3 Activities

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of the activities in this section is first for you to experience the process of historical thinking at your own level, using a variety of sources, before using the activities with your pupils. The activities are divided into those for key stage 1 and those for key stage 2, so that you can focus on the activities for your particular key stage, although you should read through all the activities.

You should work through the activities in the following way:

1. Try the activities by yourself, taking on the role of both teacher and pupil.
2. Consider how the activities reflect national curriculum key elements and study units for the particular key stage that they are intended for. Consider also how they relate to those historical skills and concepts described in section 1.4.
3. Think about how you would use these activities with your pupils, and whether you would need to adapt or develop them for your purpose.
4. Choose some suitable activities with your mentor (the number will depend on the topic you are covering) and incorporate them into your teaching.

Different activities are suggested depending on which key stage you are focusing on, relating to the prescribed content in the different study units, although there is overlap; oral history, making timelines, history through story and interpreting pictures, for example, are suitable activities for children at all key stages, although their levels of response will be different. These activities should not be used in isolation with pupils, but would be part of a larger topic.

You may find it helpful when you first try out the activities to work with other colleagues at school, such as your mentor. Working with others raises a greater variety of questions, leads to hypotheses which need to be explored and argued, and so stimulates further thought. This is equally true for children. If pupils are taught the kinds of questions to ask and how to go about answering them, they are capable of sustained, varied and valid group discussion, even when no teacher is present (see Biott, 1984; Prisk, 1987; and Cooper, 1991, 1992).

3.2 Key stage 1

Time and change

Aims

- To explore how sequences of historical sources can illustrate change and raise questions about the causes and effects of change.
- To identify similarities and differences between present and past times.

Activity 1a
Method
1 Select a sequence of artefacts that reflects change (e.g. pictures, children's books, family or local photographs, seaside postcards, domestic artefacts, video clips from old television programmes). The process of selection raises various questions:

- How many items should be included?
- What changes are illustrated?
- How clear is the sequence?
- How much knowledge is needed to deduce a sequence?
- How narrow a time-span is suitable?
- Were new books written long ago (e.g. Beatrix Potter books)?
- Are artefacts replicas?
- Are they typical? (Are there other examples? Were they used by only one group of people?)
- Should they reflect more than one culture?
- Were pictures made at the time or reproduced?
- Do old things appear unworn and vice-versa?

Such considerations should not be seen as difficulties but rather as prompting questions which lie at the heart of historical thinking.

2 Put the items in chronological order.
   (a) What changes does the sequence illustrate?
   (b) What do you think caused the changes?
   (c) How were people's lives affected by these changes?

Note: You might find the following questions useful when considering how you could develop or adapt this activity for your own key stage 1 pupils:

- How would you organise the activity?
- How could pupils be involved in the selection?
- Could children bring artefacts from home?
- How would you convey the concept of change and encourage them to be aware of some of the considerations listed above?
- How could the activity fit into a wider topic?

ACTIVITY 1b Timelines

Aims
- To provide pupils with a method for sorting, matching, sequencing and organising artefacts and other information about the past.
- To explore the issue of contemporaneity with pupils.
- To help pupils sequence events, for example events from today's news.
- To describe changes over a period of time.
Method

Timelines are easy to make and store and can be a temporary or permanent feature of any classroom. They provide a useful visual teaching aid and can be the basis of many highly practical classroom activities.

They can be made in two different ways. The first uses a piece of string or washing line and a set of pegs. The children can then sort out pictures, labels and lightweight artefacts (see Figure 1 (a)).

The second method is to have a large piece of card, marked with a permanent baseline, with a limited number of time markers. This can be placed on a flat surface for the sorting of three-dimensional objects (see Figure 1 (b)).

![Figure 1 (a)](image)

**FIGURE 1**
Two types of timeline

The following are suggestions for how timelines can be used with pupils:

1. **Changing times**

   Select a series of pictures from different historical periods. Arrange them to allow a journey back in time. Talk to the pupils about similarities and differences. Select a series of items or pictures which reflect change over time to fit in with a class topic, for example household technology, transport, homes, toys, school or family life. Ask the pupils to sort the items out and arrange them from the oldest to the newest and to explain their choice.

