretations by nineteenth century historians, educationally orientated 'Bad King John' accounts in school textbooks of the 1950s and 1960s (including the Ladybird book quotation of the essay title) and interpretations designed for entertainment, such as modern feature films that draw richly on

popular understandings of King John the 'baddy'. Whilst the teaching focus of the final essay was not on 'Interpretations' (Key Element 3) this section of the preparation was important in showing pupils why an evaluation of King John's 'goodness' or 'badness' is such an interesting historical problem. It would undoubtedly feed their growing understanding of how some historical interpretations are constructed, ready for me to exploit more directly elsewhere in their more direct study of interpretations.³

The stages of the overall programme are summarised in Figure 1. During each of these stages pupils were, in effect, concentrating on particular parts or dimensions of the essay writing process, each of which served to strengthen their critical evaluation of historical evidence at the same time. Most of the activities were techniques for modelling a particular type of writing and for teaching students to stand back from those models and analyse them. My analysis of the learning that took place at some of the stages requires some additional commentary.

The hamburger in history - paragraphs as balanced meals (Stage 4)

The first 'writing frame' introduced to students was a 'hamburger paragraph'. The intention was to give pupils a memorable image. Hamburger paragraphs are used in this way in many Canadian schools⁴. Figure 3 shows the image used to help students to structure the piece of writing that they undertook for homework during Stage 4 of the project. Pupils were quick to grasp how the 'shape' of a hamburger resembles that of an effective paragraph. It provided an image that they could relate to and remember. It was a potent source of analogy for teaching. Analogies could be made about how all three components of a paragraph (the opening statement - the evidence - and the conclusion) combine to make an effective piece of writing, just as the three components of a hamburger combine to make a proper meal. Opportunities for other, apposite analogies abound: "Make sure you complete it with the bottom slice of bread or your fingers will get mucky. . . or the evidence will fall out. . ." and so on.

Introducing the double hamburger - a differentiation device (Stage 5)

Having been introduced to a hamburger paragraph in Stage 4, pupils were then asked to take this image a stage further. Figure 4 shows the structures pupils were given for constructing a speech attacking or defending King John. The basic structure of the original hamburger was maintained but with an additional layer added. Pupils now had to challenge the opposing view of John as well as to support their own view. In order to allow for a wide difference in ability, three 'burger style' writing frames were produced. These ranged from a basic outline for

Pupils felt
confident
because
they had a
large pool of
knowledge on
which to draw

higher attainers (fig. 4a) to a writing frame which gave detailed structured guidance for low attainers (figs 4c & d).

As an experiment in differentiation, pupils were allowed some freedom in their choice of hamburger. Many students quickly found a frame with which they felt confident. However, it is interesting to note that many pupils moved between two different frames during the writing process. Most seemed determined to receive as little 'help' as possible but were quick to use a writing frame which offered more assistance when they were in difficulty. For example, many high attainers began the task using only the basic outline structure provided in Figure 4a. Later in the writing process, when it came to the more difficult task of highlighting weaknesses in opposing interpretations of King John, they found it useful to refer to additional support offered by Figure 4b. Pupils enjoyed the flexibility and freedom of being able to choose a structure. However, when pupils were clearly using a structure that was inappropriate for their ability they were gently persuaded to change!

The decision to allow for pupil choice of writing frame was critical. It helped to overcome the difficulty of determining how much guidance each pupil should receive. It also encouraged pupils to view writing frames as flexible structures that could be adapted to suit individual needs. Throughout the writing process pupils were encouraged to develop their own sentence-starters. Many pupils amended the frames, tending to use them as guide or model rather than rigidly following the structure laid down on the sheets.

It was vitally important that the pupils saw the writing frames as a 'flexible friend' that could be adapted for their own purposes, rather than a fixed format that constrained their own writing. The writing frames gave the pupils the confidence to develop their ideas in greater detail and meant that their speeches were well-structured, without providing a rigid structure that produced 'mechanical' responses.

It was also important that the pupils had already been introduced to a simpler version of the burger before a more complicated model was introduced (see fig. 3). Key concepts cannot be taught in a one-off lesson. The basic shape of the hamburger paragraph was a key strategy. It was therefore important that this concept was returned to and reinforced.

At the same time, it was also important that pupil thinking was taken a further stage forward. How to reinforce prior learning and ensure progression was a central concern of this project. When providing writing structures for pupils it is always tempting to think in terms of removing the assistance provided as a means of achieving progression. However, the solution devised here was to start off with a simple structure and then to build more complicated layers into the planning process⁵.

It should also be noted that all the hamburger work was preparation for an oral activity. Pupils were beginning to gather both the knowledge and the discourse structures that they would need to make powerful speeches. Throughout the build-up to the Grand Prix pupils were learning to argue in both

The decision to allow for pupil choice of writing frame was critical



Figure 3. Pupils did some additional research on King John for homework. They used this to write a short hamburger paragraph giving their opinion on John.

well-structured, analytical writing does not have to be the preserve of the high ability pupil

spoken and written forms. The learning processes for each were serving each other in interesting ways.⁶

The collage essay and sorting frames: facing up to the organisational problem (Stage 6a & b)

Large sheets of A3 paper with headings were used to make a 'sorting frame' on which pupils could construct what amounted to a draft plan or 'collage essay' (see fig. 1). Selecting evidence and ideas from others' speeches, they simply had to think about where to position each item. Did this particular chunk of someone else's speech belong under the heading 'Evidence that John did good things' or did it belong under 'Evidence that John was cruel'?

The use of sorting frames was therefore crucial to the success of the project. Pupils benefited from the fact that they could cut out and stick key arguments or pieces of evidence onto a large pre-designed frame. This enabled them to think more about the appropriate place for a piece of information, without having to worry about copying it out⁷. Sorting frames had already been used during Stage 3 of the project. Pupils were therefore familiar with their use and had seen their practical advantages. However, as with the hamburger paragraph, it was important that such a crucial technique was revisited and reinforced, and in such a way that pupils saw beyond the technique to its purpose.

Whilst selecting information for their essay, pupils were encouraged to use the speeches of other students (from the trial) as a source of information. This fostered an atmosphere of group cooperation within the classroom. It was also motivating for pupils to see that their work was being valued. The process by which they became willing to share ideas and research helped foster the environment in which they were willing critically and sensitively to evaluate the work of their peers during Stage 6c of the project.

Giving them the glue: securing fluency through connectives (Stage 6e & f)

After pupils had sorted all the information that they needed for the essay into relevant sections, a teacher-led lesson on how to incorporate appropriate linking sentences into their work was introduced. As a whole class we looked at examples of effective analytical writing. I demonstrated to the pupils how high level work is often characterised by the use of appropriate connectives. Pupils were then provided with a sheet giving examples of appropriate connectives and sentence starters (see Fig.5) ready for their essay on King John. As with the burger structures, pupils were encouraged to invent their own 'starters' and 'connectives'. However, the important factor in securing learning was that pupils were not expected to start from scratch. They already had an idea of what they should be aiming for and a model to fall back on

if they needed assistance.

Similarly in Stage 6f pupils were provided with models of effective introductions and conclusions written by historians, with mini-writing frames for very low-attaining pupils. Pupils were then given an opportunity to write introductions and conclusions for homework. These were then used in whole-class teaching to highlight what makes an effective introduction and conclusion. The fact that pupils' own work was being used as a model was highly motivating and they quickly accepted that the class would point out strengths and weaknesses in their work.

The blend of modelling and collective analysing of written work - either of other pupils' or historians' - was a very useful tool by which the class were able to grasp the importance of connectives, sentence starters, introductions and conclusions. It encouraged the pupils to look beyond the content of their written work and to think carefully about how they organised and expressed their ideas. Pupils had thus been provided with the background skills and the confidence to develop their own work. They had been encouraged to think, directly and self-consciously, about all the different components that go into producing a coherent, fluent piece of analytical writing.

The Grand Prix Race

The overall structure of the essay was presented to pupils in the form of a Grand Prix race (see fig. 1). As pupils had been concentrating on specific parts of the essay writing process, there was a real danger that they would lose sight of the overall shape of the essay. The visual representation of the whole essay as a Grand Prix race was therefore designed to illustrate how the various segments of the essay writing process fitted together.

The image of a Grand Prix race was chosen because it was a structure that pupils could relate to, would find stimulating to use and would remember. Like the image of the hamburger paragraph it allowed useful analogies to be made. In particular, it was valuable for pupils to see the essay writing process as a journey. It provided pupils with a mind map of the process. Different stages of the 'race' were designed to mirror the stages of a Grand Prix race. For example, introductions and conclusions were placed on bends, encouraging pupils to slow down and think carefully about their writing.

Such images were particularly powerful in teaching pupils to handle the heart of the matter - the integration of evidential analysis with their broader argument. All too often, work on the reliability of historical evidence is never integrated into anything else⁸. However, here, pupils were required to reach tentative conclusions from their critical evaluation of the evidence and to integrate their ideas with their ongoing argument.

Figure 4 (a - d): pupils chose their own burgers, often moving between the different levels of support until they found the right amount of modelling and independence that they needed.

Figure 4a: Open-ended burger, targeted at high attainers

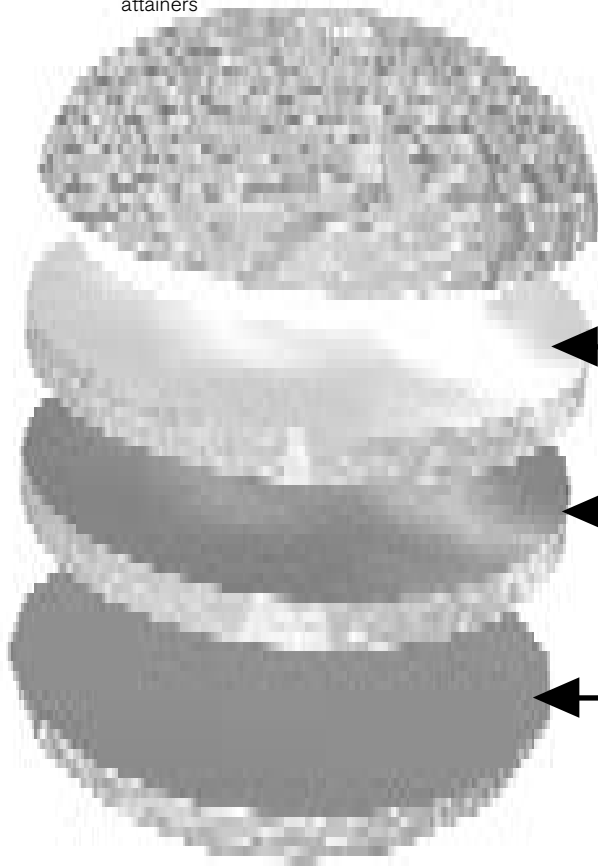


Figure 4c: Highly-structured burger (pro-King John option), targeted at low attainers

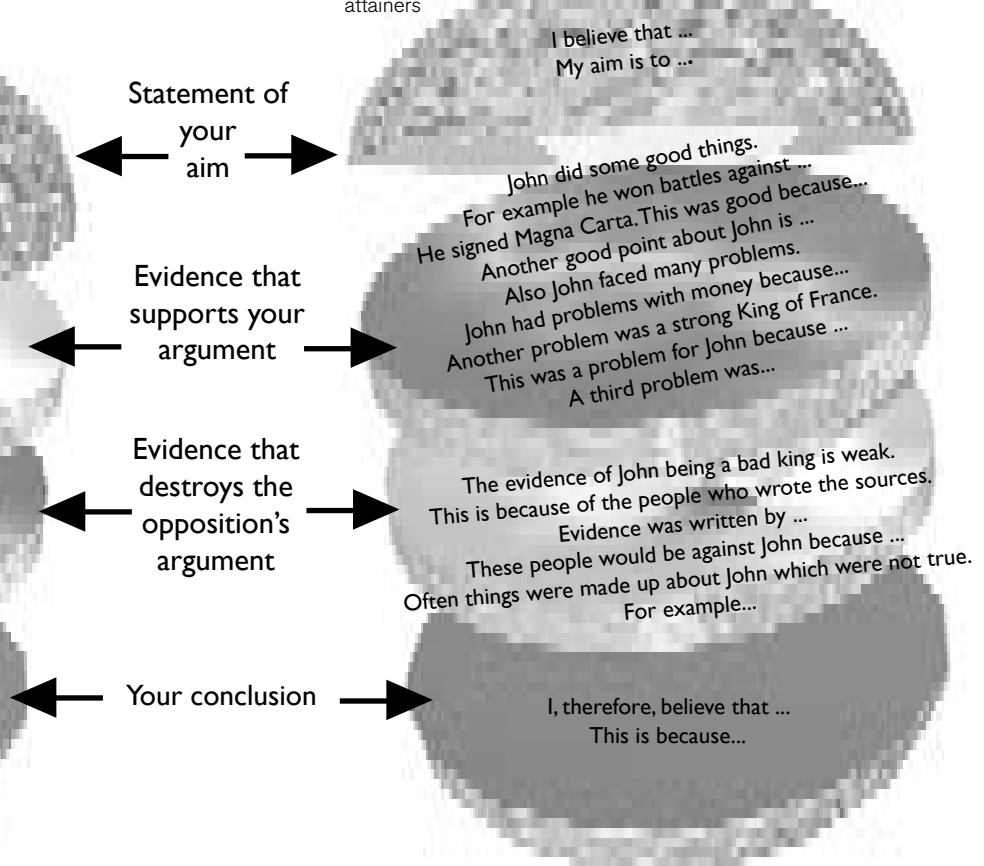


Figure 4b: Semi-structured burger targeted at average attainers

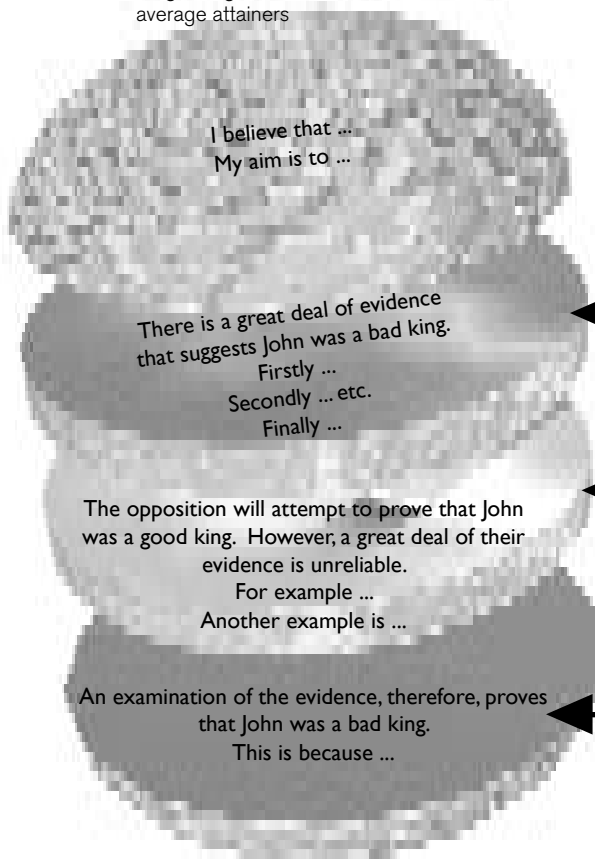
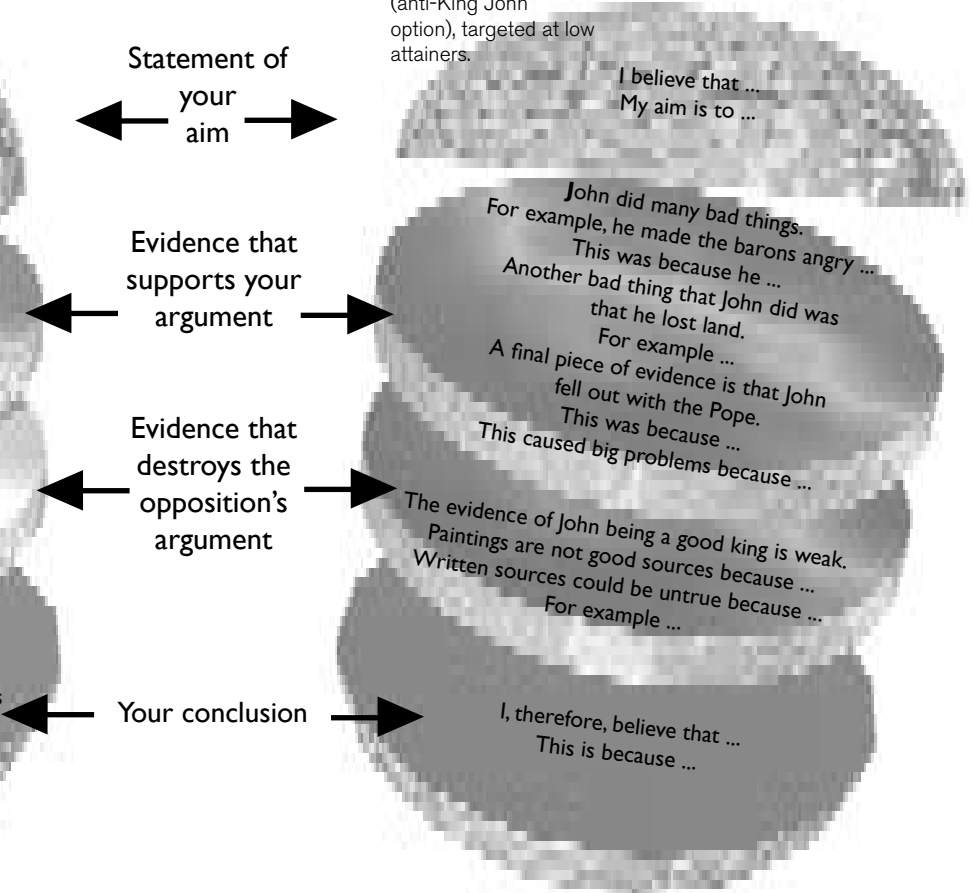


Figure 4d: Highly-structured burger (anti-King John option), targeted at low attainers.



