

Teaching Emotive and Controversial History to 3-7 Year Olds: A Report for The Historical Association

Teaching Emotive and Controversial History to 3-7 Year Olds

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Abstract *The English government's Department for Education and Skills funded the Historical Association to produce a synoptic report called "Teaching emotive and controversial History 3 – 19" (TEACH 3-19). Below is the commissioned research paper on TEACH to 3-7 year olds, on pages 00-00 the report on TEACH 7-11 year olds.*

The National Curriculum for History and GCSE and A-level History qualifications often include areas of study that touch on social, cultural, religious and ethnic fault lines within and beyond Britain. Such areas of study include the Transatlantic Slave Trade, the Holocaust and aspects of Islamic history. These areas are sometimes avoided by teachers to steer away from controversy in the classroom.

The way such past events are perceived and understood in the present can stir emotions and controversy within and across communities. The Historical Association's report contains exemplars of effective teaching that deals with emotive and controversial history in schools across all key stages from the ages of 3 to 19. This produced a comprehensive view of current best practice in teaching these and similar issues. It recommended proven and successful approaches that enable teachers to tackle these issues in ordinary lessons through rigorous and engaging teaching while at the same time challenging discrimination and prejudice.

Evidence for this report is derived from statutory curriculum requirements,

- The Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage and the National Curriculum;
- materials to support the curriculum including QCA history schemes of work and assessment activities;
- recent government policies such as Every Child Matters and the Primary Strategy; * Ofsted Reports;
- research into children's thinking and case studies of aspects of children's learning;
- examples of curriculum organization;
- research studies linked to pedagogy;
- resources in particular children's books;
- relevant websites.

Where do opportunities currently exist in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1? The Context

The development of children's understanding of emotive and controversial history during the foundation and Key Stage 1 is closely linked with both their social and cognitive development. As children develop as social beings there are potentially more opportunities for encountering conflicting situations and issues which impact on them emotionally in their every day lives. Early years practitioners work hard to encourage children to develop positive social relationships; they foster the understanding of rules and behaviours; provide models for dealing with conflict and disagreement and support

children in their interactions with each other and within broader social groups. Children in the foundation stage and in Key Stage 1 are beginning to learn their place in the world; their own unique identity and the identities which they share with the rest of their group. In effect, children are experiencing in their daily lives many of the circumstances which underpin the controversial nature of history. Consequently, studying the dilemmas and conflicts experienced by earlier societies and individuals in the past may contribute to children's own developing understanding of dilemmas and issues which they face in their own personal and daily lives.

In terms of their cognitive development studying emotive and controversial history provides opportunities for young children to extend their knowledge of the world and consequently supports their conceptual development. The processes of doing history – asking questions – making observations – explaining and drawing conclusions are all key skills which support their overall learning. The role of language is central in developing children's understanding and in communicating their understanding to a wider audience. Studying emotive and controversial history may provide opportunities to use talk for a variety of purposes; communicating thoughts, feelings and ideas; negotiating roles; making friends; asking for help, clarification or information; relating; reflecting; reporting; narrating; arguing; presenting ideas; persuading; explaining and instructing (McDonagh and McDonagh 1999: 10)

Statutory Frameworks : The Foundation Stage Curriculum.

The foundation stage curriculum incorporates a more holistic approach to curriculum planning. History is not identified as a discrete subject, but is incorporated within the Early Learning Area, Knowledge and Understanding of the World in the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage. Specific history input is identified within the Early Learning Goal, 'Find out about past and present events in their own lives and in those of their families and other people they know' (DfEE and QCA 2000: 95). Learning opportunities which would support children in this area of learning and which are particularly relevant are;

' activities based on first-hand experiences that encourage exploration, observation, problem solving, prediction, critical thinking, decision making and discussion' and 'opportunities that help children to become aware of, explore and question issues of differences in gender, ethnicity, language, religion and culture' (page 82). The guidance also acknowledges the 'diversity of insight' which parents may provide into faiths, cultures, history and places.' (p85).

As young children learn about themselves and identity – teachers' questions which might promote them to think more critically about themselves and to appreciate difference as well as similarity include –

Who am I? How do I know that it is me? What other things apart from how I look make me me? What is the same about me and other children? What is different about me that makes me who I am ?

Since the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage adopts an holistic approach to children's development, relevant principles may be found within other learning areas. For example, within personal, social and emotional development - opportunities for children learning to respect themselves and others, respecting cultures, learning about relationships, opportunities for problem solving (p29). In communication, language and literacy – opportunities to speak, listen and represent ideas (p 45).

History National Curriculum at Key Stage 1 The history curriculum at Key Stage 1 provides teachers with considerable freedom to develop the history curriculum to meet the needs and interests of their children. It builds on the children's experiences within the Foundation Stage and extends opportunities for children to acquire a broader knowledge and understanding of the past.

Children's own personal and family histories Within the breadth of study at Key Stage 1 children learn about their own personal histories and those of their families through studying 'changes in their own lives and the way of life of their family and others around them'. Such histories may require sensitive handling by the teacher taking into account children's different backgrounds and experiences.