2. **Family history**

   Make personal timelines using photographs, clothes or artefacts associated with the different stages of a child’s growth and development from birth to their present age. Ask pupils to talk about when they were 1, 2, 3 years old, and so on, and to make a cartoon strip, showing the major events that have happened in their life in chronological order (see Figure 2).
3  A day in the life

Take photographs or use pictures of everyday school activities for your class. Ask the children to arrange them in the correct order in which they happen. Extend this idea beyond the length of the school day, for example by placing a sun symbol at the left-hand end of the line and a moon at the other end. Encourage children to use time vocabulary such as 'before', 'after', 'day' and 'bedtime' as they talk to you about their choice of sequence. This idea can also be used with older infants to look at the days of the week, and months and seasons of the year, or even to look back over a decade using a few key dates and events and to explore the idea of different generations, for example baby, child, teenager, grandparent.

4  Storylines

Ask children to sequence events from a story or rhyme, and to make a class concertina book or a cartoon strip to show the sequence of events.

5  The built environment

Select photographs of buildings in your immediate locality, showing how they have changed over time. Can pupils recognise the building? Can they detect what has changed and what has remained the same? Are there any clues in the pictures which might help the children sort the photographs out or find out more about their area in the past?
Note: Here are some suggestions for when you try out these activities on your pupils:

- Allow the pupils to be involved as much as is feasible in the selection of sources for the activities.
- Observe closely what they do, for example note down the vocabulary they use and the types of activities they find more difficult than others.
- Question the pupils about the reasons for their choices.
- What do you notice about their historical knowledge and methodology? Do they have misconceptions about the past?
- How could you adapt these activities to further develop your pupils' sense of time and concept of change?

Oral sources

Aims

- To use an oral source and related photographs to make deductions about the past.
- To identify and explain differences between past and present times.

Method

1. Contact an elderly person who would enjoy talking about the past. This can fit in well with topics such as homes, health, schools, holidays, clothes. Talking to someone about changes in their work (e.g. a florist, baker or miner) can be part of a workplace study, which involves economic awareness and industrial understanding. Interviewing someone brought up in another part of the world, or from a different environment in this country, will link with a geography project on other places. Community centres and local organisations may help (e.g. the Willowbank Urban Studies Centre, or the Black Women's Oral History Group in Southwark).

2. Decide on a focus for discussion and possible questions. Looking at photographs or family heirlooms, or a visit to a familiar site, may generate conversation. A tape-recorded discussion will help you to refer back later.

3. How did the discussion involve the evaluation of sources? How could other interviews also involve interpretation of history.

Note: Consider how you could develop this activity with your pupils to create an oral history project, which preferably relates to a particular topic that they are studying.

Interpretations - interviews

Aims

- To focus on different interpretations of the past.
- To understand why different stories can give different versions of what happened.
- To distinguish between a fact and a point of view.
Method

1 Decide on an event in the past which many people would remember (for example, the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, or the Gulf War). Interview several people old enough to remember the event. Decide on three questions, for example:

   For the Coronation:
   (a) Describe the event.
   (b) How did you know about it?
   (c) How did it affect you?

   For the Gulf War:
   (a) How did it begin?
   (b) What happened?
   (c) Why did it end?

2 Identify what are facts and what are points of view in the interviewees' responses, and list them.

   Consider how you distinguish facts from points of view.

3 What events might pupils like to find out about? What topics might such an enquiry be part of?

Activity 4

Interpretations – stories

Aims

- To develop an ability to understand different interpretations of history, and to gain an awareness of the past through analysing:
  - stories from different periods and cultures, including myths, folk-tales, legends and stories about historical events;
  - eyewitness accounts of historical events;
  - fictional stories set in the past.

Note: The Oxford English Dictionary defines legend, folk tale and myth as the following.

legend an unorthodox or non-historical story, handed down by tradition from early times and popularly regarded as historical.

folk-tale a popular story handed down by oral tradition from a more or less remote antiquity.

folk a nation, myth or tribe.

myth a purely fictitious narrative usually involving supernatural powers, actions or events and embodying some popular idea concerning natural and historical phenomena.

Method

1 Select a source from one of the above categories, i.e. legend, folk-tale, myth, historical story, eyewitness account or fictional story set in the past. Use an analysis sheet to consider how it may be used to develop historical thinking. Below, an example is given for When I Was Little by Marie Williams (Williams, 1991). Adapt it to suit your source.
Analysis sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>ISBN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family history</td>
<td>When I Was Little</td>
<td>Marie Williams</td>
<td>Walker Books</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>07445 1765-6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Style
Illustrations
Synopsis
Large print (about 1.5 words per page, with simple speech bubbles). Humorous, strip cartoon style, plenty of detail. Granny has rosy recollections of her childhood, when icecream tasted of cream and babies never cried.

