

Why is diversity so important?

How can we approach it?

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Imagine what the following scenarios tell you about the past – a Tudor role-play of Queen Elizabeth visiting Kenilworth Castle; a photograph of London during the Blitz; a picture of Viking warriors attacking Lindisfarne monastery. The first of the images can perhaps draw on a family visit to an event or a school trip, provide a sense of fun and relate to ways in which the past is typically presented to people. Each image provides a vivid picture of a time in the past and is a great lead-in to a topic.

Having said that, if they are the only images which children have of different times in the past they would clearly present a stereotypical view of the periods in which each event happened. Teaching diversity provides an essential means of ensuring that children and adults can critically evaluate how well such images relate to different times, by providing insights into the lives of a diverse range of people.

What does the National Curriculum say?

The National Curriculum makes a broad reference to diversity. When defining purposes of studying history, it states that pupils should understand:

...the diversity of societies and relationships between different groups, as well as their own identity and the challenges of their time.

(DfE,2013).

The aims of the curriculum include the following: reference to 'these islands'; 'how Britain has influenced and been influenced by the wider world'; 'characteristics of past non-European societies'; 'understanding the connections between local, regional, national and international history [and] between cultural, economic, military, political, religious and social history' (DfE,2013). Non-statutory examples that illustrate diversity include Rosa Parks and Mary Seacole as significant individuals at Key Stage 1

and topics such as Benin and Islamic Civilisation at Key Stage 2. Although they reflect Black or non-anglocentric perceptions of the past, they only go so far in helping children to understand the diverse experiences of people in the past. There is a need to plan for learning about diverse experiences of people within and between societies as a matter of course, in order to provide a holistic understanding of the past.

If you refer to the Historical Association website, the section relating to diversity has an article by Ilona Aronovsky which provides a rich range of examples and approaches to developing diversity. This article sets out to complement this section, by providing some strategies for implementing an organic approach to diversity in your history teaching.

From big picture history to diversity

How can diversity be developed to provide a more holistic understanding of the past and in so doing enable us to teach primary history as effectively as possible? In order to appreciate that there was more to life than living in Elizabeth's court or being a marauding Viking, it is necessary to find out what different people were doing and what was happening in different places at that time. By looking at the rich, the poor and a range of jobs, homes and people's lives in different localities we can get a more broadly-based understanding of the time. Given that you cannot teach everything, however, it is necessary to have some criteria for selecting what we teach. Overall, we agree with Claire (1996):

In the real world everyone belongs to all three categories since each of us is male/female, and middle, upper and working class, and from an ethnic minority or the white English group in British society. In an inclusive curriculum there are good reasons for not treating race, gender and class separately, not just to match the real world but



Rosa Parks



Mary Seacole

also to avoid the danger of creating hierarchies or forgetting links.

(Claire, 1996, p.10)

You need to relate this to big picture history – which requires providing children with a chronologically-secure knowledge of the past, together with teaching British, local and world history as a structure for understanding the past. At the same time, it requires us to consider people in ‘these islands, together with those from different localities and the nations of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland’ and in other parts of the world. Diversity requires us to consider strands such as gender, the rich and poor and the experiences of people from different ethnicities within societies. By acknowledging links, similarities and differences between all of these dimensions it is possible to provide a more meaningful appreciation of the past than one which does not go beyond narrowly focusing on the exploits of Elizabeth I, London during the Blitz or Viking warriors.

It is also possible for this to provide a basis for pupils to identify different aspects of the past and use it as a background to understanding the world in which they live. You could contrast our stated scenarios with the following – Queen Elizabeth I at court could be contrasted with her meeting with the ‘pirate’ Grace O’Malley, alias Gaelic chieftain Granuaile, or pictures of a variety of women in Elizabethan times. While teaching the London Blitz, you could produce a

photo of Ita Ekpenyon – an African air raid warden in Marylebone. Viking warriors could be contrasted with accounts of Vikings engaged in domestic chores.

How can we plan for this?

In planning we need to consider the following:

- ensuring that children have the opportunity to study a range of people’s experiences within topics – men, women, people from different ethnicities, regions and localities. At Key Stage 1 select individuals such as Rosa Parks, Grace O’ Malley, Mary Seacole and Nelson Mandela as well as Florence Nightingale. Some topics such as the Romans, Saxons and Vikings could also be linked to broader themes such as people who have come to Britain up to the present day.
- ensuring that children are involved in developing their understanding of diversity through the process by which we teach it. We need to allow them to ask open questions of pictures and sources and not be too worried if we can’t always provide the answers. This is a learning point in itself. For example, children can start by exploring the life of Elizabeth I and deciding what this tells them about the time. This could be followed by exercises which look at the experiences of rich and poor people, together with Black migrants in Tudor times. This could provide an opportunity to reflect on their perceptions of the time in which we live.