Therefore, the stages where pupils had to evaluate evidence were presented as chicanes, potentially difficult stages in the writing process which had to be negotiated with caution.

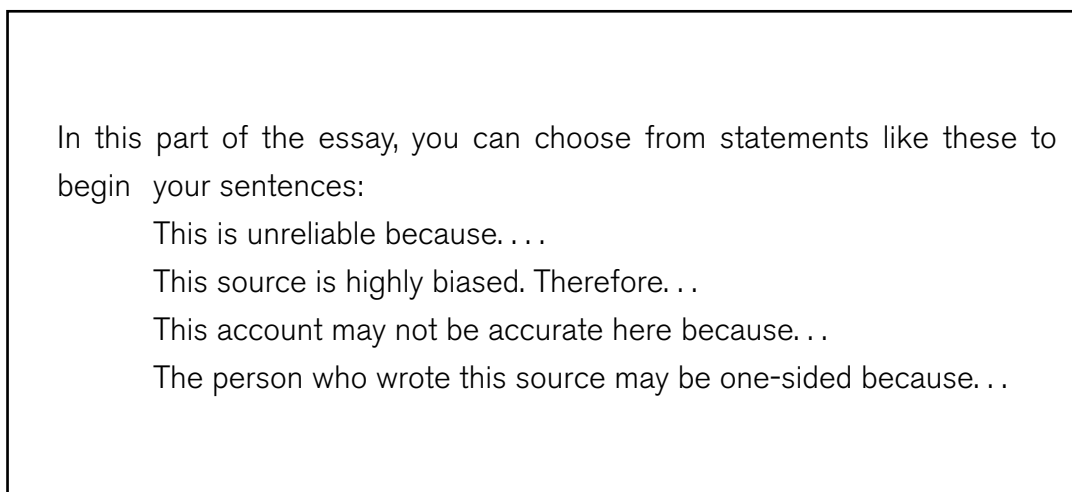
In order to encourage pupils to take up the challenge of extra research, which would allow them to draw useful comparisons between John and other monarchs, extension work was made to appear more attractive to pupils by making it a 'high speed hairpin'. By making this extension activity into an exciting challenge that invited some daring, many more pupils (especially boys) carried out and integrated this extra research.

On 'The Finishing Straight' pupils were encouraged to edit their work. Advice on editing was adapted from an

writing. Experience plays a central role in the learning process. Too often we think of the learner's mind as being like a blank sheet of paper yet this is clearly not the case. We all enter learning situations with a store of knowledge and experience that can be applied to the new situation. The effective learner canalises an existing stream of knowledge. If students are taught key writing and thinking skills in a memorable and stimulating way they can transfer these skills to new learning situations.

In addition, the overall format of the project has been used to support students developing extended writing skills in other years. For example, the Grand Prix race has been used to demonstrate appropriate structure to Year 8 students producing an extended piece of

Figure 5: Examples of menus of connectives and sentence stems. Many more of these, for different parts of the essay or for different types of argument, were offered to the pupils. These were all attractively presented on the back of the laminated Grand Prix race, for ease of use for homework.



evidence
chicanes ...
potentially
difficult stages
in the writing
process to be
negotiated with
caution

English department guidance sheet on effective editing. The aim was to encourage pupils to see editing as an integral part of the essay writing process and to pay a greater attention to the rules of spelling, punctuation and grammar in their historical writing.

Formative conclusions: extended thinking and writing for all

Analytical and discursive writing is difficult to teach and difficult to learn. However, well-structured, analytical writing does not have to be the preserve of the high ability pupil. Clear, effectively presented strategies that focus on the skills necessary for analytical and discursive writing can enable pupils of all abilities to achieve success. This is the way to meet demanding targets for the less able.

Year 7 pupils involved in the project have applied many of the key thinking and writing skills taught during the depth study to subsequent pieces of extended historical

analytical writing on Oliver Cromwell. The concept of the hamburger paragraph and the 'double burger' have been used throughout Key Stage 3 and have therefore helped GCSE pupils to think more carefully about the way they structure their work. When trying to raise standards, there is no point in leaving such teaching until Years 10 and 11.

Transferring the lessons of historical argument to the rest of the curriculum

Pupils have also transferred many of the skills learnt during the depth study to other subject areas. Interviews with pupils highlighted the fact that many pupils were now thinking more carefully about the way in which they structure their written work in all subjects, not just in history. Other teachers within the school have also shown an interest in the principles that underlay the project. This demonstrates that

history departments can play a leading role in whole school developments. History teaching that challenges pupils of all abilities to write critically, analytically and at length can empower pupils to write more effectively in other areas of the curriculum. During a period when the time devoted to history in many secondary schools is being cut, it is important that history departments demonstrate the inherent worth of their discipline in terms of the thinking and writing skills it naturally delivers.

REFERENCES

¹Key Element 4' in the National Curriculum Order for history in England (DfE 1995) requires evaluation of sources of different types and also the planning and pursuit of historical enquiry.

² The idea and inspiration for the eight week 'depth' study on King John originated from two sources: (i) my reading of Christine Counsell's *Analytical and Discursive Writing in History at Key Stage 3* (1997) Historical Association; and (ii) an INSET course on extended writing run by Hilary Pegum for Suffolk Humanities Advisory Team. Counsell argues that most pupils find extended, analytical writing unnecessarily difficult only because they have not been taught to 'see' the organisational problem at the heart of the composing task. Counsell demonstrates how an explicit teaching focus on the classificatory demands of the discipline not only teaches critical thinking to a very high level, but gives 'lower attainers' access to difficult historical concepts.

³ It is interesting to speculate on what the Grand Prix race might look like if the Key Element 5 objectives were combined, instead, with learning objectives centred on NC Key Element 3: 'Interpretations of history'. There was some direct attention to 'interpretations' in Stage 1, by way of preparation, but the final essay using the Grand Prix race does not take this as its learning focus. If 'interpretations' were the focus, pupils might use the essay, for example, to explore how modern and changing demands for entertainment make popular and money-spinning cinema out of King John. Alternatively, they might take a closer look at the Ladybird account, perhaps interviewing their grandparents about how they were taught about King John, and so learn about how and why certain personalities have, in the past, been presented to schoolchildren as unequivocally 'bad' or 'good'.

They would thus be producing an analysis of how a real interpretation (or interpretation type) came to be constructed. A critical look at the original evidence might play one part in this, but pupils would chiefly be examining the period from which the interpretation emerges - its values, priorities, audiences and so forth - rather than reaching a judgement about whether or not an interpretation is 'reliable' or tenable, or giving their own view of John, which rather misses the point of KE3. See NCC (1993), *Teaching History at Key Stage 3*, Chapter 8 for some clear, practical guidance on the issue of teaching interpretations.

⁴ I am grateful to Andy Bell and Greg Ashton who teach at Sir Wilfred Laurier School, Scarborough, Ontario for sharing the hamburger technique with me. See also Margaret Mulholland, (1998) 'Frameworks for linking pupils' evidential understanding with growing skill in structured, written argument: the evidence sandwich', *Teaching History*, No. 91, Historical Association.

⁵ Counsell, op. cit., is similarly critical of simplistic models of progression which assume that withdrawal of structure is the way to move pupils on or to stretch high attainers. Such models emerge from too simple an application of Wood's (otherwise very helpful) notion of 'scaffolding' (see David Wood, (1988) *How Children Think and Learn*, Basil Blackwell). In fact, new types of sophistication need to be modelled if skill and understanding are to be developed so that attainment is raised. 'New forms, genres and organisational devices may need to be presented at every stage of learning if pupils are to continue to make progress', (Counsell, op.cit., p.39).

⁶ Any history teacher will find Richard Andrews (1989) *Teaching and Learning Argument*, Open University Press, both theoretically illuminating and practically helpful on these issues.

⁷ See Counsell, op. cit., pp 13 to 15 for a fuller discussion of the function of 'sorting' in teaching pupils to overcome their difficulties in historical analysis. Teachers need to address the fact that many pupils 'have no self-conscious problem-solving strategies for finding or testing order and pattern' (1997, p.15).

⁸ See Jamie Byrom (1998) 'Working with sources: scepticism or cynicism? Putting the story back together again', *Teaching History*, No. 91, Historical Association. 'To allow pupils simply to spot some problems with the sources was to risk encouraging cynical defeatism that the less able can so easily drift into in source-based work' (p.33).

Being ambitious with the CAUSES of the First World War: interrogating inevitability

Gary Howells asks hard questions about typical teaching and assessment of historical causation at Key Stage 3. Popular activities that may be helpful in addressing particular learning areas, or in teaching pupils to use the terminology of causation, are not in themselves evidence of having acquired a 'skill'. Howells invites us to 'think big' about the purposes of teaching about causation and the possibility of helping more pupils not only to understand and explain but to think about the very processes of explanation. Like Mike Gorman and Dale Banham he stresses the importance of a big question in order to keep the pupils focused. He takes apart the stages in his own teaching of causation and shows how he motivates pupils by shining a spotlight on the concept of inevitability. Pupils who have difficulty in remembering and understanding complex information can still find access to challenging historical ideas. Howells outlines some of his principles for ensuring that 'differentiation' does not leave such pupils with a watered down version.

Gary Howells

Introduction

An idea of causation is central to historical understanding. But what does this mean for students? As history teachers, we try to explain why events happened. Yet for children, it is often their mastery of terms such as long term, short term, trigger or spark and their ability to produce a hierarchy of causes that is seen as good evidence of their skill in handling second order concepts such as causation.¹ Some teachers will even shoot straight to a convenient Level Description on the basis of such an 'assessment'! It seems sometimes that we do not go beyond the labelling stage on causation and miss opportunities to construct something meaningful for the students. This is not to suggest that knowing your trigger from your long term cause is not useful. However, we can easily fall back on terminology at the expense of hard and hopefully more fulfilling thought. This article offers some ways by which causation can be made meaningful and vital in the lower secondary school classroom.

Identifying difficulty

Causation is not easy. A passing acquaintance with debates on the origins of the English Civil War or the First World War makes that clear. Postmodern thought further challenges the whole notion of great events and great causes. However, history carries with it (to coin a Birtist phrase) a 'mission to explain', to make comprehensible, somehow, a past which is selective and whose record is unreliable. Old style history teaching would have presented events as having distinct causes and distinct conclusions. We might have written down lists from the board and soaked them in, to be regurgitated as needs be in an examination. The student would have absorbed the tablets of stone uncritically

and would have sought only some clarification. We no longer view such approaches to the teaching and learning of history as tenable. We seek to make lessons engaging and attempt to encourage students to think. Yet what are we attempting to do when we attempt to teach children why events happened?

Acknowledging difficulty is central to the effective teaching of causation. It has recently been acknowledged that extended writing is difficult for students. A range of strategies have been publicised to develop skills in this area, aiming to encourage students to classify and organise their ideas before setting down to writing. Even more significant is the acknowledgment that writing historical essays is not a one-step process. Breaking down the necessary components of the task is central to the successful operation.² To secure understanding of causation similar treatment is required.

Big issues and big questions

The first step is to identify the issue and the question. To say this is to owe much to the SHP Key Stage 3 textbook format, whereby most topics are taught through a key question. Topics are identified as an issue or a controversy, for example, 'how religious were people in the Middle Ages?'³ With causation, we are always dealing with a big question and the question needs to be identified and returned to constantly. If the question is 'Why did the First World War break out in 1914?' the teacher needs to maintain focus on this question throughout the lesson sequence and the significance of the question needs to be brought home. Big questions excite children. They provide purpose and direction to lessons.

Not only does the question need to be identified; the

teaches history at Mill Hill County High School (11-18 Comprehensive) in London. He completed his doctorate (on emigration and the New Poor Law) in 1996. His article, 'For I was tired of England Sir': English pauper emigrant strategies, 1834-60' was recently published in Social History Vol.23 No.2.

nature of the actual event or development needs to be made tangible to the student. There is no point seeking causes for an event which is still abstract or vague to the pupils. There is no point encouraging students to investigate the causes of the Civil War or the First World War if they have no mental picture of those events. Here, visual and audio-visual resources provide excellent starting points.

Using 'long term reasons' to build contextual knowledge

The next step is to create a further layer of knowledge which we could label 'context'. Where the lesson sequence has been built around a big question concerning causation, another way of framing that context is to think of it as long term reasons (and there is no harm in stressing long term reasons as being long term reasons!). Of course, how this is done is dependent upon time constraints, and to some extent the nature of the causes. Causes of an event such as a war or a revolution, need perhaps longer, more detailed treatment than other phenomena. For example to answer the question 'Why were the Arabs so successful?' one could provide a list of reasons or cards of reasons for the students to classify and organise. The teacher may not have a detailed knowledge of Arab military tactics and of the internal politics and history of the countries which the Arabs colonised, yet such an approach for Islamic civilisation is one way in which studying causation is often used to provide a stimulating overview of historical trends and developments.

Long term causes have compelling explanatory power. With some students, a knowledge of these factors might be sufficient to bridge an introduction to the main event. Whilst life in the English Civil War might be viewed, by some, as a more appealing subject than a detailed understanding of its causes, sometimes long term causes themselves can act as the motivational 'hook'. The long term causes of the Civil War - royal abuse of power, financial problems, religious divisions and the difficulty of ruling England, Ireland and Scotland - provide sufficient explanatory power to explain the bitterness and length of the English Civil War. Taught this way, studying long term causes offers one way to provide an overview.

How the long term causes are established can involve a whole manner of teaching methods, yet among the array of techniques on offer there are some common principles for success. The challenges for teacher are twofold and sometimes difficult to hold in tandem: how to maintain focus on the big question to which the individual tasks contribute, and, at the same time, how to encourage pupil ownership of the enquiry. Activities requiring mini-summaries or mini-analyses of long-term factors displayed on tables and charts work best when they attend to both of these aims. Such activities keep the students focused on the big question and encourage the students to link in their minds the different factors. Furthermore, tables and

charts provide focus and shape to an enquiry as well as providing an important role in consolidating knowledge and understanding.⁴

Encouraging the students to try to come to their own assessment of the potential significance of a cause is particularly important. My own experience suggests that this notion of 'significance' must inform the learning objectives at some point in the lesson sequence if pupils are to be involved in claiming ownership of the enquiry. For all the fact that it is historically problematic, giving each causal factor a mark out of 10 for perceived significance, or ranking the factors in order, forms a good stimulus for purposeful paired discussion. Whatever the technique, the learning we are looking for is for pupils (using either their own or given criteria) to find some understanding, through application, of the notion of 'significance'.