Change/
continuity
Cause/
consequence
Key features
of past situations
Compare pictures: 'we didn’t have these ... but we did have these'.
How are they different? Why?
Make a list of these features.

Different interpretations of history
(a) Place the things Granny says into three sets: things that are true, things which may not be true and things that are false. (This could be done by each pupil choosing an example to draw, and writing a caption, on separate cards.)
(b) Sort the things in these sets out into topics (e.g. weather, facts, feelings, rules, play, warnings, food).
(c) Why do you think Granny said things that are probably or definitely not true?

Source evaluation
Ask your own Granny or an older relative about, for example, the weather when they were little, or the clothes people wore. Then ask for photographs of when they were little. Do they tell the same story? Make your own 'Granny comes to visit' book, or something similar.

Change/continuity
Make a page saying 'she/he didn’t have these, but she/he had these ...'.

Different interpretations
Compare with other people’s ‘Granny comes to visit’ books. Do they all tell the same story?

Cross-curricular extensions
Science
Weather – keep records: ‘it never rained in summer’?
Energy: steam, electricity.
How long do lollipops last? How is icecream made?
Space travel – first man on the moon – the moon...

Maths
Journeys to school: ‘We walked four miles to school.’
Maths – do we do it like this?

Geography
Journey to school.
Foods, now and then.
Grannies who lived in other places.

English
Let’s pretend play: when Granny was little.
Questionnaires/interviews.
Book-making.

2 Using the model reproduced as Figure 3, represent your source in diagrammatic form.
FIGURE 3
Using stories as starting points for history

ACTIVITY 5  Using a site
In studying history all children need to have the opportunity to explore buildings and sites and other aspects of the history around them. Every locality provides evidence about the past that children can investigate. These visible remains of the past are as important to the understanding of history as are artefacts and written documents.
At key stage 1, local people, buildings, artefacts and simple written documents can be a starting point for a study of a site. With the building environment children need to be encouraged to ask the following key historical questions:

- What is the place like now?
- Has it always looked like this?
- How has it changed?
- Why and when did these changes take place?
- Why was it built in this way?
- What was it built for?
- Who used it and for what?
- What is its use today?

A useful resource for understanding the use of a site is the English Heritage video on Key Stage 1 Curriculum: Teaching on Site. Posing these questions about a site develops a child’s understanding of the concepts of change and continuity.

At each stage of their investigations, children should be encouraged to consider the use of evidence. The ways in which some historical sites have been reconstructed also allow children to explore the issues raised under different interpretations of history.

Site visits provide children with opportunities to engage in observing, mapping, sketching, measuring, interviewing, taking photographs and in dramatic reconstructions.

### 3.3 Key stage 2

**Portraits as historical sources**

**Aims**

- To use a portrait to make deductions about the past.
- To relate a portrait to information from other sources.
- To comment on the usefulness of sources for a particular enquiry.
- To compare the usefulness of different sources.

**Method**

1. Select the following three sources about a well-known person related to one of the history study units:

   - A portrait [see list of postcards, slides and prints available from the National Portrait Gallery. You can effectively enlarge postcards to A3 size and laminate them.]
   - One extract from a secondary source – an adults’ (or children’s) book describing the person.
   - If possible, a contemporary description of the person, i.e. written at the time that the person was living.
2 Discuss the portrait:
(a) Who is represented?
(b) What does it manage to convey (e.g. wealth, status, pride, beauty)?
(c) How does it convey these messages (e.g. pose, facial expression, clothing, composition, background, size, objects depicted with sitter)?
(d) Why was it painted?
(e) Does it seem to have been painted as a result of a live sitting?
(f) What does it tell us for certain about the person? What reasonable guesses can we make? What do we not know?

3 Discuss the secondary source:
(a) What does this tell us about the person?
(b) What evidence is this information based on?

4 Discuss the contemporary written source:
(a) Who wrote it?
(b) Why was it written?
(c) How did the person know?
(d) What does it tell us for certain? What reasonable guesses can we make? What do we not know?

5 What historical investigation may be aided by these sources?

**Activity 7**  
Information technology and historical investigations

**Aims**
- To make deductions from sources.
- To comment on the usefulness of sources to answer a question (e.g. Did people live as long in Victorian times as they do today? What names were popular in Victorian times? Did Victorian people have large families?).