This will enable them to have a more profound understanding of diversity in the past and challenge their own and other's misconceptions.

- ensuring that children treat diversity historically. For example, a study of the First World War could start by focusing on the life of Walter Tull, a footballer who became the first black officer. He was exceptional; it would be inappropriate to assume that his experience reflected the experiences of all black soldiers. A local study at Key Stage 2 could have the question – How well would soldiers from our locality have recognised Walter's story? This could be followed by exploring the lives of other soldiers from the locality, other parts of Britain and the rest of the world.
- ensuring that children are aware that there are gaps and omissions in a variety of sources (e.g. textbooks, pictures) and that women and people from ethnic minorities are often either under-represented or not acknowledged. For example, making children aware that Roman soldiers were likely to have come from different parts of the Empire and of the variety of roles that women have played at different times in the past.

In conclusion, consider diversity when deciding both what to teach and how this relates to children's learning of the past.

Case study 1: Does learning about Elizabeth I tell us all we need to know about Tudor Women?



Queen Elizabeth was exceptional in her power and authority as a monarch, while other women in Tudor times were unable to do certain jobs such as becoming lawyers or holding political power. However, rich women could be significant at court and play important roles in organising family estates and giving medical help to the poor. Poor women did a

wide range of jobs – silk-making, printing, working on the land and shop-keeping for example.

- Stage 1:** Select a picture of Queen Elizabeth I. Ask the question – What does this suggest about the lives of women in Elizabethan times?
- Stage 2:** Look at four other pictures of other Elizabethan women. Ask the question –

What more do these tell you about the lives of Elizabethan women? How typical was Queen Elizabeth I?

Stage 3: Create a grid with the following titles: Rich, Poor, Jobs, Punishments, Power, Other. The children sort cards relating to different characteristics of women's lives in Tudor England. These cards are one of the resources you can download on the HA website with the Primary History Scheme of Work/The Elizabethans/All banquets and fun?

Stage 4: Children review a textbook and/or a school website (e.g. BBC Bitesize www.bbc.co.uk/guides/ztqbr82) to assess how accurately it reflects the diverse nature of women's lives in Tudor times.

Review: How well does our study of Elizabeth I tell us about women's lives in Tudor times?

Case study 2: What does the Lant Street teenager tell us about Roman Britain?

In 2015 2,000 skeletons were found in London dating back to prehistoric and Roman times. Using DNA, archaeologists have made some very interesting discoveries, including the skeleton of a 14-year-old girl, since named the Lant Street teenager. The website shows a reconstruction of what she may have looked like, together with a clip of an archaeologist telling us about her – that she came from Africa, had lived in London at least three years and was blue-eyed. Other skeletons include Mansell Street man whose ancestry was north African, a gladiator from Eastern Europe and Harper Road woman, a native Briton who adopted Roman ways soon after the conquest. As this involves using skeletons, you may want to look at the website to reflect on any sensitive issues that may be involved.



Table 1: Some people who have come to Britain from earliest times to the present day (This relates to Case Study 3)

The Normans 1066	Flemish weavers – 1200-1400	Africans – AD 43	Jewish people – late 19th/mid 20th centuries
We came as invaders and our leader became King of England.	We came to weave cloth in the wool trade.	Some of us came over as Roman soldiers and settlers.	We came as we were being attacked because of our religion.
Huguenots 16th /17th century	Irish people mid-19th century	Caribbean people – especially 1940s onwards	People from India, Bangladesh and Pakistan – especially 1940s onwards
We came because we were being attacked because of our religion.	We have come for work for many years but especially when there was a famine in our country.	We helped Britain in the First and Second World Wars and have come here to work.	We helped Britain in the First and Second World Wars and have come here to work.
People from Poland and Eastern Europe – 1940s	People from Poland and eastern Europe – today	People from Australia, New Zealand and Canada – especially 1940s onwards	Africans in the 17th and 18th century
We came because our countries were invaded during and after the Second World War	We have come for work.	We helped Britain in the First and Second World Wars and have come here to work.	Many of us were brought over as servants and slaves.

Stage 1: You could begin with the picture of a typical Roman soldier or a picture in your textbook of Romans in Britain. The children consider the following questions – What does it tell you about the Romans? What doesn't it tell you?

Stage 2: Look at the picture of the skeleton of the Lant Street teenager. Children decide in small groups what questions they would like to ask the archaeologists about the skeleton.