Linking the long and the short

However, unless one focusses on the immediate outbreak of the event and attempts to relate it to the long term causes, a more sophisticated and perhaps more meaningful appreciation of causation is ignored. Recent revisionist work has criticised the determinism of historians who concentrated unduly on the long term causes and saw civil war as on the cards by 1640 (if not far earlier). The key point is to establish how two sides developed from 1640-2, or in other words how on earth Charles I was able to raise support. The SHP presentation of the subject has assimilated this revisionist perspective and provides detailed and questioning treatment of the period 1640-2.⁵ By breaking down the narrative of the events of 1640-2, and by suggesting ebbs and flows of opinion, the teacher creates an ideal opportunity to introduce students to the notion of inevitability, which is central to an appreciation of causation in any meaningful sense. Central to any sophisticated appraisal of causation is the ability to formulate an idea of not just why something happened, but why it happened when it did.

In other words, this means understanding the trigger and attempting to connect the spark with the broader issues. On one level this sounds quite sophisticated. However, deciding on a key concept and tenaciously holding to that concept sharpens the teaching focus. This brings us back to big questions. A clearly defined question, such as 'Was the First World War bound to happen?' provides the direction which will reap good results. The wording of the question, by hinting at inevitability, contains within it a suggestion that 'long' is competing with 'short' for attention. For successful results, the children should be involved in this big question from the very beginning. If placed to the fore of the classroom discourse (and on the lesson sheet, on the board, on the wall) it offers them a direction and a focus. It helps them to connect the longer term and the 'big' story with the immediate and the small.

Keeping 'inevitability' to the fore

The assassination at Sarajevo is an event rich in colour

studying the
causes of
World War
I offers the
opportunity
of studying
more than one
question of
inevitability

as well as being the great exemplifier of the cock-up theory of history. The amateurish youths of the Black Hand Society, incompetent and unprepared for the job, failing not only to kill Franz Ferdinand but also themselves, until finally the driver of the car tried to U-turn after taking a wrong turning because no one had told him that the route had been changed, thus giving Princip his chance, is a story worth telling in its own right. Subjected to analysis, the story immediately allows the students to gain some sense of chance, some sense of how easily the assassination could have been avoided. Furthermore, the value of stories as a stimulus for students should not be underestimated. There is no conflict between telling, reading or constructing stories and encouraging an analytical and questioning approach to the past.⁶ To encourage careful reading of the story we can ask students to mark on the text examples of the Black Hand Society being badly organised; and then, in a second colour, the circumstances, which, if changed, could have prevented the assassination.

Having considered the episode in depth and having given the students the opportunity physically to claim the story as their own, by marking their own opinions on it, the teacher can then clinch the message by returning to the question of inevitability. Was the assassination inevitable and then was the war inevitable? Asking the same questions at different points in the lesson or lesson sequence and allowing the students to track the changes in their own answers again places ownership in the hands of the student and gives them a sense of making their own decisions. We can teach them to track their own thinking.

Speculation and possibility - letting the lower attainer play too

Having formed an opinion on whether the assassination was inevitable, we can move to the actual outbreak of the war itself. Here, again, we want to encourage the students to speculate and to think and to try to see that other sequences of events could have happened. A simple presentation of the different steps and responses to the assassination can receive various treatments depending on the ability of the students.⁷ Some students only need to look at each step to the war and then they are able to work out how war might have been avoided if countries had acted differently. Then they can try to evaluate which step was the most important in causing war, and finally face the question of whether or not the assassination of Franz Ferdinand made war inevitable. However, other students will need more support in order to reach the same level of thinking. Thinking counterfactually is not easy. It is difficult enough to get students to imagine what has happened without trying to work out what might not have happened! Steps to war, to the historian, can be readily assimilated. The historian has the familiarity born from experience of how one step might elicit one reaction. With most students we must constantly attend to and remediate their lack of knowledge.

Simple questions referring to each step can kill two learning problems with one stone. The right questions will both familiarise the student with the steps to war and direct them to think counterfactually. For the least able, even a creative 'filling in the gaps' can form an effective summative, reinforcing exercise. The broad point is that in order to encourage students to think we should not eschew what might be deemed 'lower order' tasks, as long as they are fitted into a broader analytical framework. We need to build their knowledge steadily whilst keeping an eye on the broader purpose, which is to encourage some imaginative and creative thought. Often students will only take this approach if they are confident with the material.

Exploring inevitability

Once familiarity and confidence is assured we can then move to considering the steps to the war in relation to the broader (and ultimately key) question of inevitability. We could, after all, leave the exercise there and launch into a study of the war. Hopefully the students have some appreciation of whether the assassination made the war inevitable and have viewed the reactions of the great powers as the key. But there remains a deeper question. Why did great powers react as they did? In effect, studying the causes of World War I offers the opportunity of studying more than one question of inevitability. One question is, 'Was the assassination inevitable?'. Then once the assassination has taken place, 'Was war inevitable?' Finally there is the deeper question of whether war was inevitable regardless of the above events. The circumstances surrounding the outbreak of World War I offer the opportunity to interrogate the notion of inevitability. By constantly returning to that one question, students are encouraged to explore an identical question in different contexts which provides the opportunity for rigorous thought and, ideally, a sophisticated notion of causation which extends far beyond classifying events or factors as short term, long term or trigger.

If we leave the study with the steps to war we have the long term causes and the trigger, but we do not have a dynamic notion of people's attitudes and preoccupations at the beginning of World War I. We have no meaningful context as to how the idea of war fitted into the general historical framework. Why did people gaily step onto the World War I roller coaster? An answer which involves the death of the archduke, some awareness of the Balkans, the arms race and scramble for Africa would be adequate. Yet somehow the ideas of the participants are lost. Can we place the assassination within a more meaningful context and encourage the students (in Year Nine) to take on board a bit of the Fischer thesis?⁸

Try presenting students with three paraphrased attitude boxes of the German generals, German politicians and all generals (see Figure 1). Figure 1 contains crude paraphrases, but they present a broader perspective and present the context within which the war started. Having equipped the students to think whether war was inevitable as a direct consequence of the assassination,

Can we
encourage
Year Nine to
take on board
a bit of the
Fischer thesis?

we can now present sources which argue the opposite. Again, we are encouraging them to think and to think about big questions. Causation is shown as complex and shifting.

So what is the end product? Have the students a better idea of causation than they had before (whatever that might mean)? Could they connect boxes to identify what led to what?⁹ One would hope so. But such a reductionist outcome is hardly the total purpose. Hopefully they have a sound idea of why one major event happened, but they also have a more complex idea of causation. By staging the enquiry and using short steps we have ensured access for all students.¹⁰ Yet we have also, by the nature the big issues being highlighted and the questions being asked, offered more than enough challenge.

The broad point is to ensure that pupils achieve meaningful understanding. As history teachers, we need to aim for meaningful outcomes. These outcomes need to be conceived as something broader than the immediate confines of the lesson. Concepts are difficult to teach. Inevitability might not seem an immediate concept at the top of the list. However, by determining to address one key term and by tenaciously holding on to that term a direction and purpose can be found to planning and students can be encouraged to think and express their views. As with all historical skills most students do not learn by osmosis. They need explicit direction and the opportunity to develop their thinking through concrete examples and over time. Furthermore, in teaching new concepts or developing thinking on concepts we should not expect total success, amenable to easy measurement, in terms of conceptual

Figure 1: Taking on board the Fischer thesis. These paraphrases will introduce students to a broader perspective.

1. GERMAN GENERALS

Germany has a strong army at the moment. It is expensive to keep the army at such high numbers. The Russian army is getting bigger and stronger. At some stage we will have war with the Russians. It is better to fight Russia now than later. Anyway, war will be quick.

2. GERMAN POLITICIANS

Workers are complaining too much and want to have a say in the running of the government. A good quick war will teach people loyalty to the country and will shut the protesters up.

3. ALL GENERALS

War is very complicated. The most important thing is to get all our troops to the front line as quickly as possible. To do this we must rely on complicated train time-tables. Once we start ordering troops to the front we must carry on with our plans. To change plans could cause a disaster because other countries might take advantage of the confusion. It is better to be safe than sorry. Anyway, war will be quick.

understanding. Yet that is no reason for not attempting to encourage an appreciation of those ideas. We persist, and return to those same concepts at a later date.¹¹

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- ¹ I use the term 'second order' concept to describe the large organising concepts of the discipline such as causation or change, as opposed to 'substantive' concepts such as 'kingship', 'parliament' or 'settlement'.
- ² School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, (1997) *Extended Writing in Key Stage 3 History*, SCAA
- ³ More recently, see the Longman Key Stage 3 series, *Think Through History* which makes the enquiry more explicit and also more developed.
- ⁴ Ben Walsh's textbooks, and especially his GCSE *Modern World* (1997) textbook, published by John Murray, are excellent examples of how summary tables which students return to at the end of each subsection of a topic can keep the student's eye on the big picture.
- ⁵ Shepard, C., Hinton, C., Hite, J. and Lomas, T. (1992) *Societies*

in *Change*, John Murray, pp. 46-9. This could have been lifted straight from work by Anthony Fletcher or Conrad Russell. That is not a criticism. It shows how text book writing can still allow students to engage with recent historical work.

⁶ Hake C., and Haydn, T., (1995) 'Sources or stories?' in *Teaching History*, No. 78, The Historical Association.

⁷ By this I mean that I suggest a list of steps. For example: Step 1: Austria takes its time to react. Germany secretly tells Austria it will support it whatever it decides (and so on).

⁸ Broadly speaking, Fischer argues that the Germans were planning war and that the assassination was but a convenient excuse.

⁹ Lee, P. J., Ashby R. and Dickinson A.K. (1996). 'Progression in children's ideas about history.' In M. Hughes (ed.), *Progression in Learning* (pp.50-81). Clevedon, Bristol (PA) and Adelaide: Multilingual Matters.

¹⁰ This notion of stepped or scaffolded learning owes something to Wood, D., (1988) *How Children Think and Learn*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

¹¹ For example the same styles of thinking and analysis could be repeated and developed through work on 'Why did Germany lose the war?'

The 'structured enquiry' is not a contradiction in terms: focused teaching for

Mike Gorman uses the language of the National Curriculum Order to describe and analyse his practice. Yet he throws down a challenge to those who use it uncritically rather than interpreting it to make their own meaning. Like Dale Banham, he sees Key Elements 4 and 5 as virtually omnipresent, needing an explicit relationship with other objectives in all our planning, and an explicit teaching focus almost all of the time. Gorman chooses to conceptualise Key Elements 4 and 5 differently from the National Curriculum rubric and he shows how this works in his detailed planning. Mike Gorman's main theme, however, is the creative tension between structure and independence in teaching the practice of historical enquiry. He adds his voice to the many now alerting us to the fact that pupils will not become 'independent learners' just by being given more independence. Instead, his piece is driven by a paradox: in his quest to make pupils independent, he draws the role of the teacher all the more sharply and strongly, suggesting that teachers need very tight thinking about conceptual areas and learning stages. He builds a model for enquiry work which, used repeatedly, will teach pupils to enquire on their own. Finally, notice too, the effects of other thinking about progression in his department coming through. The linked Key Element for his case-study enquiry is 2b (causation). By Year Nine the pupils are confident in framing certain types of question about causality. Why? Because they have done it before and the teachers remind them of this. This article will be an invaluable stimulus for history departments reviewing their policies on progression (and not just in 'enquiry skills') and developing teaching strategies, across the 11 to 16 curriculum, for meeting more demanding targets at GCSE.

Michael Gorman

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Introduction: the Key Elements revisited

Curriculum planning in history was once aptly described as a 'cosmic marriage between content and skills'. Now, three years since Dearing and with the National Curriculum review well underway, can we say that the marriage has been consummated? All too often the Key Elements are treated in textbooks and lessons as free-standing skills to be learned at different times in a Study Unit and in isolation from one another. They are not always reassembled into a coherent process which defines the historian's craft in a way that will allow pupils to see it in its entirety. The problem, and the solution, I believe reside in Key Elements 4 and 5. These state:

Key Element 4

- to investigate independently aspects of the periods
- studied, using a range of sources of information, including documents and printed sources, artefacts, pictures, photographs and films, music and oral accounts, buildings and sites;
 - to ask and answer significant questions, to evaluate sources in their historical context, identify sources for an investigation, collect and record information relevant to a topic and reach conclusions.

Key Element 5

- to recall, select and organise historical information,
- including dates and terms;
 - to organise their knowledge and understanding of history through the accurate selection and deployment of terms necessary to describe and explain the periods and topics studied including government, parliament, Church etc...
 - to communicate their knowledge and understanding of history, using a range of techniques, including extended narratives and descriptions, and substantiated explanations.

If we treat the components separately, they create a comprehensive but muddled definition of the historian's craft. Why, for example, would anyone ask questions after independent investigation, as is implied in Key Element 4? Key Element 4a seems quite unnecessary and has contributed to the 'How useful is source B?' phenomenon in numerous text books. Surely it makes more sense if it is all reworked as follows:

- to ask significant questions
- to identify and evaluate sources of information, both primary and secondary

3. to collect and record information
4. to reach conclusions
5. to communicate knowledge and understanding

This accords with any academic definition of historical research. Marwick, for example, states that 'research means diligent and scholarly investigation in all the available primary and secondary sources... in order to extend human knowledge in a particular area'.¹ In school terms, we may interpret this a little differently: we make a judicious selection of the evidence so that pupils can cope with it, and we seek to extend our

have all too often been obliged to engage in the game-playing characterised by such dire GCSE exam questions as 'Source A is a cartoon. Source B is a diary extract. Which is more useful to the historian for finding out about working children?' To answer such questions pupils have had to learn an alien logic, isolated from a complete reasoning process which history ought to be teaching them.

With the loosening up the curriculum in primary schools, the implication of the national literacy strategy and the revision of the national curriculum for 2000, perhaps now is a good time to re-examine that cosmic marriage once again and to see how skills,

Figure 1: Study Unit 3: Britain 1750-1900

Enquiry Question	Key Elements developed	Outcome
How did Britain change 1750-1900?	1. Chronology 2a. Characteristic features	Timeline
What difference did this inventor/entrepreneur make?	2b. Consequence 2d. Significance	Role Play
Why did Britain have an industrial revolution?	2b. Causation 2c. Links 2d. Significance	Extended writing
Why was there so much disease in nineteenth century towns?	2b. Causation 2c. Links 2d. Significance	Explanation diagram
The Great Exhibition - whose history?	3. Interpretation	Extended writing
Why was the slave trade abolished in 1807?	2b. Causation 3. Interpretation	Debate

pupils' knowledge and understanding, but the process is essentially the same. Good practice in history is asking pertinent questions, undertaking research and communicating your findings.

A crucial word in the Key Stage 3 'Key Elements' is 'independent'. Good history teachers seek to help pupils to become increasingly autonomous investigators so that the support we give them at each stage becomes less and less necessary. Indeed, this is surely one of the principle aims of education. Making this happen in the classroom is by no means easy. A highly prescriptive national curriculum, a powerful inspection regime and the demands of GCSE can, in Ruth Sutton's words, 'have an impact on our teaching which may make learning less effective in our schools'.² The preoccupation with source analysis in history has reinforced this as McAleavy powerfully argued in the last edition of *Teaching History*.³ Pupils

content and independent learning can be combined successfully.

Historical enquiry as a basis for planning

Prior to my appointment as adviser for history and geography in Wiltshire, I was Head of Humanities at Westfield Community School in Yeovil, Somerset. My colleague Hilary Mozley and I decided to revise the Key Stage 3 curriculum so each Study Unit became a series of enquiries. Each enquiry would be planned around the interpretation of Key Elements 4 and 5 discussed above, and each enquiry would emphasise one or more of Key Elements 1, 2 and 3, as determined by the important and motivating historical issues. Developing independent learning skills was a necessary ingredient too. An example of part of the resulting Year Nine curriculum is shown in Figure 1.

Pupils have all too often been obliged to engage in the game-playing characterised by direct GCSE exam questions

The same approach was used in Years Seven and Eight. Each enquiry followed the same pattern but each one was carried out in different ways, according to the issues being investigated. The teaching process for historical enquiry, informed by the continuous, integrated use of Key Elements 4 and 5, is summed up in Figure 2.

