effects of changes in the way goods are made, transported and traded; and how humans relate to and affect the environment. An understanding of the concept of citizenship can be developed through finding out about the role of organisations and individuals in the local community both in the past and present.

As discussed in section 1.2, the processes of historical enquiry, as well as the content of history, are essential to social and emotional, as well as cognitive, development. Children learn to express an opinion, weigh up evidence, listen to the views of others, and give their own interpretation to support an argument, while accepting that there can be more than one valid interpretation and that, even for apparently straightforward questions, there may be no one 'right' answer.

2 The development of children’s historical thinking

Research in cognitive psychology related to each of these strands of historical thinking suggests the kinds of thinking in history we may expect from children at 5 years old and how these may be built upon during primary education. It has sometimes been suggested that history is not appropriate for young children, because their learning should be based on direct and concrete experiences; this view is now very much refuted. Also the past is an intrinsic part of children’s experience, through family history, through myths, legends and folk-tales, and through the buildings and place-names they are familiar with. By focusing on and developing their questions about these experiences, children can be helped to think about the past and their place in it in an embryonic, but genuinely historical, way.

2.1 Understanding the concept of time

Concepts of time emerge slowly. Smith and Tomlinson (1977) found that 8 year olds still had little understanding of duration, of what is meant by a short or a long time. Crowther (1982) found that 7 year olds perceive change simply as the substitution of one thing for another. Piaget (1956) suggested the sequence in which concepts of time develop. Firstly, children learn to place events in order, then to measure intervals of time, and, finally, to understand that events can occur at the same time. Piaget's work on number (Piaget, 1952a) showed how young children are in the process of learning both how to form sequences of numbers and to sort objects into sets with shared attributes. In the context of history, then, they may begin to put artefacts, photographs and familiar events in chronological sequence, and to make sets of, for example, ‘very old’, ‘old’ and ‘new’.

Young children are already familiar with the language of time (for example, ‘yesterday’, ‘before you were born’, ‘long ago’) and, as they get older, they can develop more precise concepts (‘century’, ‘decade’). Stories introduce children to vocabulary which is particularly related to
the past ('castle', 'spinning wheel', 'knight', 'peasant'), and gradually they can extend their understanding of this specialised vocabulary and relate it to particular, historical periods (Roundhead, bow and arrow, moat). Words are often learned piecemeal, through use; it is important therefore, when teaching, to focus on such words when they arise, to discuss them and to use them. Concepts that are often used when looking at change, such as 'fashion', 'power' and 'trade', should also be focused on to ensure pupils understand what is meant by them.

2.2 Inferences about sources

Piaget found that young children's thinking is dominated by their own perceptions and emotions, but that gradually they take in (or assimilate) information, store it, and apply it in new contexts. When new information does not fit into their existing mental patterns, they adjust these patterns accordingly (this process is known as accommodation). This is consistent with the view that children become increasingly able to make inferences about the past and about historical sources and to justify their deductions. Piaget (1928) found that at 7 years old, children begin to use 'because' and 'therefore' correctly. He also found that they become increasingly able to recognise chance and to estimate probability (Piaget and Inhelder, 1951). This pattern in development applied to historical sources has been endorsed by subsequent research (for example, Peel, 1960; Hallam, 1975; Cooper, 1991, 1992).

Children can then ask of any source, whether it be a button, a building, or a site:

- How was it made?
- How was it used?
- What difference did it make to the people who used it?

In order to answer these questions, they also need to consider the following:

- What do we know for certain?
- What reasonable guesses can we make?
- What would we like to know?

These questions encapsulate the nature of historical enquiry.

2.3 Interpretations

Through using available sources to construct their own accounts of the past (in role-play, pictures, writing and models), children learn that accounts of the past may differ, because evidence is incomplete and reconstructions are made from different viewpoints and for different audiences.

Although Piaget (1956) suggested that young children find it difficult to see different perspectives, subsequent research has shown that, if they are motivated, children can change social, visual and conversational perspective (Cox, 1986). Knight (1989) found that 60 per cent of 6 year
olds could retell a story from another viewpoint and 32 per cent could explain an apparently strange attitude in the past.

One way for young children to form their own reconstructions is through 'Let's pretend' play. Winnicott (1974) saw play as essential in forming a relationship with powerful events, hero figures, paintings and pieces of music, and Moyles (1989) described play situations stimulated by a pretend castle, a Victorian kitchen, a museum or a ship. The role of the adult is to offer the stimulus (a story or a visit), to provide materials for initiating free play (for turning the house-corner into a castle, a ship, or an old kitchen), and to observe. Adults can then extend the play with questions (e.g. Why have you built the castle here? How can you lift the draw-bridge?), suggestions (e.g. Are you going to have a feast?), and by introducing new resources (e.g. books and pictures). Young children are limited by immaturity and lack of knowledge, but their reconstructions, whether play, models or drawings, can be increasingly related to evidence as they find out more about what is known.

Woodhouse and Wilson (1990) showed how, as children grow older, investigations based on available evidence can be structured over a long period to develop into role-play and drama related to a particular event.

Children can also compare and explain accounts and reconstructions made by others. These may be:

- illustrations in different books (e.g. of a Greek myth);
- different versions of a story (e.g. in old and modern history books);
- different oral accounts of well-known events;
- theme-park, or museum reconstructions;
- entertainments (e.g. epic films such as Anthony and Cleopatra or 'Old Time Music Hall').

For further ideas, see Little and John, 1986, and the publication Into the Past: a list of historical fiction for primary children produced by Wiltshire County Council. (More detail on 'story' is given in Section 3 Activity 4.)