Stage 3: Teacher is hot-seated as an archaeologist using the reconstruction picture from the website. You could also draw on the other finds – Mansell Street man, the Gladiator from Eastern Europe and Harper Road woman. The children could watch 'Septimius Severus and black Roman soldiers' (BBC Bitesize) to see how far this resource answers questions raised during the hot seating.

Review: Children consider how far this has changed their views of the Romans in Britain.

Case study 3: What has a twentieth-century Polish grave in Worcester got to do with our lesson on the Romans?

Polish people have been coming to the UK since the early twentieth century. They mainly came for employment or to set up their own businesses. During the Second World War the majority of Poles came

to the United Kingdom after the Germany and the Soviet Union invaded their country. The Polish made a significant contribution to Britain during the war; many then settled here after it ended.

This grave is in Astwood Cemetery, Worcester. Jan Przyszlak came to be a soldier (*zoldnier*) in the Second World War – as should be spotted from the dates on his grave



Stage 1: Look at the picture of the Polish grave. Ask children the following questions: What can you learn about the people who have come to this country? What questions do you have? How far does information card help you to answer them?

Stage 2: Using a map of Britain, Europe and the world, the teacher models where s/he comes from, his/her parents and grandparents. Children are given maps and have five minutes to talk about their backgrounds to each other. Ask a couple of children to say what they've learnt about each other.



Resources

Stage 3: Get the children to look at an information card that tells you why the Polish community came to this country after the war.

Stage 4: Children sequence cards (See Table 1) showing why people have come to Britain from earliest times to the present day. Children group the cards into reasons why people came to Britain.

Stage 5: Children select the cards which have most in common with why the Romans came.

Stage 6: Children select the cards which have most in common with the reasons why Polish people came in the 1940s and 1950s.

Review: The class discusses the following question – Has finding Jan’s grave in Worcester got anything in common with our lesson on the Romans or not? Explain why you think this.

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HA resources

Ilona Aronovsky, ‘Diversity and the History Curriculum’. Available as a PDF on the HA website. Published in *Primary History*, 65 (Autumn 2013). This issue includes a range of articles devoted to diversity and inclusion.

Paul Bracey (Spring 2015) ‘From Home to the Front: World War I (1914-18) in the Primary Classroom’ in *Primary History*, 69, pp. 14-19. Bracey tells how the story of Walter Tull, a footballer and the first British black officer in the First World War, relates to the theme of diversity.

Go to Primary Scheme of Work/The Elizabethans/ Beyond Elizabeth’s Court: What was it like to live in Elizabeth times? on the HA website and download the PDF. The section also includes Tudor Women cards as a card-sorting activity.

BBC (2007) ‘Septimius Severus and black Roman soldiers’, BBC Bitesize. Available at www.bbc.co.uk/education/clips/z4sfb9q

Ghosh, P. (2015) ‘DNA study finds London was ethnically diverse from start’, *BBC News*. Available at: www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-34809804 -

The National Holocaust Education Centre, Acre Edge Road, Laxton, Newark, Nottinghamshire, NG22 0PA. Website: www.nationalholocaustcentre.net/ This museum has a Key Stage 2 exhibition called ‘Journeys’ which focuses on the Kindertransport as well as presentations from survivors.

IIS (n.d.) *Ireland in Schools*. Available at www.iisresource.org This site includes a range of resources which bring an Irish dimension to many aspects of diversity.

National Archives (n.d.) *Moving Here: 200 years of migration in England*. Available at <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/> and www.movinghere.org.uk/

National Archives (n.d.) *The Black Presence: Black settlers in Tudor times*. Available at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/blackhistory/early_times/settlers.htm

NBHA (n.d.) *Northampton Black History Association*. Available at www.northants-black-history.org.uk/ The education tab in this includes several teaching resource such as Key Stage 1 and 2 packs related to Walter Tull.

Westminster City Archives *Westminster At War*. Available at www.westendatwar.org.uk/page/itaekpenyon05?path=0p3p11p - Ita Ekpenyon

Zosia Biegus, ‘Polish Resettlement Camps in the UK 1946-1969’, www.polishresettlementcampsintheuk.co.uk/camps2.htm

Bracey, P., Gove-Humphries, A. and Jackson, D. (2011) ‘Teaching diversity in the history classroom’ in Davies, I. (ed.) *Debates in History Teaching*. London: Routledge, pp. 172-85. This textbook is in process of being revised to relate to National Curriculum 2014. It includes references to debates associated with diversity.

Claire, H. (1996) *Reclaiming our Pasts: equality and diversity in the primary school*, Place of publication: Trentham Books. Although written some time ago this text provides useful insights and support in teaching diversity.