The five stages shown in Figure 2 were not a rigid template: good learning takes place when layers of understanding are built up by pupils through the teacher's careful planning and sequencing of successive learning objectives. This meant that steps two and three tended to be recursive, allowing the pupils to develop understanding of different parts of a larger enquiry before proceeding to crucial steps four and five. We were also firmly convinced in the view that pupils do not become independent learners by being allowed to undertake their own research more or less unsupervised. In what almost sounds like a contradiction in terms we wanted to structure the pupils' enquiry work so they would learn all the necessary historical skills to use that structure independently themselves.

A case study: Why did a murder lead to war in 1914?

All of this is best explained by reference to a case study. The causes of World War One is a difficult issue to

teach and yet little sense can be made of the mass slaughter of that war without it. Year Nine pupils need to grapple with difficult issues like this and it is good preparation for GCSE.

Step One: ask significant questions

In order to stimulate interest we read an account of the assassination and role-played key points in the story to our Year Nine classes. To add dramatic effect, I displayed pictures of the events on OHTs and played 'Mars' by Holst. We then had a brief look at the first few minutes of 'All Quiet on the Western Front' which shows a typically ferocious scene from a battle. I pointed out that all of Europe was at war within a few weeks of this murder. We then went into discussion about what questions we should ask about these events, and whether the assassination alone could explain it. Here, prior learning (achieved from planning for progression through repetition) was critically important. From day one in Year Seven, pupils were used to looking for multiple causes for events in history and they were used to coming up with 'why' questions. They did not take long, therefore, to arrive at their 'big' enquiry question: How could this one murder lead to such a dreadful war?

Pupils made several suggestions as to lines of enquiry such as finding out more about the Archduke and/or

Figure 2: A teaching process for historical enquiry

Enquiry Stage	Purposes
1. To ask significant questions we need to four things: be asked, ideally summed up in one 'big' question	The starting point of the enquiry is the most important stage. Here do 1. Engage the pupils' interest 2. Identify the questions to 3. Plan the enquiry 4. Describe the outcome and
2. To identify and evaluate sources of information, both primary and secondary	Here pupils decide which sources are useful, which are not and which have to be treated with caution.
3. To collect and record information	Here pupils make notes from their sources in readiness for the next two stages.
4. To reach conclusions their	Through reflection and discussion, pupils should now be able to decide what answer to the enquiry question is.

finding out about other tensions that might exist in Europe. Even so, this was an unfamiliar area for them and, unlike a number of other topics, they needed more structure from the teacher in order to proceed successfully. We agreed that we needed to investigate the countries of Europe in the years before 1914. We would have to see what interest these countries had in the events in Sarajevo.

- Cut and sequence questions into a sensible order for an enquiry, discarding the relevant ones;
- Choose from a suggestion list provided by the teacher; give the pupils criteria for the choice so that they think, explicitly, about why they are choosing particular questions or types of questions;

Figure 3: Chart to help pupils select and record relevant information

COUNTRY	ENEMIES	SUSPICIONS	AMBITIONS	POWER
RATING 1 - 5 1 = VERY WEAK 2 = VERY STRONG				
Give your reasons!				
GERMANY				
FRANCE				
AUSTRIA- HUNGARY				
RUSSIA				

I told them that they would be producing an essay by a set deadline which would count towards their end of Year Nine 'Level' assessment. We found this tactic to be great motivator in Year Nine. It lent gravity to their work and made it sound like GCSE. Also, the pupils' motivation was enhanced by the fact that they could envision the end product.⁴ This approach to starting an enquiry worked successfully elsewhere. Other motivating starting points have included:

- A detailed picture of an unusual scene, or a portrait
- Story
- Description of some gruesome facts
- Looking at artefacts
- Outside visitor
- Hot seating of a character by the teacher

In order to keep general class discussion focused, the following methods are useful for generating questions from pupils:

- Brainstorm questions onto large sheets of paper, circulate it to other groups who add more and then return to the first group;

Step Two: identify and evaluate sources of information, both primary and secondary

AND

Step Three: collect and record information

The next history learning objective was to establish an understanding of the interests of each of the Great Powers in Europe in the years before 1914; the next enquiry objectives were to locate, select and record relevant information. For this I provided the pupils with a chart for positioning their information.⁵ This is shown in Figure 3.

This approach again gave structure to their independent learning. Pupils were provided with a wide variety of primary and secondary sources. They had to work in pairs to locate the ones that were most useful and accessible, and then to select and record the necessary information in the chart. Their evaluation of the sources had a purpose and pupils could apply an analytical logic to them, rather than having to evaluate them out of context. This had been an important part of our interpretation of the Key Stage 3 curriculum requirements, and so pupils were able to do this reasonably well by this stage in Year Nine.

For pupils who experienced difficulty with selecting and recording information we photocopied the relevant pages of accessible books and got them to highlight, in different colours, key words and phrases that helped them fill in the chart. Lower attainers can learn all the same principles; they simply need information on a much smaller scale so that they can see the wood for the trees. Other data capture and data processing methods we have used to teach pupils to learn from texts are:

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------|
| WHEELS OR CYCLES | VENN DIAGRAM |
| MAPS | FLOW CHART |
| MIND MAPS | FACT FILE |
| LABELLED PICTURES | SUMMARIES |
| DIAGRAMS | ROLE PLAY |

Role play is a particularly useful tool to embed learning by shifting it into another context away from reading and writing. After the charts had been completed the pupils then staged arguments between representatives of different countries about key issues, for example about the opposing armed camps. This deepened their understanding of each country's perspective and so prepared them for the penultimate stage.

Step Four: reach conclusions

The pupils were clearly developing opinions as they worked on the charts and on the role play. Their new understanding had to be reassembled and brought to bear on the original enquiry question they had set themselves. This was achieved through another chart and plenty of discussion. The new chart is shown in Figure 4.

Pupils were able to complete the chart using their new knowledge and could see the deeper reasons behind the actions of the different powers in the days and weeks before the outbreak of war. To reinforce the learning further we set up another quick role play in which each pupil was again put in role as a representative of each country. They had to defend their actions during June, July and August, first in pairs and then in groups of six. Other methods we have used to get pupils to draw conclusions include card sorting exercises and the creation of large diagrams on sugar paper to which the whole class could refer in the final stage.

Step Five: communicate knowledge and understanding

This final stage is crucial as it cements the pupils' learning. It is tempting to leave out this stage as one could argue that the pupils had answered the question by the end of stage four. I would argue that there are several good reasons for requiring the pupils to show their understanding in one final piece of work. First, having to recount your knowledge and understanding helps to reinforce it. Many teachers may well have shared my experience of having learned far more history by having to teach it than just by learning it at university. Secondly, it makes sense to produce a single answer to a single question. After all, that is what historians do, whilst acknowledging the tentative nature of their conclusions. Thirdly pupils can have a goal to aim for if they can picture it from the outset of the enquiry. Finally, a well produced piece of work at the end of a detailed study marks an ending point in which the pupil can feel some pride, and a starting

Figure 4

DATE REASONS	EVENT	IMMEDIATE REASON	OTHER, BIGGER REASON
June 28 th	Murder at Sarajevo		
July 28 th	Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia		
August 1 st	Germany declared war on Russia		
August 3 rd	Germany declared war on France		
August 4 th	Britain declared		

point for making progress with a future, comparable piece of work.

How, then, do we get pupils to produce a piece of work that will engender pride? In this particular enquiry we wanted the pupils to produce a piece of extended writing. Having drawn their conclusions we discussed how we could go about organising the answer. Those who needed it were provided with a basic writing frame; others organised their work themselves. The writing frame was set out as follows:

In this essay I am going to explain...

There were many reasons for this.

The most important reason was...

Another important reason was...

In addition...

Furthermore...

In conclusion...

But an enquiry does not have to culminate in a piece of extended writing. Other motivating outcomes for enquiries could include advertisement, instruction manual, film storyboard, theme park design, boardgame, debate, TV show format, diagram or role play. What matters is that the final outcome, first, requires pupils to draw the threads of the enquiry together and to engage in some analysis of the problem as a whole; second, that it is substantial and significant, motivating and meaningful for the pupils. They need to feel that they have reached some worthwhile resolution, albeit one that is full of tentative and provisional conclusions.

The finished essays about the outbreak of the war demonstrated many things to the teachers and to the pupils. They had achieved a sound level of understanding of a difficult topic in a comparatively short space of time. They had investigated, discussed and written about the complex interplay of factors and recognised how the 'spark' of the assassination led to war. In so doing, they had evaluated sources for a particular purpose. Kate's earlier learning allowed her to assert that,

'Each of the Great Powers had reason to suspect their enemies. Germany was suspicious of France, Russia and Great Britain because they were all members of the Triple Entente and encircled Germany and could attack on three fronts.'

Later she concludes - unwittingly drawing the same conclusions as Fischer!

'I feel that the main reason for the war was Germany. Germany wanted everything...It had a brilliant naval structure, good weapons and a large army. I think that Germany had been planning for European dominance and the murder of the Archduke was just an excuse to CHARGE.'

Not quite the crisp eloquence of an AJP Taylor, but Kate has an opinion based on her interpretation of the evidence. Tom concluded differently:

'All the great European powers of 1914 had been intimidating each other for years and stirring up trouble. They all felt threatened and had reason to go to war... In conclusion I would say the murder of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand started a little war between Austria-Hungary and Serbia which was the 'cue' for all the big countries to start fighting.'

In their seminal work on children's literacy, Lewis and Wray concluded that:

*'Context is crucial. We strongly believe, and our work has confirmed this to us, that children learn best when they learn in meaningful contexts, through authentic activities.'*⁶

By structuring historical enquiries and by getting pupils to move through all of the five stages we can teach pupils the skills of independent investigation, help them to evaluate sources in their context and so allow them to arrive at individual and legitimate conclusions about past events.

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¹Marwick, A. (1986) Introduction to History, The Open University

²Sutton, R. (1995) Assessment for Learning, RS Publications

³McAleavy, A. (1998) 'The use of sources in school history 1910-1988: a critical perspective' in Teaching History, No.91.

⁴As Robert Powell states: '...students will be more motivated, will work harder, will understand more, will transfer learning to new contexts if a clear purpose is established from the beginning. Furthermore, if students are aware...of the product that they may eventually produce, then the motivation and performance can be enhanced still further.' Powell, R., (1997) Raising Achievement, Robert Powell Publications

⁵See Taylor, C. and Temple, G.(1997) Combating Copying, Devon Learning Resources. Taylor and Temple provide a wonderful array of 'data capture' devices. These charts, tables, diagrams and headings provide a variety of organising tools which, used regularly, and discussed fully with the teacher, begin to equip pupils to choose or design their own.

⁶Lewis, M., and Wray, D. (1997) Extending Literacy: Children Reading and Writing Non-Fiction, Routledge. Lewis and Wray's work is essential reading for all secondary school history teachers.

Minimalist cause boxes for maximal learning: one approach to the Civil War in Year 8

Ian Gibson and Susan McLelland describe their work using cause boxes. They identify the type of historical learning that they felt was taking place and the range of factors which they judged to be critical in making it happen. Work with the cause boxes was carefully positioned within a sequence of learning with close attention to the role of pupils' prior knowledge. Pupil pairings and groupings were chosen in order to increase the opportunity for focussed and purposeful talk. Whilst this type of 'cardsorting' is now extremely common, what is distinctive and interesting here, is the use of very brief wording on the cards. Many teachers use phrases or sentences in order to help pupils to construct causal webs, see relationships or build an argument. Gibson and McLelland simply use names or substantive concepts, thus making the 'cause' less obvious. This simplifies the task in some respects whilst creating new kinds of challenge in others. Absolutely clear about where they wanted that challenge to be, the learning reaches a crescendo with pupils highly engaged and competing with each other, determined to find the most defensible historical links. Gibson and McLelland conclude by anticipating much transfer of learning into other historical problems and settings, as pupils progress into post-14 work.

The History Department at Lochinvar School set out to develop the Key Elements of 'chronology', 'range and depth of historical knowledge and understanding', 'historical enquiry' and 'organisation and communication' through a research project for Year 8 (12 and 13 year olds) on the causes of the Civil War. More specifically, the project aimed to develop pupils' understanding of the political, economic and religious reasons for events and to show how these are usually inter-linked. This seemed an ambitious and challenging set of aims but the impetus to carry them out came from a day conference on accelerated learning.¹

The two classes involved were in Year 8 and were mixed in ability and gender. Pupils had studied James I but knew little or nothing about Charles I. The first part of the study therefore centred on a history role-play. This was designed to build sound knowledge on the events leading up to the Civil War by means of active, critical reflection. Four characters from the period are identified and pupils are given a brief biography of each of the four. Each class was divided into groups of four, mixed in ability and gender, by the teacher. The pupils assumed a character each and were then read a news item from the period. The news items are in the textbooks but pupils were not

given them, as it was part of the ongoing development of listening skills. The pupils have to decide whether their character is happy, displeased or not affected by each news bulletin and award points on a 1-5 scale accordingly. They then have to explain their point of view to the other members of the group.

Everyone is forced to speak and listen. Five news items are read in total and the characters then decide on the level of their pleasure or displeasure with the King and his actions. The groups were then changed to allow all pupils with the same character to discuss whether or not they had made the same decisions. This phase of the project lasted for one hour and provided pupils with background knowledge. This type of activity can be shared with the English department as part of teaching and assessment of speaking and listening.

The next phase was to develop a more in-depth knowledge and understanding of the causes of the Civil War. The pupils were divided into pairs or threes of mixed ability and gender.² Each pair or trio was given an A3 sheet of paper divided into twelve equal boxes. Each box had a very brief historical reference written in it which could stand for a 'cause' of the Civil War, such as 'Ship Money', 'Scotland', 'the Queen', 'Puritans' etc. Pupils then had access to textbooks and

Ian Gibson and Susan McLelland

Ian Gibson is Headteacher and Susan McLelland Head of History at Lochinvar School, an 11 to 16 comprehensive school in Longtown, Cumbria.

Figure 1:

Using structured activities pupils sorted, linked and ultimately extended the twelve

William Laud	Earl of Strafford	William Prynne
Scotland	Duke of	Members of
Henrietta Maria	John Hampden	The King's spending
The Puritans	The Law	Ship Money

a limited time to find out as much as they could about why each cause made the King unpopular.

This proved to be a really successful exercise. The pupils remained on task, worked well together and were clearly learning a great deal in terms of historical content. We did consider that twelve causes might be too many for the less able but the careful selection of pupils for the pairings meant that it was not an issue. This research phase lasted two lessons, that is, two hours with each class being stopped regularly to share information on what had been learned so far or where they had found certain evidence. With hindsight, the pairs could have been doubled up to share information and this might have speeded up this phase.

The third phase was to identify whether the causes were political, religious or economic. Pupils quickly recognised that the same cause could come under more

than one heading. The grids were then photocopied and then the originals cut out.

Now pupils were ready for the final phase. At this stage the squares were used in a variety of different ways:

- Sort into short term and long term causes
- See which causes can be classified under more than one heading
- See how many causes can be linked to tell a story which follows sequentially.

The linking exercise proved particularly successful with one class. Pupils were initially asked to try to link any three and explain how and why they were linked. They then attempted to add as many more as possible and again had to be able to justify the links. Some were able to link all twelve. This could form

It encourages
brief but
accurate
note-
making and
discourages
copying from
books

the basis of an extended piece of writing with each cause being the basis of a short paragraph. It could be done individually and used for assessment. It can also be adapted to make very good use of the manipulative power of IT.³

The other class particularly enjoyed trying to find as many political causes as possible (then religious, then economic) as this challenged their ingenuity. It also forced them to think deeply about the effects of each cause. They also became very competitive and this encouraged them to try to find out more, which meant that their oral skills were tested to the full. They obviously had the most difficulty in justifying those with the most tenuous links – but they were absolutely determined to do so. This was a really lively lesson with the pupils working to their full capacity and enjoying the challenge.

The value of this research project lies in the variety of different learning opportunities for pupils. They worked in pairs, trios, fours and individually. They discussed, researched, wrote brief notes and more extended pieces. They investigated the variety of links, gained practice in focussed use of evidence and increased their understanding of the period.

