

THEME 1: SEARCHING FOR THE PAST

AIMS

These five sessions aim to introduce students to some of the skills and ideas that will help their exploration of the past, particularly a past for which the written records are scanty and weighted in favour of one particular group. A lot is known about the Roman era but the written sources (including inscriptions) are predominately of Roman rather than British origin

PART 1: CYCLICAL TIME

Cyclical time was much more important to peoples in the past whose societies were primarily agrarian.

Discussion points

- What is cyclical time?
- What examples are there of cyclical time in the natural world?
 - ♦ Day/night, moon phases, tides
 - ♦ Seasonal change etc
- Some calendar events relate to cyclical time, indicating their early origins e.g. Easter, Passover, Eid

PART 2: LINEAR TIME

This is the familiar time within which we frame our daily lives. It moves inexorably forward from birth to death, from New Year's Day to New Year's Eve. It is broken down into accurate, quantifiable units.

Discussion points

- How do we measure time?
- Modern society relies on accurately measured linear time. Why?
- Calendars have changed over time and other cultures mark the years differently; explore some of these e.g. Islamic, Jewish and Chinese calendars.

PART 3: ESTIMATING TIME

The concept of 'generations' can be a helpful way of placing 'dateless' events in a rough chronological framework.

1 generation = 25 years

Prior to this session ask students to bring in something 'old' from home and find out the following if possible:

- What is the oldest object in their home?
- Who is the oldest person they know?
- How old their home is?

Bring in information/objects of your own.

Discussion points

- Share information and objects students have gathered.
- Whose house is the oldest? What information about the locality does the age of the houses give?
- What is the oldest building in your locality? How can you find out?
- How old are the objects brought in? Who do they belong to? What can they tell us about the owners and the time they lived in? Make comparisons between 'then' and 'now'.

- What are the students' earliest memories? How long ago was it? Do they share similar memories?

Activities

- Use metre rulers or tape measures to lay out a line 21 ms long either outdoors or in a hall. Mark on centuries. (1m = 1 century) Hand out a selection of events cards with the dates on them and ask students to place them on the line.
- Collate information from students to see how their own personal timeline develops.
- Make a human chain: 1 person = 1 generation.
- Make a Year Group timeline and add on key shared events from students own timelines.
- What is the earliest memory of the oldest person they know? Using the 'generations' rule work out roughly how long ago this was.
- Record information for one member of each generation in their family, starting with him or herself.

Resources/useful links

- 'Found' objects and photographs
- Metre rules/tape measures
- Event cards

PART 4: ARCHAEOLOGY IS RUBBISH

This lesson introduces students to archaeological evidence by focusing on a selection of everyday rubbish.

You will need a selection of rubbish in a small plastic dustbin or bin liner.

Discussion points

- Discuss categories into which rubbish can be sorted e.g. bio-degradable/non-biodegradable; natural/manmade; material; could contain liquid/couldn't contain liquid; Romans would have/ wouldn't have.
- Information that can be gained from rubbish, e.g. nutritional; country of origin; who might have used it; manufacturing processes.
- What will survive and what will decay?
- What factors influence the survival of rubbish? Properties of the material; where the artefacts are deposited – acidic soil will 'eat' away bones; natural materials may survive in bogs (anaerobic), deserts (desiccated), ice or tundra (frozen) where bacteria are deprived of elements essential to their survival i.e. oxygen, moisture, warmth.
- The difference between acquired knowledge and empirical evidence. Use an empty toilet roll as an example. What is it? – a cardboard tube (empirical) or a toilet roll (acquired).

Activities

- Divide the class into groups. Distribute the contents of the bin amongst the groups. Each group decides
 - ♦ The criteria they are going to use to sort the rubbish based on the discussion above.
 - ♦ methods of recording the information
 - ♦ Who will act as scribe?

- ♦ Who will act as spokesperson?

Sort the rubbish and report back findings to the class based on the criteria they chose.

- Examine the contents of the bin as above but as a whole class activity.
- Using the contents of the bin, what can be said about the people who created the rubbish and the society they live in? e.g. male/female; adult/child; diet; customs (birthday cards etc); interests.

Resources/useful links

- Selection of rubbish in a suitable container - include a mixture of materials i.e. organic/ natural/man-made and items that relate to specific events or people e.g. suntan lotion, postcards and tickets indicate a holiday; wrapping paper, ribbon, crisp packets and drink bottles represent a celebration; pet food wrappers indicate a household of animal lovers.



PART 5: SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

The primary aim of this lesson is to develop the skills students need to explore the range of evidence that is available to study the 'Past'.

Discussion points

- What evidence can we use to find out about people in the past? – artefacts; contemporary writing; old photographs or paintings; aerial photography etc.
- Who studies the 'Past'? What is the difference between an archeologist and a historian? Who uses artefacts to find out about people from the past? (An historian studies documentary evidence, an archaeologist uses artefacts and physical remains e.g. buildings, field systems, environmental evidence.)
- What is an artefact? What is the difference between an artefact and a fossil? (An artefact is something that has been made or used by humans i.e. a stone that has been used as a hammer or slingshot becomes an artefact through usage.)
- Recap on questions to 'ask' the objects. (Part 4)

Activities

Artefacts

Use a selection of modern objects alongside archaeological artefacts and replicas where possible.

- Identify the materials they are made from and the methods of manufacture
- Does the manufacturing process/material influence cost/value of the object?
- Refer back to Lesson 3 – which of these objects would survive if buried in the ground?
- Use a collection of pottery fragments (sherds). Ask each student to consider the evidence available from one fragment i.e. how it was made (on a wheel or by hand), colour, texture, purpose. Record by careful, annotated drawing. Swap drawings around – can other students identify the potsherd from the drawing?
- Choose one object and record it in the same way as the potsherd.

Writings

- Discuss
 - ♦ the difference between primary and secondary resources
 - ♦ author bias
 - ♦ context and style

Photographs

- Aerial photographs to help students identify features in the landscape.
- Old photographs of your town/village. Compare these with the same places today. What has changed? What remains? Take photographs from the same viewpoint.

Resources/useful links

Google Maps

Texts*

Collection of objects, e.g. replica Roman coins and artefacts, pieces of pottery (from any era), Victoriana, pre-decimalization coins

Loan Collections*

Local photographs

* See Resources section