**Method**
1. Become familiar with a simple database program (e.g. OUR FACTS).
2. Decide on fields of information which could be collected from gravestones (e.g. date of birth, date of death, age, first name, second name, decoration on stone, size of family).
3. Collect information for each field from a local cemetery.
4. Type into database.
5. Decide on a question to investigate.
6. Print out findings as a bar chart or graph.
7. What do you know for certain, and what reasonable guesses can you make from these findings?
8. What else would you like to know?
9. What aspect of life in Victorian Britain might this be related to?

**Note:** In undertaking such work with children, it is important to be sensitive to the possibility of recent bereavements, and to religious and cultural differences in attitudes to death. As with family history, it is important to explain the purpose of the visit to parents and to enlist their support.
**Local history**

**Aims**
- To make deductions from sources.
- To put together information drawn from different sources.
- To comment on the usefulness of different sources for describing change over a period of time.
- To give reasons for changes.
- To recognise that some things have changed and some things have stayed the same.
- To show awareness that events usually have more than one cause.
- To describe different features of an historical period.

**Method**

1. Visit your local history library. Find out about a key person, event or period of change in your community. Select a range of sources related to this (for example, census returns, maps, newspaper cuttings, photographs). Use the sources to investigate a relevant question.

**Note:** When selecting the focus for the local history study, think about how it can be related to national events, for example a local outbreak of cholera might have been connected to a national public health campaign. When deciding how you could use this activity with your class, ask yourself the following questions:
- Would they work alone or in groups?
- What questions might they investigate?
- How could they present their findings?

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**Evaluating interpretations of the past**

**Aims**
- To consider why reconstructions of the past may differ.

**Method**

1. Do a brainstorm to come up with a variety of historical reconstructions for a given period. For example:
   - Children in Victorian Britain: films (e.g. *Oliver*), Christmas cards, children's history books, children's fiction;
   - Roman Britain: films (e.g. *Up Pompeii* - starring Frankie Howerd), Butser Iron Age Village reconstruction, the book *Asterix in Britain*, Alan Sorrel's illustrations in children's history books, children's fiction (e.g. *Rosemary Sutcliffe*).

Select three different types of reconstruction.

2. Identify an aspect which is common to all the reconstructions (e.g. buildings or clothes) and write notes about how this aspect is depicted in each of them.
3 Compare your findings and consider reasons why the reconstructions may present the historical period differently from each other. Ask yourself the following questions:
   (a) Who produced the reconstruction?
   (b) Who was the intended audience?
   (c) When was it produced?
   (d) What sources were used and how valid were they?
   (e) Why was it produced (to entertain, amuse, inform, create a myth, search for truth)?

4 Which interpretation is most valid?

Note: You should consider how you could structure questions for pupils, based around this activity, which would reflect the key element interpretations of history; pupils need to be asked to identify the ways in which the past is interpreted differently, and the reasons for these different interpretations.

**Activity 10**

**Timelines**

Timelines in school may be individual timelines or made collaboratively with different groups working on separate themes within a study unit. They may be made on a single sheet of paper or may be on a strip of paper the length of the room, corridor or hall. They are not necessarily linear: 1 metre of thread, with 1 cm representing 1 year, will fit on to a sheet of A4 paper. A timeline can also be made from a piece of string with pegs on it or marked segments along a bench top display. (Figures 1a and 1b show two examples of timelines — see key stage 1 Activity 1b.) They can display artefacts, drawings, models, photographs or postcards. Scales and units vary. These may just chart the first five years of a child's life or cover centuries, decades or many years for older children. The age and ability of pupils will determine what is most appropriate. Children can devise their own scales (this involves a lot of mathematics) or complete a prepared timeline. Through the process of making a timeline, children (and adults) use a number of reference books and other sources. They are acquiring knowledge in an active way. They are also asking questions which lie at the heart of history (for example: Is it typical? Can we give it a precise date? Does the timeline show 'progress'? What is progress? Why did things change? How did the changes affect people? Was everyone affected? Was everyone affected in the same way? Were the changes beneficial? To whom?). By structuring the way pupils present and explain their timelines to an audience, it is possible to ensure that these questions are addressed.

By devising timelines on the themes suggested for a key stage 2 study unit, it is possible to cross-refer, and so to cover chronological understanding.

1 Select a study unit from the programmes of study for key stage 2.
2 Collect a number of relevant (children's) books and other visual sources, for example postcards and photographs.
3 Make a timeline for different key themes within the study unit.

Note: You may find it helpful to refer back to the advice and suggestions given for timelines activities in Activity 1b for key stage 1 pupils.