The use of squares or grids to gather research information is a technique with which our pupils are becoming increasingly familiar. It encourages brief but accurate note-making and discourages copying from books. This approach is playing a key role in developing extended writing skills as it makes the process more manageable. This approach could be used for the causes of any conflict and it is hoped that pupils will be able to adapt the concepts and ideas for themselves as they progress to the end of Key Stage 3 and into Key Stage 4.

REFERENCES

1 The Accelerated Learning Conference was run by Alastair Smith. See Smith, A., (1996) *Accelerated Learning in the Classroom*, Network Education Press and Smith, A., (1998) *Accelerated Learning in Practice*, Network Education Press.

2 The Cumbria Small Schools Development Group has been doing some work on whether mixed gender groupings really do encourage boys to perform better without having an adverse effect on the performance of girls.

3 The first in the NCET/HA series, *History Using IT* (for the DfEE-funded History and IT Project), has done exactly that. See NCET (1997) *Improving Students' Writing in History using Word Processing*, NCET/HA, available, with disks for all platforms, at £15.00 from the British Educational Communications and Technology Authority.

'A lot of guess work goes on'

Children's understanding of historical accounts

The ESRC-funded Project Chata has collected evidence of children's ideas about the discipline of history and attempted to see if there is any progression in those ideas. Here, Peter Lee describes how Chata has tried to map children's ideas about historical accounts. History teachers (and tutors and managers of history teachers) who are trying to extend and explore the bases of their professional knowledge will find this clear and lively account an invaluable starting point for considering the role of the Chata project, its methods and findings.

Introduction

If you were to ask your students about why historical accounts differ, what would they say? What do you tell them when the issue arises in your teaching (assuming it does)? What do you actually believe yourself? Have you equipped your students with ideas that will help them to make sense of the differences they will encounter in the stories historians tell?

The Chata project wanted to map students' ideas about historical accounts, and if possible to construct a model of progression in those ideas. This paper gives a brief description of how we set about the research, and gives a summary of what we found.

Method

For the first phase of the project, discussed here, the sample of 320 (aged between 7 and 14) was drawn from rural, suburban and urban schools in Essex.

The analysis presented is based on written responses for years 6, 7 and 9, and both written and interview responses for all year 3 children.

We gave students in years 3, 6, 7 and 9 two stories running side-by-side down an A4 page, and asked them questions about the differences, and how it could be possible that there were two different stories about 'the same bit of history'. The same format was used in three different task sets, on three separate occasions. Each task set was based on different content, but the structure and some of the questions were the same for all of them. The two stories on each task set were exactly the same length, each broken into three mini-chapters, and each illustrated by specially drawn cartoons picking out key features of each 'chapter'.

In task set one the pair of stories dealt with the Romans in Britain: they differed in three main ways. First there was a difference in theme. One story focused on

Do we really need to know what students think?

Yes. First, if we don't know about students' ideas, we can't hope to be very effective in changing or developing them. This is nothing to do with being 'child-centred': it's more a matter of taking the 'subject' or discipline of history seriously.

Second, 'interpretation' is enshrined in the National Curriculum. Whatever else it means, it includes differences between historical accounts, and we need to know what students make of such differences.

Third, arguments about the nature of historical accounts are in the forefront of debate about history. They are sometimes coupled with assumptions about the implications for teaching. For example, we are often told that we must disabuse students of any 'certaintist' notions they hold about history. But are students 'certaintist' in the first place? We need to know what ideas our students do have.

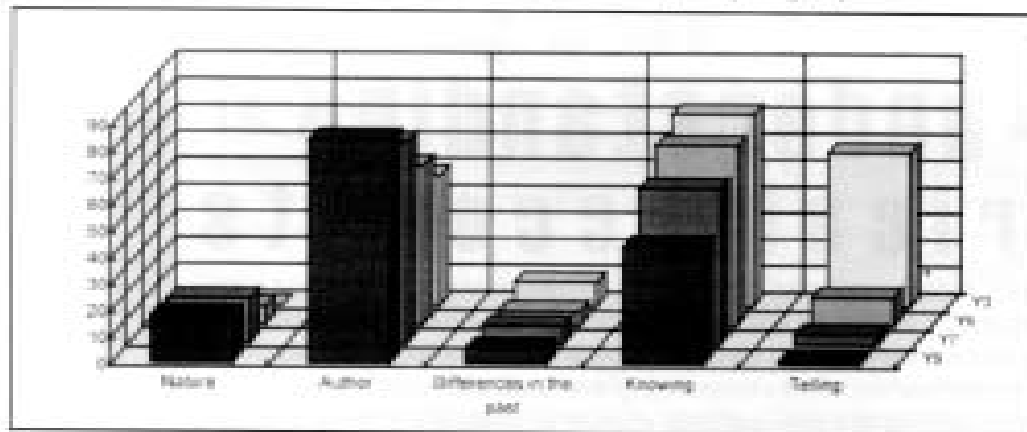
Finally, history looks set for another round of impositions from educational theorists and politicians, this time hoping to use it as a vehicle for citizenship, democracy and patriotism. It is not that history has no role to play here, but there is a danger that in the attempt to make sure history delivers, emphasis will be placed on giving students particular versions of the past, rather than on understanding the kind of game history is. If we want to empower students by giving them a better intellectual toolkit with which to think about the past and the present, we need to know how they think history works.

Peter Lee (History Education Unit, Curriculum Studies Group, University of London Institute of Education) is a member of the Chata project team. Project Chata (Concepts of History and Teaching Approaches at Key Stages 2 and 3) was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. The project team also included Rosalyn Ashby, Manling Chau and Alaric Dickinson.

Peter Lee

only in how the stories are told;

Figure 1. Ideas about differences in accounts: percentages of year groups



(Note that Figures 1 to 4 only register an idea if it appeared on any given child's response on at least two of the three task sets. For 3.75% of the sample, a total of 12 cases, no ideas appeared more than once, so single occurrences were used at the risk of a slight reduction in reliability.)

material life, the other on culture and ideas. Second, the tone of the two stories differed. One stressed improvements in material life for the Britons, and contrasted strife among the Britons before the Romans came with peace afterwards. The other emphasized the cultural achievements of the Britons before the conquest, and told how the Romans imposed their way of life on the Britons. Third, the stories differed in timescale. The first story ended with the Roman withdrawal and its short-term impact on material civilization. The second carried the story forward to end with the survival of Roman ideas in the present. (See Appendix 1.) The same pattern of difference (tone, theme and timescale) was repeated in the pairs of stories from task sets two and three.

The second task set gave students two stories on the end of the Roman Empire. The first of the pair mainly dealt with barbarian invasions, and ended in 476. The second story focused on the organizational problems of running the Empire, and ended in 1453. In task set three the two stories were about Saxon settlement in Britain. One gave a relatively detailed account of the coming of the Saxons, and the other located the settlement in a longer period ending with the establishment of a unified English kingdom.

We asked a range of questions, some of which were repeated across the three task sets. One key issue we wanted to explore was how students and younger children would explain the fact that there could be 'two different stories about the same bit of history', and it is the responses to this that are discussed here.

Analysis

1. The big picture

The ideas students used to explain why stories about 'the same bit of history' could differ fell into five broad categories.

1. The accounts are the same, and any differences are

2. Differences are a result of problems in obtaining knowledge of the past;
3. The stories are about different things, places or times;
4. Differences are a consequence of the accounts being written by different authors;
5. It is in the nature of accounts to be different from one another.

Figure 1 shows how these ideas were distributed between year groups.

Figure 1 suggests that it is possible to think in terms of a progression of ideas in students' understanding of historical accounts.

Young children tended to say that the stories were 'the same', differing only in the telling. Sometimes such ideas seemed to be linked to the classroom experience of being given a story, and having to retell it 'in your own words'. It was as if the story was fixed, and differences arose because people just used different words to tell it (and perhaps ought to do so, or they'd just be copying). Few older students made reference to this idea.

Younger students were more likely than older ones to attribute differences in the stories to knowledge problems (see section 2 below for more details).

- Between 5% and 9% of students said differences between stories must mean that the accounts were about differences in the past. The past is complex, and different accounts mirror that complexity. Ideas of this kind were spread fairly evenly across the age range.

Older students were more likely than younger ones to stress the role of the author in differences between accounts. They treated authors as active agents, in some sense constructing accounts, even if this amounted to no more than compilation. Responses of this kind varied between thinking of the author as imposing an illegitimate and biased view, and seeing selection as a legitimate personal move.

A small proportion of (mainly) year 7 and year 9 students recognized that accounts could not be complete. In this sense they thought that it was in the nature of historical accounts to differ.

One way of looking at the pattern in Figure 1 is to represent it as a broad shift in students' views of historians. From seeing historians as more or

Are 'levels' getting out of hand?

There is a big difference between taking a finished attainment and slicing it arbitrarily into a series of steps, and trying to establish different positive ideas students work with.

In the latter case you can say what the ideas are: they can be characterized in their own right. In the former case grades of response are picked out in terms of failure to meet the final achievement, or by watering down the previous step. So words like 'simple', or 'more fully' stand in for positive description of a self-standing idea.

The ease with which this kind of achievement slicing can be applied (unhelpfully) to almost anything is well illustrated in set of spoof levels devised by a Cambridge History Project cluster group after a hard day with sources on the Ranters from the 17th century.

Some Ranter Levels (with apologies to Lawrence Clarkson)

1. Is sworn at.
2. Can manage simple expletives with assistance.
3. Swears independently on request.
4. Spontaneously generates full-mouthed oaths.

Alternatively, 'levels' are often set out as merely generic descriptions. The SCAA chart supplied to teachers to exemplify 'ascribing significance', and 'interpretations' manages nothing under the first heading except a final goal: 'Assessing the significance of events, people and changes.' There is no indication whatever of any steps towards the goal, and the goal itself is no more than an expansion of the heading. The progression set out under 'Interpretation' is as follows.

Recognizing that there are different evaluating interpretations and relation representations period of the past	Describing and giving reasons for different representations and interpretations	Describing and interpretations	Analysing and analysing i n to their
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The progression here is from recognition, through describing and giving reasons for and describing and analysing, to analysing and evaluating in relation to period. But these are generic descriptors that leave untouched the ideas students and their teachers might need.

If 'levels' are to be useful, they will have to be robust and relatively simple descriptions of ideas students do seem to use. Indicators as to what counts as operating with each of these ideas can then be written by teachers for any particular task and content.

less passive story tellers, handing on ready-made stories or compiling and collating information, they move to thinking of historians as actively producing their stories, whether by distorting them for their own ends or legitimately selecting in response to a choice of theme. A more detailed breakdown of the 'knowledge' and the 'author' categories shows an interesting pattern. The same sort of shift from passive to active is apparent inside these categories as is visible between categories in the overall picture.

2. The 'knowledge' category

Figure 2 shows how

ideas within the broad 'knowledge' category were distributed.

Figure 2. 'Knowledge' by year group: percentages of year groups

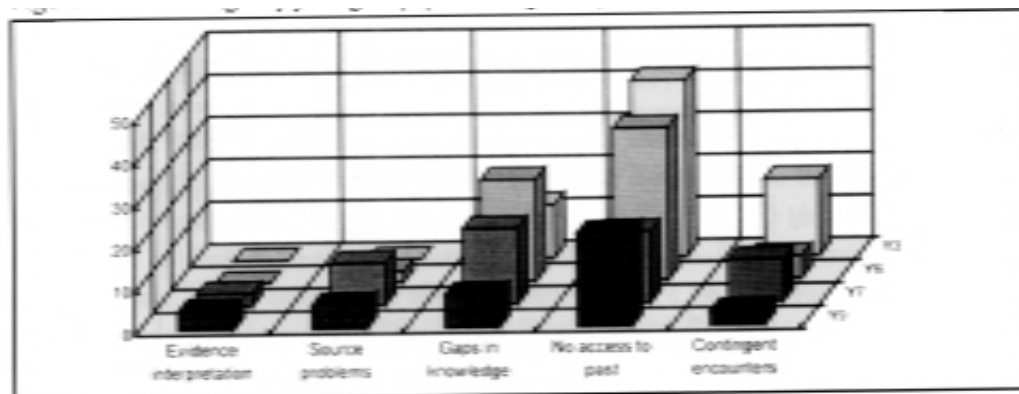
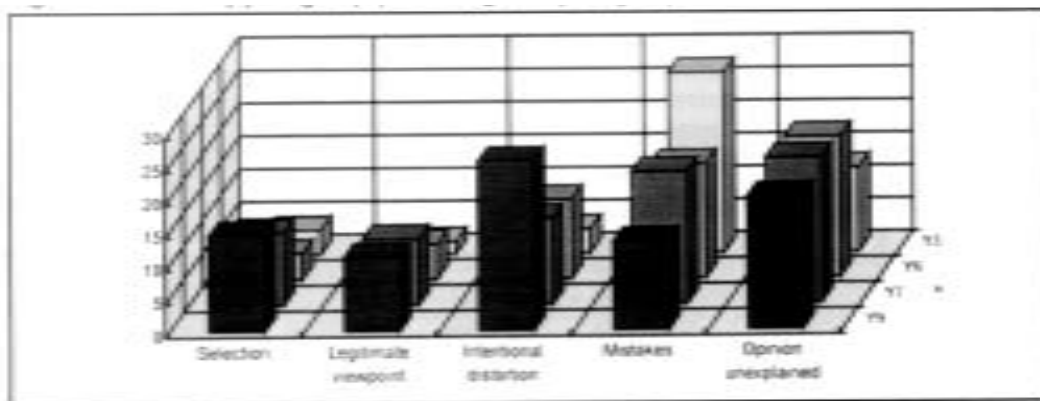


Figure 3. 'Author' by year group: percentages of year groups



In general younger students were more likely to appeal to knowledge problems than older students, but the 'knowledge' category has its own internal structure.

Very young children were more likely to say that differences between accounts were the result of people happening to encounter different books, objects, or stories. We cannot argue from silence here, and say these children had no sense of history as a purposive activity, but if they had, it did not show. Stories seemed more like things in the world that you either bumped into or didn't, and they might just be different.

Year 3 children were also more likely than year 6 students (and much more likely than years 7 or 9) to make repeated mention of problems of access to the past, as if this was all that could be said. (In the words of a year 6 student, 'No-one from them days is alive today'). For year 6 students access problems were still the main issue, but they also stressed gaps in knowledge. Older students sometimes mentioned our lack of direct access to the past, but at the same time tended to mention problems arising from historians' attempts to cope with this problem. (See below.)

A small proportion of students said differences in accounts were a result of transmission errors, mistakes and inaccuracies, or intentional distortion (bias or lies) in the sources. Year 7 students (10%) were most likely to give explanations of this kind. These students clearly thought of history as having a methodology, but were very aware that sources could be problematic.

At year 7 and year 9 (3% and 4.4%) students began to insist that evidence needs interpretation, and that this might explain differences in historical accounts. At this point the role of the author of the account begins to be more important, even if the emphasis is still on the source. (As one year 7 put it, two historians might tell different stories on the basis of the same evidence, 'because they might think that things mean different

things e.g. one might think something was a cooking bowl, the other might think it was for carrying water.'))

3. The 'author' category

Figure 3 shows the age-distribution of ideas about differences attributable to authors.

Older students were more likely than younger ones to see the author as the main source of differences in historical accounts. But, once again, within this broad pattern there was a shift from a more passive to a more active author role.

Year 3 children tended to explain differences in accounts by saying that authors must have made mistakes.

Older students were more likely to put differences in accounts down to intentional distortion by authors (dogmatism, lies and especially bias).

A less frequent explanation of differences, again more common among older students, was that authors hold legitimate viewpoints (without any intentional desire to mislead).

A small number of students used sophisticated ideas about authors operating selection criteria, having theories, or writing from social (not just personal) standpoints. Although year 7 and particularly year 9 students were most likely to refer to these matters, it is worth noticing that two year 3 students gave responses in this category.

In all year groups some students explained differences in accounts in terms of authors' opinions, and gave no further explanation (slightly more than 20% each in years 6, 7 and 9, and about 13% in year 3). Analysis of the use of 'opinion' by those who did explain what they meant suggests that 'opinion' covers a range of different ideas, and that this range follows a similar pattern to the wider progression under discussion here. For example, some students saw 'opinion' as filling in for lack of knowledge, whereas for others it was what authors have when they take sides.

