



BRITAIN AND THE WIDER WORLD IN TUDOR TIMES THE SPANISH ARMADA

TEACHERS' NOTES

This is a simulation that we have played twice with two different year 3 and 4 classes. It is highly interactive and stimulating, and a very effective way of involving children in a range of issues associated with the topic. We introduced the story of the Armada, outlining the main parties involved and the nature of the conflict. The pupils know about Elizabeth and Philip, the conflict between Catholicism and Protestantism, and the Spanish assembly of an invasion fleet at Lisbon.

Now we give the children a problem to solve, taking two perspectives: those of the English and the Spanish.

Concerning literacy, we are using mini-writing frames in the explanation genre, that is, introducing the connective **because** into the writing.

The writing occurred in a follow-up writing lesson. Here the pupils were able to use their mini-writing frames to inform their writing.

This simulation has worked extremely well with classes we have taught. It provides the children with a framework of ideas to map on to the actual events of the Spanish Armada. It serves as an introduction both to the *Armada writing lesson* and to a study of the *Armada Portrait*.

Year group/class

Year 3, mixed ability and gender. Used to active whole class teaching, that is, exposition, discussion and debate as a class, as well as individual, pair and small group work linked to the overall lesson theme. The first class we worked with had two or three disadvantaged/ highly disruptive/ disturbed children. They loved the simulation, being engrossed with it and the involvement it brought.

Teaching time

Two one-hour sessions. The game can be played in an hour, but to get maximum effect it needs to be linked in to other materials and information, so as to bed the simulation into the actuality of 1588.

Learning objectives

- To face the class with the problems of the Armada from both a British and a Spanish perspective.
- To involve the pupils with an instruction genre form, that is, the rules for a game.
- To develop their causal thinking through filling in the mini-writing frames.
- To produce a narrative piece of writing from the work.

Key question

- What factors influenced the admirals of the English and Spanish fleets during the Spanish Armada campaign?

Resources

Map showing the area covered during the Armada campaign

The decision-making simulation:

- Decision sheets, rounds 1-4
- Outcome sheets, rounds 1-4

The teaching

Episode 1

Focus: Introduce and explain the idea of the game.

We asked the class if they would like to play a game as if they were taking part in the war between England and Spain. The overwhelming response was positive.

We told them that they would be either English or Spanish admirals in charge of either the English or the Spanish fleets.

They would have to tell the story of the Armada as a letter to a close friend at home.

Episode 2

Focus: Organisation. Splitting the class into groups, and then subdividing each group into teams of two or three.

We split the class up into six groups of four.

Each group then divided into two teams, a pair to each team.

One team in each group was the Spanish, the other team, the English. We found it best to stick to a pattern, Spanish to the left, English to the right. Otherwise muddle!

We told the teams that they had to take decisions at points during the Armada campaign, from the start until the end.

Each team had to give reasons for the decision that it took at each point. These they would write down in the **'We decided ... because...'** mini-writing frame for each decision. The results would be added later.

They would keep their decision sheets, thus building up a picture of the campaign as it unfolded. Throughout, they used the map to check their positions.

Each team started the simulation with a fleet of 180 ships.

Episode 3

Focus: Playing. The teams take their decisions, the simulation gets underway.

Each team then received either its English or its Spanish decision sheet for round 1, one sheet to each pair, that is, the English pair got the English sheet, the Spanish the Spanish sheet for that round.

We also gave each team the map showing England, Spain and the Spanish crown's territories in Western Europe.

They had to make sure that the other team did not see their decision sheet – the information on it was secret!

Each team then talked about and decided on its choice, and why it was made.

At the end of the round we went around each team in turn. The Spanish teams read out what they had decided to do, then the English did the same.

We entered the numbers of their decisions on a table on the board, that is, twelve decisions for the twelve teams.

Episode 4

Focus: The outcomes of the round. Looking at the consequences of decisions, evaluating the situation.

Next we gave each team an outcome sheet to read to see what had happened to their side, explaining how the sheet worked. They could identify their outcome by matching their number on the board with the same number on their outcome sheet.

They wrote in the space on the decision sheet what had happened to them and how many strips they had left.

We went through the results on the board – dismay or relief as they realised the consequences of their actions.

There was great excitement as they filled in their mini-writing frames, and realised what had happened to their fleet.

Episode 5

Focus: Continuing the simulation, building up ideas about the campaign.

We played the remaining three rounds in the same way. Excitement mounted as the struggle unfolded, with the Spanish fleet either disappearing north or making a bid for freedom along the Channel.

Learning outcomes

- The pupils learned how to work effectively in groups playing a game within clearly prescribed rules. In terms of decision-making they had to co-operate and to discuss the issues involved.
- They learned to listen, and to pay attention to the detail of the instructions.
- The pupils became involved and enthusiastic: their motivation and predisposition to study and learn markedly increased.
- A good time was had by all, while learning in depth about the course of the Armada campaign.

Nuffield Primary History project

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