4. The

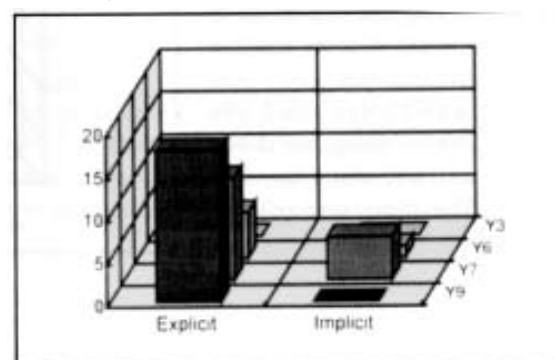


Figure 4. 'Nature' by year group: percentages of year groups



Chata



in a Nutshell

OK, SO IT'S ANOTHER ACRONYM. WHAT'S IT MEAN?



Concepts of History and Teaching Approaches at Key Stages 2 and 3. Chata tried to get a picture of 7 to 14 year-old kids' ideas about history (just over 400 of them in all). That's their ideas about the discipline and how it works, not about peasants or kings or revolutions.

OH, COME ON NUTSHELL! WHAT DO 7 YEAR-OLD KIDS KNOW ABOUT HOW HISTORY WORKS?



And your ideas about time are as good as Einstein's? Understanding's not all or nothing. Most adults' ideas about the world aren't up to expert standards, but they get you around, and some even improve.

OK, BUT YOU'RE NOT TELLING ME MY KIDS HAVE ANY IDEAS ABOUT HOW HISTORY WORKS - BELIEVE ME, THEY DON'T GIVE IT A THOUGHT!



Right, it's not something most kids ponder. But we're talking about tacit ideas, kids' working assumptions. They have to make assumptions about what doing history is, otherwise they can't even begin to do those beautiful worksheets you set them. And some assumptions work better than others.

BIG DEAL! SOME KIDS HAVE BETTER IDEAS THAN OTHERS! YOU MEAN IT'S A RIVAL NATIONAL CURRICULUM ATTAINMENT TARGET?



Yes and no. Chata did look to see if there is a progression of ideas. Do some kids have more powerful ideas than others, and do older kids tend to have more powerful ideas than younger ones? But no, Chata didn't just cook up an end point and then carve it into eight. It collected evidence of what ideas are around. And it's clear that kids' ideas don't all change at the same speed, so just one AT won't do.

WHAT'S A MORE POWERFUL IDEA?



For a kid who thinks we can only know about the past when someone saw what happened and wrote down the truth, history soon becomes impossible. But for another kid who understands that you can make inferences from stuff that wasn't meant to tell anyone anything, history can go on even in the face of lies and bias.

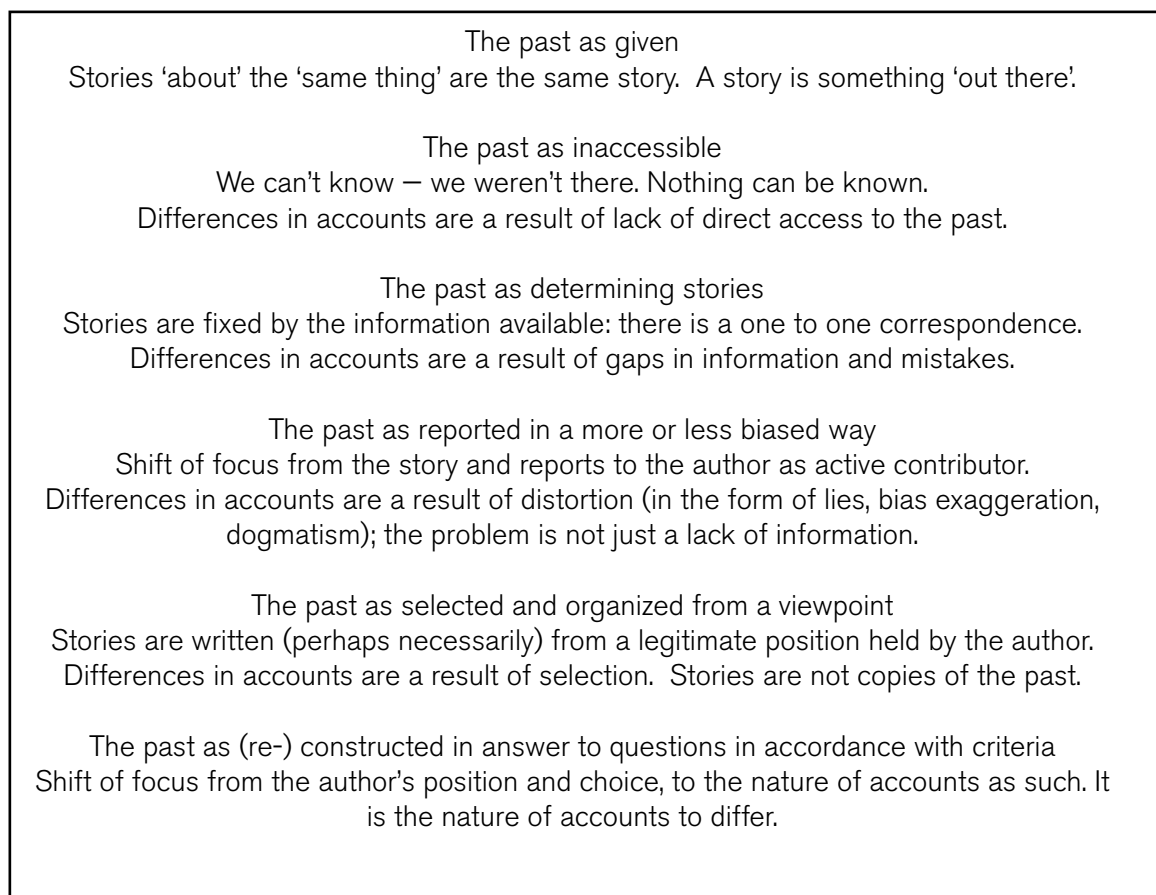
BUT SURELY KIDS' IDEAS AREN'T FIXED?



Chata just mapped the ideas kids happen to have now. Think of the changes in ideas as like sheep-paths or snail tracks; they're the way most kids tend to go. Their ideas are probably just the ones our culture and our teaching set them up with. (Humans might be wired up to make certain assumptions about the past, but that's too big a question yet. A Chata follow-up looking at kids' ideas about history outside England is on the drawing board.)

SO WHAT DID CHATA FIND? DON'T TELL ME NUTSHELL, YOU HAVEN'T GOT SPACE TO SAY. . .
You guessed it. But you could look at Peter Lee's Chata piece starting on page 29

Figure 5. Progression in students' ideas about accounts and their relation to the past



'nature of accounts' category

A few older children recognized that historical accounts can never be complete, and that they have to be constructed within sets of parameters. Different accounts answer different questions, and have to meet different criteria. Where responses in the 'author' category treated selection as a matter of historians imposing their preferences on an account, those in the 'nature' category thought of the task of producing a historical account as imposing selection on historians. In that sense it is in the nature of historical accounts to differ. Figure 4 shows how these ideas were distributed across year groups.

10% of students explicitly mentioned ideas about accounts answering different questions, fitting different parameters, or as necessarily being incomplete. Some also talked about accounts as not just being conjunctions of facts. (A further 2% made implicit reference to such ideas.)

• Only 5% of year 6, 12% of year 7 and 18% of year 9 mentioned ideas of this kind. While these small proportions may not be surprising, it is perhaps surprising that these ideas appeared at all in responses from students of 14 or younger.

These findings suggest a progression of students' ideas about why historical accounts differ, and in their ideas about the nature of such accounts.

Further reading

The most easily available Chata publications include the following.

Lee, P. J., Ashby R. and Dickinson A.K. (1996a). 'Progression in children's ideas about history.' In M. Hughes (ed.), *Progression in Learning* (pp.50-81). Clevedon, Bristol (PA) and Adelaide: Multilingual Matters. (Written at an early stage of analysis, but gives some idea of the assumptions of the project, and deals with aspects of evidence and explanation.)

Dickinson, A., Lee, P. J. and Ashby, R. (1997). 'Research methods and some findings on Rational Understanding'. In *Principles and Practice: analytical perspectives on curriculum reform and changing pedagogy from history teacher education* (pp.113-125). Standing Conference of History Teacher Educators in the UK. (An interim report on rational understanding.)

Lee, P. J., Ashby, R. and Dickinson, A. K. (1997) 'Just Another Emperor: Understanding Action in the Past.' In J. Voss (ed.) *International Journal of Educational*

Research, Volume 27, No.3, pp. 233-244. (Discussion of rational understanding on the basis of responses from one task set.)

Lee, P. J., Ashby R. and Dickinson A.K. (1996b). 'Children Making Sense of History', in *Education* 3-13 24 (1) 13-19. (Deals with some aspects of explanation.)

Lee, P. J., Ashby R. and Dickinson A.K. (1996c). 'Children's understanding of "because" and the status of explanation in history.' *Teaching History* 82 (1) 6-11. (Outlines some of the questions asked by Chata in the area of explanation, and reports one small aspect of the work.)

The most up-to-date work has been given as unpublished conference papers or published overseas (a situation we hope to rectify before too long). However one paper is available in English, dealing with accounts in much the same way as the present paper, but discussing examples of students' responses.

Lee, P. J. (1997a). "'None of us was there": Children's ideas about why historical accounts differ.' In S. Ahonen et al. (eds), *Historiedidaktik, Norden 6, Nordisk Konferens om Historiedidaktik, Tampere 1996* (pp. 23-58). Copenhagen: Danmarks Laererhøjskole.

The Chata project grew out of research at the Institute of Education beginning 25 years ago, and pursued on a small scale (with interruptions) ever since. Much of this earlier work used video recording of groups of three students discussing the 'best' answer to historical problems of explanation or enquiry in the absence of adults. (References to this work, and to the work of Booth, Charlton, Hallam, and Shemilt are to be found in Lee et al. 1996a, listed above.) Independently, Denis Shemilt's much bigger Schools History Project Evaluation Study (1980) both confirmed and went beyond the research at the Institute. Later Institute explorations (of 'empathy' and 'evidence') further developed our understanding of children's ideas. More recently Cooper and Knight, adding to the earlier work of West, have researched ideas at primary level. A keen interest in these matters has appeared in the USA in the past decade (influenced to some degree by history education and research in Britain).

So what?

There's no room for an argued case here, so what follows is a speculative, if dogmatic, starting point.

The Chata evidence suggests that any 'certainty' about historical accounts is more likely among year 3 children than year 9 students. More common at all ages is the belief that history is impossible, either (for younger children) because 'No one was there' or (for older students) because 'Everyone is allowed to hold on to his own opinions'.

Students need ideas that enable them to move beyond helplessness in the face of historical disagreement. This means tackling key ideas that shut down further moves. What are they? Let's take just two.

We didn't see past events so we can't say anything valid about them.

If the story is not complete, it can't be any good.

First, much of what we say about the past couldn't have been 'eyewitnessed' by anyone. Declining economies, rising birth-rates and the acceptance of new constitutional ideas (for example) are not witnessable events. Not even the things that historians want to say about apparently concrete events like battles were available to witnesses. 'Being there' is not the answer!

Second, as some of the Chata students already understood in year 6, historical accounts cannot be complete: this is not a problem, just part of what an account is. But once you've asked a question, and subscribed to some parameters, not any old story will do.

Third, different accounts don't necessarily conflict, though they may compete. Accounts can do different jobs, and talking about the significance of an event only makes sense within a particular account. The Falklands War had different significance in a story about dictatorship than it did (as the Malvinas crisis) in a story about colonialism. And significance changes with timescale within a single story. The students who said that no account could be complete, and that different accounts answered different questions, understood that historical accounts were not just copies of the past. They were pointing the way for other students to follow.

STAFF BASIS



Photograph of a group of people sitting around a table in a meeting.

CHAPTER 1



Photograph of a group of people sitting around a table in a meeting.

Photograph of a group of people sitting around a table in a meeting.

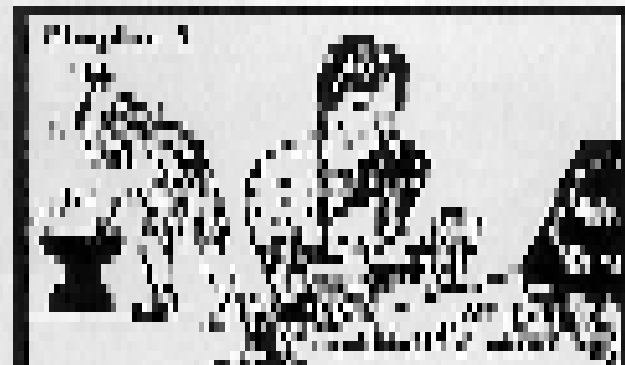
CHAPTER 2



Photograph of a group of people sitting around a table in a meeting.

Photograph of a group of people sitting around a table in a meeting.

STAFF BASIS



Photograph of a group of people sitting around a table in a meeting.

CHAPTER 1



Photograph of a group of people sitting around a table in a meeting.

Photograph of a group of people sitting around a table in a meeting.

CHAPTER 2



Photograph of a group of people sitting around a table in a meeting.

Photograph of a group of people sitting around a table in a meeting.



Cunning Plan

CUNNING PLAN FOR A LEVEL EUROPEAN HISTORY: THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC

Teaching the Weimar Republic is rather like teaching the voyage of the Titanic. However much you stress the strengths of the Weimar vessel, they just can't wait to see it sink into the Nazi sea. I have found this problem to be so bad that many of them perceive the 'Hitler iceberg' as the only point of interest in the whole study unit. I wanted to devise a programme of study which would alert them to the complexity of Weimar politics and tackle the problem of their perception of boring inevitability.

1 HOW DEMOCRATIC WAS THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC?

ENQUIRY 1

Start with theme for whole unit. Each student to pick a card describing one Weimar citizen. Age, name, class, job and town or province is described. This character has to vote at each Weimar election as we progress through the unit.

What makes a democracy? Brainstorm and establish baseline. Is Britain democratic? Discuss PR, House of Lords etc. Divide class in two. Half study Weimar constitution and half US constitution (already familiar from GCSE). Class debate: Which country was more democratic in the 1920s?

Election: 6th June 1920

2 HOW FAIR WAS THE TREATY OF

ENQUIRY 2

Quick video with original footage to get a bit of atmosphere. Factual review. Draw out contrasts with 1870-71. In small groups, each to be one country. prepare press briefing (for early radio?). One or two rogue journalists to ask difficult questions. Record separately. Then play full recording to the group, asking each to anticipate the reaction of other countries.

Follow up with contemporary cartoons from various countries. Focus on German reaction. Was the treaty fair? Was it perceived to be fair? **Write.**

3 WHICH POSED THE BIGGEST THREAT TO DEMOCRACY: LEFT OR RIGHT?

ENQUIRY 3

Factual review of left and right. Explain context and terminology.

Use two giant score charts and review the dangers under four headings, giving a score out of 10 for each (e.g. support at home, support abroad, leadership etc.) Fill in totals. Who won? Why?

Did the Weimar government agree? For an extra twist, make them state which their 'character' would have perceived as the greater threat.

Election: 4th May 1924

Diana Lafin
The Holt School (11-18 comprehensive)
Wokingham

4 WHAT WERE THE CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF THE ECONOMIC CRISIS?

ENQUIRY 4

MEGA SORTING Exercise. Use driving analogy (most are learning to drive - use of rear and side mirrors plus awareness of road ahead). Sort cards with short, medium and long term causes and hazards ahead. Place car in centre of sugar paper. Return to characters. Add more information on their financial state, e.g. mortgages, savings. Are they winners or losers in the inflationary crisis?

Election: 7th December 1924

5 WERE THE 'GOLDEN YEARS' REALITY GOLD?

ENQUIRY 5

Group Evidence Work. Bombard them with photos, statistics and written evidence. Leader of each group to state if the later 1920s were as good as they have been portrayed.

Individual research into Stresemann's life and foreign policy. Short essay on whether he deserved the Nobel Peace Prize. Spaghetti Junction. Ask them to produce a diagram to show links between foreign policy and the economy. Best diagram to get joke prize.

Election: 20th May 1928

6 WHY DID WEIMAR FAIL?

ENQUIRY 6

Tackle this as a carousel with four half hour rides: HIDES computer programme - independent learning on support for Hitler

Long clip from BBC Nazis programme on rise of Hitler - focus on primary and secondary sources and differences between them. Library research on weakness of Weimar from 1930 on. Focus on differing interpretations.

Tutorial with me. Students prepare with key points. Face the iceberg: how important was Hitler in Weimar's collapse? If they all claim he is the only factor, take early retirement.

Final Elections: Contrast their votes with actual votes. How close were they and why? Analyse.
Final Seminar: Was the republic bound to fail?

ME MOVE ON

THE PROBLEM PAGE FOR HISTORY MENTORS

This feature of Teaching History is designed to build critical, informed debate about the character of teacher-training, teacher education and professional development. It is also designed to offer practical help to all involved in training new history teachers. Each issue presents a situation in initial teacher education/training with an emphasis upon a particular, history-specific issue.

Mentors or others involved in the training of student history teachers are invited to be the agony aunts.

THIS ISSUE'S PROBLEM

MELVILLE MILES, PGCE STUDENT, IS HAVING A FEW PROBLEMS WITH CAUSATION IN THE CLASSROOM

Problem: Melville Miles, student history teacher, is in Term 3 of his PGCE year. Melville has taught a number of excellent lessons in which he enabled pupils to reach high levels of historical understanding. His diagnostic assessment of pupils' work is unusually sophisticated for a PGCE student. Melville's two placements have been in contrasting schools where he has taught pupils, aged 11 to 18, across the full ability range. However, Melville is frustrated because he feels that the practice that he has seen in both schools reduces causal understanding to something simplistic and unchallenging.

Melville has been encouraged to read widely and to discern the principles that underpin his own and others' practice. As a result of his long assignment (the focus for which he negotiated with his mentor) he has explored the possibility of teaching for progression in pupils' understanding of causality. He chose to do this by examining whether the tasks being set by the department in years 7, 9 and 11 show progression in this area. Whilst there seems to be consensus in the department that the 1991 NC model (Attainment Target 1b) was problematic because of its specious precision (he has enjoyed listening to his first mentor's amusing, rueful accounts of attempting to use that system!), he is concerned that pupils are now just being trained to jump a similar set of hoops and that identifying, linking or prioritising 'causes' doesn't really add up to anything bigger.

Melville feels that real learning is being bypassed. His worries have been increased by some recent, unexpected and uncharacteristic discipline problems. A middle ability Year 8 group became bored and frustrated during an activity that involved analysing causes. One pupil said, "We are always doing this." This has set him thinking. . .

Melville's mentor is short on imaginative ideas for training/learning activities which can both take Melville's thinking forward, and yield some workable solutions. Melville is also feeling pretty low as the recent discipline problems were nasty. Relationships with pupils in the Year 8 class seem to have taken a dive. This has come as a shock to Melville. It makes it even harder for Melville's mentor to know how to move Melville on.

Extract from Melville's fortnightly professional development profile

TEACHING, EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

. . . The low point of the fortnight was 8B Set 3 on Tuesday. I could tell it was going to go wrong in the first five minutes. They were not interested in organising the causes into a table and some of the really weak pupils were just putting the causes anywhere. They had given up. I encouraged and cajoled but I knew that I had lost it. I have used an identical technique with Y7 and Y10 and it went brilliantly, leading to some very high level historical thinking. Maybe Year 8 have just had too much of this of type of thing. The department's common techniques are very helpful, but somehow my heart wasn't in this one and I couldn't find the language and energy to drive it.

Part of the problem was that my chosen assessment focus was to identify whether or not the pupils could 'classify causes'. I now just don't believe that the satisfactory completion of this task really shows that pupils have learned how to do that. Also, I don't believe that this bit of 'causal analysis' is really deepening their understanding of the causes of Islamic Expansion. It seems at one remove from the guts of the enquiry itself.

SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE AND ASSESSMENT

Work for my long assignment has meant that my negotiated programme for the last fortnight has focussed on enquiring into the department's planning for progression in causation. Concern about what we are trying to achieve with Key Element 2b's 'reasons' and 'results' is now mounting. It is the idea that pupils are *demonstrating* a particular skill that bothers me. Do they really re-use that skill? Has it really made them better at analysis ready for next time? And if it has, why are the lower attainers just as confused in Year 11 as they were in Year 7?! What, exactly, have they got better at?

True, many are recognising the terms 'long-term' and 'short-term' and using these with greater facility. This is a helpful analytical trick and I am not saying it is pointless. But some of the answers to a Year 9 'assessment' task, even by average-attainers, were so crassly distorting of the causes of the First World War that I just did not feel comfortable awarding them the 6 or 7 out of ten that the departmental markscheme recommended. What have they understood about *causation*? And what have they understood about the *causes of the First World War*? And what is the difference?

Extract from professional development profile, May 21.

Relevant extracts from Melville's long assignment

(6,000 words with requirement to focus on pupils' learning)

. . . I then looked closely at the Year 9 causation exercise in Swineshead Comprehensive School. This is one item that the department will shortly be using, together with others, to reach an overall judgement using the Level Descriptions. I have big problems in seeing the difference between 'describe and make links between relevant reasons' (Level 5) or 'beginning to analyse' (Level 6). The Level 5 statement is surely a statement about a kind of 'analysis'! Equally, establishing 'relevance' remains a teaching focus right through to A Level. It just gets harder and harder according to the context or the question. Is the excessive precision of the LDs just causing us to invent convenient, but meaningless benchmarks?

Standing back from the collection of Year 9 work, I found myself inventing other criteria for assessment. The words 'critically reach and support conclusions' (Level 6) are, in fact, helpful. They characterise Pupil A's collection of work much more effectively. How does this combine with causal understanding?

We need to be alert to the dangers of losing a rich sense of the full historical challenge. We need to work back from this to the smaller building blocks that will 'scaffold' pupils into getting there (Wood, 1988).

Extract from long assignment, submitted June 16

Extracts from a supervision document written by the university-based tutor after observing Year 8 lesson

... and I thoroughly enjoyed our discussion. You are really drawing together the reading from Terms 1 and 2 with your own critical observations of what pupils are understanding. Just to summarise what we agreed went wrong:

- ♦ Many pupils did not really know why they were doing this. They had lost the focus on the big question and their interest had dipped as a result.
- ♦ Some of the weaker ones seemed even to have lost any meaningful sense of what a 'cause' is. We had stayed at this level of abstraction for too long to be helpful.
- ♦ How far did the problem lie in the task and how far in the way you explained it and set it up? Your comment 'my heart wasn't in it' suggests, of course, that the two are connected!

Extract from supervision document May 17

Katharine Burn

was for five years a history mentor within the Oxford Internship Scheme, whilst teaching at Cherwell Upper School (13-18 comprehensive). She is now a research student at Oxford University Department of Educational Studies.

Melville's thinking about causation has got tied up in the intricacies of mark schemes and Level Descriptions. He has temporarily lost sight of the real history and of the pupils! Assessment is important, and he has alerted us all to some of the critical issues about mechanistic routines and planning for progression. But I think the way forward is for him to forget any of the hoops to be jumped, and to concentrate in the short term on grabbing pupils' interest, engaging them in genuine, controversial questions. Then he'll be in a much better position to come back to the issues of assessment.

IF I WERE MELVILLE'S MENTOR I WOULD SUGGEST THE FOLLOWING:

Select a causation issue that really interests you, and where there is scope for real debate. Plan a way in that will intrigue pupils - so they want to find out why - and create a structure which is going to force them to argue, debate and justify their claims. One possibility is Hitler's rise to power with Year 9. Starting with a very powerful depiction of the worst features of Nazism should leave them wanting to know how this could possibly have happened.

Whatever the focus, try to set up simple tasks initially; perhaps in groups investigating a single factor, with short presentations. (This would allow for some differentiation in allocating particular causes.) Commitment to the one they've researched may add an edge to later debate. Then try mixing the groups, getting them to identify specific points where one factor interacts with another - drawing diagrams perhaps, with explanations of some of the specific combinations. Experiment with questions that will get them debating in groups: Can they reach a consensus, prioritising the factors? If not, why not? What happens to their diagrams if a factor is removed? Can they speculate about - write or even role play - an alternative history?

~~Treat the series of lessons as an experiment. Tape some of the pupil discussions. What do they reveal of the learning process and of their understanding? Is it different from that shown in their written work? Use me, too, to collect data about the pupils' responses.~~

~~Then we'll review together. How helpful are the different strategies? What have we learnt about pupils' understanding that we can then feed back into the assessment strategies?~~

NEXT ISSUE'S PROBLEM:

Millie Marvel, PGCE student, is not making the progress that she should in using information technology to teach history. Pupils are being challenged in their use of ICT but not in their history. Millie's mentor must intervene. But How?

If you would like to contribute to next issue's Move Me On, write for full details of Millie's problem to:
The Editor, Teaching History (Move Me On: November), The Historical Association, 59A Kennington Park Rd,
LONDON SE11 4JH

Responses are invited from history ITE/ITT mentors. To appear in the next issue, requests for details on the problem must be received by 15 September and responses to the problem must be received by 6 October 1998.

Melville and Millie are fictional characters but their profiles are based upon composites of real PGCE student experience.

Claire Smith

Is a history mentor with the University of Bath Faculty of Education 'PGCE in Partnership'. She teaches history and English at John Cabot City Technology College (11-18) in Bristol.

There are two main problems facing Melville at present, each affecting his motivation and development. First, and with most impact for next Tuesday afternoon, is Melville's relationship with the pupils in 8B3. Second, there is the need to develop an awareness of the wide range of teaching strategies for causation and to continue to explore progression in that area.

IF I WERE MELVILLE'S MENTOR I WOULD SUGGEST THE FOLLOWING:

Read McAleavy, T., (1994) 'Meeting pupils' learning needs - differentiation and progression in the teaching of history' in Bourdillon, H., (ed.), Teaching History Routledge. McAleavy warned how sometimes the old Attainment Targets for the 1991 National Curriculum could encourage a dreary and formula-based approach to classroom history. Any new history assessment structure will always contain the same danger. You have both recognised this and experienced pupils feeling it. McAleavy's chapter shows how not to let the tail of assessment wag the dog of teaching and learning.

Team-teach your next 8B3 lesson with me. Plan it with me so that you feel confident with your objectives and resources. The best advice I was ever given was never to hold anything from a previous encounter against a class/pupil but to begin each lesson as if it were your first with them.

If pupils are tired of categorising causes into a table then let's get rid of that restriction. How about splitting the class into small groups, giving each group an initial cause-card on what caused the Islamic Empire to develop, and get them to decide what categories or themes the cards should have, one at a time?

Think about avoiding writing altogether in a causation lesson. Oral work, either as a class or in groups, doing quick, five minute tasks can be just as valid if properly structured. Can you think of a way that 8B3 could take their cause cards and stick them down in a gradually expanding spider diagram on sugar paper in several stages? (5 minutes to choose cards to do with war, 5 to do with trade, 5 to do with Islamic religion etc?).

Alternatively, use pictorial cards instead. How might this extend their understanding? Which pupils might gain additional access to difficult ideas? No need to write anything in the interim stages. A final plenary on the board will enable them to offer, orally, the themes which seem best to explain Islamic expansion. Then, a five minute silent diagram in their exercise books, of their view of why Islam spread, will confirm their learning for you rather more than a table. They will also leave the task with their memories enriched by the visual images.

Come to the next mentor meeting having looked at our scheme of work for Year 8 and having mapped the incidence and style of causation work. Is it all too similar? can you suggest, now, how this could be altered? Can you identify two major causation pieces in the year and three or four minor ones? How is what pupils can do at the end of Year 8 different from what they could do at the beginning? If it is no different where and how would you build more progression into our long-term planning?

Knowing what **counts** in history: historical understanding and the non- specialist teacher

is Reader in Education at Newcastle University.

Douglas P. Newton

is Senior Lecturer in Education at Durham University.

Lynn D. Newton

If science graduates think that history teaching is not about questioning, that there is only 'one answer' in history or that historical facts are unproblematic, does it matter? Should we care? Doug Newton and Lynn Newton argue that it matters very much for the teaching of history. Their article focusses upon primary teachers whose specialism is science and who have no higher education background in history. They argue that where there are serious misunderstandings about the discipline of history then this will have its consequences in the kinds of understandings teachers seek to develop in children. At the very least, this has serious implications for the proper professional education of these teachers. It also has implications within the secondary school and not just with non-specialist teachers. Do senior managers (especially curriculum managers) understand the precise contribution that history is making to pupils' intellectual, social and moral development? It is very likely that many do not, rendering not only the status of history, but wider curriculum debate in the school, unnecessarily impoverished.

Introduction

What do history teachers need to know? Suzanne Wilson argues that they need to know their subject and subject-specific ways of teaching it¹. The latter include strategies for eliciting prior knowledge, ways of explaining, useful analogies, ways of managing particular activities², and knowledge of common misconceptions and predilections, such as the a tendency to be Angliocentric³. But, 'teachers cannot teach what they do not know'⁴ and Wilson points to the need for a deep or rich knowledge of history. She defines this as a differentiated, qualified, elaborated and integrated knowledge of events. Teachers must know and distinguish between the various aspects of an event. They must be able to qualify accounts of events to the extent that they are underdetermined and dependent upon context. Their knowledge should be extensive and detailed and should be related to other events and phenomena.

Underpinning this need is knowing what counts as understanding in history. Understanding can generate explanation and reasoned argument. Perkins has described it as knowing the structure of what is to be understood, the purpose of that structure and why it serves that purpose⁵. This involves inferring relationships amongst the various aspects of an event and linking it to other events. While the inferencing of relationships is an innate ability⁶, there are many kinds of relationship that can be constructed and they are not of equal interest in history. For instance, the loss of King John's baggage in the quicksand between Lynn and Lincoln was due to the relative

densities of baggage and quicksand. Potentially of more interest to the historian is why such a route was taken at all. In history, understanding such an event involves the construction of a plausible account that involves, for instance, human motives and frailties⁷. Helping students understand historical events is at the centre of much of what the history teacher has to do⁸. If a teacher does not know what constitutes an understanding in history, aims are likely to be off-target and learning inappropriate.

A learner acquires ways of thinking about a subject from experience of the beliefs and practices that prevail in that field of knowledge⁹. Often, this is not the result of explicit instruction in those beliefs and practices. It develops largely through a teacher's example, explanations of events, and evaluations of a learner's performance. In other words, knowing what counts is learned largely through a process of enculturation. But no two teachers of history experience exactly the same enculturation. Each has particular differences in experience that could lead to differences in conceptions of what counts as understanding in history. Perhaps nowhere is this more likely than in the primary school where history is often taught by teachers with widely different educational backgrounds. On the one hand, there may be someone with a history degree teaching history in one classroom while in the next room it is being taught by, for instance, someone with a science degree. Primary teachers with a history degree and primary teachers with a science degree are likely to have experienced different patterns of enculturation. For instance, students of science will usually have

studied events that illustrate ‘universals of fact’ and applied these generalisations to make predictions about new events. Students of history, at least in the British tradition, will have studied events, teased out what are arguably their significant antecedents and consequences and acquired a feel for their essential uniqueness. This is not to say that no-one seeks generalisations in history or applies history to make predictions. Andy Croll, for instance, predicts that a recent ‘naming and shaming’ of tenants policy in Wandsworth will be ineffective by drawing parallels with Victorian and Edwardian ‘blacklisting’ practices¹⁰. Rather, it is that the conditions of an historical event do not re-occur and the event must, in the end, be understood through those unique conditions.

Do such teachers agree about what counts as understanding in history? If they differ radically, at least one of their classes of children could be at a disadvantage.

Identifying Teachers’ Conceptions

We asked university lecturers in science and history to describe what counts as understanding in their subject. From their accounts, a thirty-six statement questionnaire was compiled. The questionnaire began with illustrations of events in history such as, ‘The Pilgrim Fathers left England for America’, ‘Guy Fawkes tried to blow up the Houses of Parliament’, and ‘The Romans built Hadrian’s Wall’. The relevance of each statement to understanding events such as these was to be rated on a five-point scale ranging from irrelevant to very relevant. To illustrate, the list of statements included:

- ‘a mental reconstruction of a kind of story describing the event’,
- ‘a certainty that you have found the truth of the event’,
- ‘a knowledge of the facts of the event’,
- ‘the use of deduction’,
- ‘an analysis of the event into smaller parts’,
- ‘choosing the most plausible explanation of the event’,
- and
- ‘predictions about what will happen in the event’.

During the interviews with lecturers, we also asked them to describe understanding in the other subject. Regarding understanding in history, a science lecturer felt that:

‘My idea of history would be that it’s just [pause] there’s one answer. There is only one reason why such a thing happened, only one reason why such a battle happened and once you’ve learnt that, then you have understood it.’

Another was of the view:

‘I feel that to understand the science you’ve got to question

yourself about things whereas in history you don’t really have to question things... I feel as if history is factual based and you learn things by looking at the past but science is very much questioning about things that you see and do.’

On the other hand, another thought that,

‘It’s very factual in science. I think history is a lot less factual and a lot of it is based on opinion.’

We felt that such diverse views amongst science lecturers might be found in science graduates in teaching.

Accordingly, fifty-eight primary teachers with a history degree and sixty-one primary teachers with a science degree completed the questionnaire and their responses were compared¹¹. After completing the list of statements, the teachers had to respond to a question asking them to state features of understanding that science and history had in common and features that were different. A further 59 teachers with other degrees also responded to the list of statements.

Teachers’ Conceptions

Treating the two groups of teachers as one, there was a tendency to see some statements as more relevant to understanding historical events than others. For example, understanding such events called for, ‘a mental construction of a kind of story describing the event’, ‘a knowledge of how the event started’, ‘a knowledge of the context of the event’, ‘a taking into account of other points of view’, and ‘an awareness that the event may have several causes’. Instances of relatively low relevance included, ‘using patterns and regularities to explain the event’, ‘predictions about what will happen in the event’ and ‘a certainty that you have found the truth of the event’. At this level, there is grounds for some optimism. Such tendencies accord fairly well with what might be expected of a history teacher’s conceptions.

There are, however, differences between the two groups of teachers. For instance, the science graduates saw less relevance than the history graduates in, ‘an analysis of events into smaller parts’, ‘drawing on one’s everyday experience’, ‘logical thinking’, ‘the bringing together of ideas’ and ‘a knowledge of the context of the event’ for understanding. At the same time, the science graduates saw more relevance than the history graduates in, ‘an acceptance of an interpretation of the event’ and ‘an ability to draw on one’s subject knowledge’. Distinctive features of historical understanding emphasised particularly by science graduates was the ‘second-hand’ nature of the process and the need to ‘know the facts’. The other graduates’ responses, with degrees in neither history nor science, tended to fall between those of the history and science graduates. Together, this indicates that teachers with different educational

backgrounds can have different conceptions of what counts as understanding in history. Differences in conceptions seem likely to lie, at least in part, in the weighting given to particular mental processes and products such as analysis and synthesis, knowledge of the course of an event, and acceptance of some authority's interpretation.

To some degree, this might be predicted; the two groups had spent a number of years submerged in very different disciplines. Perhaps what is more remarkable is that the difference is not greater, given C.P. Snow's account of *The Two Cultures*. But there is something that was unexpected and is potentially a cause for concern. So far, we have described only the average responses. These conceal the wide variation between individuals, both with science degrees and with history degrees. Take, for instance, 'a certainty that you have found the truth of the event'. Thirteen of the science graduates saw this as irrelevant while fifteen saw it as relevant. History graduates did not show much more accord: eleven saw it as irrelevant while ten saw it as relevant. Similarly, for 'choosing the most plausible explanation', six science and six history graduates endorsed it as irrelevant to understanding historical events. Sixteen science and thirteen history graduates saw 'a knowledge of the facts of the event' as irrelevant or only slightly relevant. These are not isolated cases, almost all statements received a wide variety of responses. Significant proportions of the teachers saw very different degrees of relevance in the statements for understanding. The figure illustrates the distribution of responses for one of these.

In the context of education in the U.S.A., Wilson warned that,

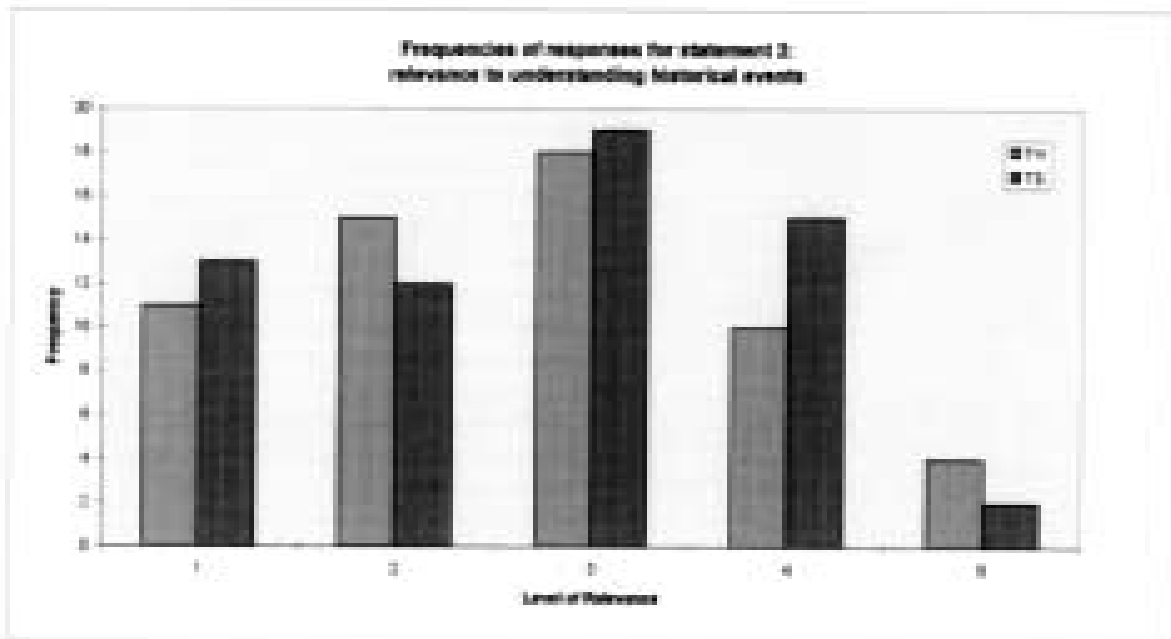
*'It is dangerous and presumptuous to assume that the types of knowledge - deep subject matter knowledge and subject-specific pedagogical knowledge - described here are the result of the completion of an undergraduate degree in history and a teacher education program. Many undergraduates never learn to think about history in the deep and flexible ways I have described.'*¹²

It seems that enculturation into the ways of thinking and understanding in history in the UK is also very varied and, for some, may be inadequate when it comes to teaching the subject.

Some Implications and Proposals

Does this variation matter? Teachers with widely different conceptions of understanding are likely to have different goals. The questions they ask and the answers they accept will tend to be different. A teacher who sees little relevance in 'a mental construction of a kind of story of the event' is not likely to ask a child for one or to accept it as an answer. Someone who sees 'the use of deduction' as being very relevant may neglect the role of chance in an event and give undue emphasis to assumed regularities in human behaviour. In other words, although children are subject to the same National Curriculum Order, they experience a different version of the subject we call history.

This is not to say that there should be an absolute agreement about what counts as understanding: even historians and philosophers do not always agree on the nature of historical explanation and the understanding of events. Here, however, the attributes of historical understanding explored were largely at



The numbers of primary teachers with a history degree (TH) and primary teachers with science degree (TS) responding to the statement for each category (1 Irrelevant, 2 Slightly Relevant, 3 Fairly Relevant, 4 Relevant, 5 Very Relevant).

a level below that debate. To put it in a gross way, we were interested to see if conceptions of historical understanding were affected by differences in educational experience and there was some evidence that this was so. But such variation is acceptable only if it has a rational basis and is, arguably, appropriate. When asking lecturers and school teachers about their conceptions of understanding, the initial response was often, 'Oh, I've never really thought about it'. This is to be expected, given the informal nature of the enunciation.

We feel that this has implications for initial teacher training and in-service teacher training in the teaching of history. The nature of historical understanding and what we expect of children's understanding needs to be made more explicit. On pre-service courses, this might be achieved by asking students to describe what they think counts as understanding. This should be contrasted with understanding in some other curriculum areas. Particular case studies might be useful in illustrating the kinds of understanding needed in history. These should be extended to show how these are translated to support children's understanding. The kinds of questions to ask and the answers that are acceptable (or rejected) would have to figure in this. In the primary school, the new teacher has a lot to think about so they need to be shown how to use their time economically yet effectively. One way is to show them how to evaluate and use textual materials, activities and other teaching resources and adapt them quickly so that they support understanding. And, of course, they need to practise these skills.

In the primary school, there is often a co-ordinator who is responsible for the teaching of history. He or she might consider asking for an in-service session on the topic of 'What counts in history?'. Views about what counts, what supports understanding and evidence of understanding in each Key Stage can be shared. This is likely to be more useful using the particular aspects of history each teacher teaches. For

each aspect, teachers can describe what understanding would amount to, what questions need to be asked, and what would count as acceptable responses. If the co-ordinator feels unable to lead such a discussion, then an advisory teacher may take that role.

Conceptions of understanding in a subject underpin much of what we do as teachers. If they are off the mark, then most of that subject's teaching could suffer.

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What if... What if... What if we had all been less sniffy about counterfactual history in the classroom?

Andrew Wrenn

Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals

Niall Ferguson (ed.) (Picador 1997)

548pp., £20 hard, ISBN 0-330-35132-X

The consideration of 'what if?' scenarios in the study of history is nothing new. Radio 4 once ran a programme where leading historians debated alternative outcomes to historical events. This so-called 'counterfactual' history has been the stuff of science fiction and thrillers for years. Both Robert Harris, in his novel, *Fatherland*, and, earlier, Deighton in *SSGB*, considered the consequences of a successful Nazi invasion of Britain in the 1940s, several years on with the country ruled by Germans. However, until recently, there has been little serious academic attempt to create a framework for rigorous analysis using what can easily be dismissed as mere fantasy. After all, what is the point of considering what might have happened if Charles I had won the Civil War if we all know that he did not? Some of these concerns are dealt with in the stimulating and controversial *Virtual History*, edited by historian Niall Ferguson. Whilst acknowledging that 'Hollywood and science fiction are not academically respectable' Ferguson defends the idea of counterfactual history because the 'business of imagining such counterfactuals is a vital part of the way we learn'. In relation to our personal lives he comments, 'it makes sense to compare the actual outcomes of what we did in the past with the conceivable outcomes of what we might have done'. If we think this way in ordinary life, how much more valid and useful this approach might be in addressing some of the great questions of history?

In *Virtual History*, leading historians explore alternative outcomes to major past events. Questions range from 'What if Charles I had avoided the Civil War?' to 'What if communism had not collapsed?'. Some of these are answered more effectively than others and on the whole those covering modern questions seem to be the most convincing, perhaps because distance in time increases the range of possible implausibilities. Michael Burleigh considers the consequences of Nazi Germany defeating Soviet Russia and paints a chilling picture of the triumph of the Third Reich. In his efforts to help us imagine what might have been, he cites the plans for the rebuilding of Berlin as 'Germania', 'Passing the new 'Fuhrer Palace' equipped with a dining hall for thousands and a private theatre, the visitor would arrive at the great Hall, billed as the largest assembly hall in the world. With a capacity of quarter of a million, the light in the cupola could alone encircle the Pantheon, the condensation thus raising the problem of interior rainfalls'.

Andrew Roberts considers the consequences of a Nazi occupation of Britain and concludes that the occupying forces would have faced a determined and fiercely patriotic resistance movement. However, this is where the limitations (and therefore the teaching opportunities) of the genre are shown. Roberts sides with a fairly traditional reading of the 'Blitz Spirit' supposedly present in the British population of the 1940s. A revisionist historian might well have created an alternative counterfactual of occupation. Roberts appears to write his essay to refute such a view of wartime Britain. Here lies the greatest potential of counterfactual history. It is a fresh way of considering the significance of various causes leading to events and of challenging existing interpretations. How might this translate into exciting teaching at secondary level?

Consider the standard classroom roleplays, now the typical fare of the 11 to 16 year old learning history. working on the Treaty of Versailles, 13 and 14 year olds are cast as Allied powers carving up Europe in 1919. This is usually used as means of evaluating the fairness of Versailles, so as to enable pupils to understand criticism directed at the treaty in paving the way to World War II. This later debate would be greatly enhanced and made more rigorous if the teacher were to set up an alternative, counterfactual roleplay with Germany and the central powers directing a peace to the allies, in say 1918, with Brest-Litovsk as a model. Discussion of the validity of this alternative model would help to shed light on the relative fairness and consequences of Versailles itself.

EVENT: WORLD WAR I

STEP 1: Teacher provisionally identifies main causes of event.
Pupils develop general knowledge and understanding of main causes through a series of short activities (e.g. from basic comprehension to elementary analysis through sorting) and through teacher explanation and questioning.

Great Power Alliances	Assassination of Franz Ferdinand	German invasion of Belgium	Rivalry between Britain and Germany	The Schlieffen Plan	Railway timetables
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STEP 2: Teacher and/or pupils isolate one cause to analyse in depth.

WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF THIS CAUSE WERE MISSING?

STEP 3: Teacher creates activities to foster speculation and counter-factual reasoning.

STEP 4: Activities to foster discussion about the importance of the cause in the light of the counter-factual reasoning exercise.

Figure 1: A suggested procedure for using counterfactual reasoning
This model is based loosely around that proposed by Swartz and Parks (1994) Determining Parts-Whole Relationships discussed in Quinn (1997), Critical Thinking in Young Minds.

REVIEW ESSAY review essay

A row of dominoes turned up on end will collapse in spectacular fashion if positioned correctly in relation to each other. Take one domino away and the collapse in the line will only get so far. Take dominoes into the history classroom because examining historical causes can work in the same way. In Year 8 (12 and 13 year-olds), too many teachers stick with the limiting (and, used in isolation, pretty sterile) categorisation of the causes into long term, short term, most important, least important and so on. Instead, why not build on this by taking out one cause and asking the children to consider what might have happened if this cause were to be missing (see Figure 1). Would history have been different or would the event still have occurred? The level of engagement will actually *increase* their historical knowledge and disposition to be accurate. It is this kind of strategy that will take pupils behind and beyond the 'cardsorting', the labelling, the tables and the headings and other useful aids to categorisation which, puzzlingly (perhaps for quick fix 'assessment?') some teachers have ended up treating as ends in themselves.

In Year 9 (13 -14 year-olds) the teaching of the Battle of Britain could be extended to create an alternative narrative of Nazi invasion and occupation: Edward VIII reinstated as King, Halifax appointed PM and a resistance movement set up to sabotage the oppressive occupation with its usual trappings of defence installations and concentration camps. A number of roleplays in groups in this setting could use evidence drawn from the occupation of the Channel Islands and continental Europe to explore how the British might have reacted in the same setting. Teachers might focus on how well the pupils use the evidential material in constructing and defending their counterfactual, thus linking Key Element 4 (enquiry, sources) with Key Element 2b (causes, reasons). This would lead to debate concerning the effectiveness of the French Resistance and consideration of various views of British morale in 1940. Through active teaching methods children would thus be accessing the same historiographical debate considered by Andrew Roberts in his counterfactual.

Again, on a battlefield trip, ask children to redesign a particular cemetery as if Germany had won World War I or World War II. In some cases, perhaps the memorial would not exist at all. In turn, this helps to illuminate the way in which the existing memorial was constructed in the first place, thus becoming an effective learning journey into the objectives required by 'interpretations' work as defined by National Curriculum Key Element 3 and GCSE.

Niall Ferguson concludes his book with a witty overview of history from 1646 to 1996, supposing that Charles I had succeeded in his reform of the Stuart monarchy. The alternative course of history that he creates relies on particular judgements of events and their relative significance. Some could be challenged, such as the assumption that Hitler would have risen to power if Germany had won the First World War. However, he also throws in chance factors such as Stauffenberg's 1944 assassination attempt on Hitler succeeding. Any counterfactual is something of a hostage to the views of the historian and as such needs to be hedged around with qualifications as to its validity. However, if the historical methodology can be explored and transferred into pedagogy, if it can become a means of encouraging children to question and debate historical issues using higher-order reasoning from a strong knowledge base, it is most welcome.