Anything linked with family histories has the potential to be emotive and controversial and needs dealing with sensitivity and awareness of different home situations and family structures. Children may recount painful experiences about their own lives and this may impact not only on their own feelings, but also other children within the class who hear their stories. Family trees which illustrate relationships within families are also potentially sources of controversy.

Knowledge and understanding of ways of life in the past The breadth of study includes studying the way of life of people in the more distant past living within the locality or elsewhere in Britain. This requirement is sufficiently broad to permit teachers to introduce potentially controversial and sensitive issues such as the experiences of children or the differences between rich and poor people within societies at different periods of time. In observing changes in ways of life, teachers may question who benefited from these changes and in what ways? Did all people necessarily benefit? There are opportunities to explore controversial issues through studying the diversity of different societies in the past.

Changes in the local community – the movement of peoples to, from and within the community may be studied. Children may study how different buildings, shops, schools, leisure facilities have changed/ remained the same. Some changes permit children to explore changing community needs; e.g. traffic free zones; location of markets and shops. In addition children may consider how changes have impacted on individuals within the community; for some individuals changes might have had a positive impact and for others change might have been more problematic. Change is controversial and looking at different people's experiences may enable children to appreciate different perspectives and points of view.

Older members of the community may regret the loss of particular aspects of their ways of life; e.g.; leaving doors unlocked, the absence of corner shops, the sense of community spirit. Exploring their different views offers young children additional perspectives on the world and may encourage them to question their own beliefs and values and what they consider as important.

It is important to introduce children to people from a range of cultures. Milner (1984) suggests that children as young as 3 or 4 are aware of racial differences, and many enter school with preconceived notions about different racial and ethnic groups (Plinney and Rotherham:1987). If this is the case, it is important that children are introduced to diverse histories from an early age. Moreover, for young children this is also important for the development of their own sense of their own identity.

Children may also have misconceptions about people who lived in the past and their ways of life which in some contexts could be controversial. Teachers need to be alert to particular stereotypes which may be manifested; e.g. native Americans called Red Indians; histories which portray people in the past as less civilized or backward; gender stereotypes.

Stories of significant people Teachers also have the choice to select which significant people children may learn about. Currently teachers tend to make their selection from a restricted number of people with Isambard Kingdom Brunel, Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole being the most popular figures. However, there are many opportunities to include other significant people who would be more relevant for the project.

Selection of particular people may be controversial and some sensitivity may be required in dealing with different gender roles. For example positive female role models might be antagonistic for some cultures.

This requirement also permits opportunities for teachers to include significant people within the locality. Bage (2000) drawing on principles from Foxfire draws attention to the principle that 'connections of the work to the surrounding community and the real world outside the classroom are clear' (Wigginton 1989: 26-8) and alerts the reader to possibilities at Key Stage 1 for children to ask questions such as; 'which people and what things in our community can help us find out about people who are now dead and so cannot tell us for themselves?'

Significant events Similarly, teachers may also select past events from the history of Britain and around the world and the Gunpowder Plot, the Olympics and Remembrance Day are popular topics. A more judicious selection of significant people and events however, could raise young children's awareness of controversy more fully. Re-telling the story of the Gunpowder Plot is often closely allied with the celebrations linked with Bonfire Night. In the current context, it might be appropriate to encourage children to explore motivation more fully and also to question whether Guy Fawkes' attempts to blow up parliament were justified and should be celebrated? What other ways may conflict be resolved?

The topic of remembrance may raise several sensitive issues for children who have already experienced conflict or whose families might be involved in warfare. Questions such as why do we remember? and in what ways should we remember? are potentially sensitive since they could relate to children's immediate experiences or those of their families. This point is emphasized in the Scheme of Work, What are we remembering on Remembrance Day? (DfEE and QCA:1998). The points to note remind teachers of the strong links between history and the spiritual dimensions of the curriculum and comment, ' Teachers will need to consider the extent to which these issues are appropriate for the particular circumstances of their school, as well as level of detail.'

www.ncaction.org.uk has examples of children's work showing their explanations of: Why do we have remembrance day? Why do we have war memorials?

www.theirpast-yourfuture.org.uk provides stories from war veterans which could be starting points for teachers

Knowledge, skills and understandings

knowledge, skills and understandings which underpin children's learning within the breadth of study provide opportunities for children to engage with historical enquiries and to ask and answer questions about the past. The requirement that, 'pupils should be taught to: recognize why people did things, why events happened and what happened as a result' (DfEE and QCA 1999:104) offers opportunities for young children to explore motivation and recognize that people may hold alternative viewpoints to their own. Children are required to identify differences between ways of life at different times. Exploration of change introduces children to ideas about whether change represents progress- who benefits from change and who does not? These requirements are crucial for the study of history and an understanding of the past, since they open up possibilities for reflection on experience which are outside children's immediate environment.

The National Curriculum also requires children to consider historical interpretations by identifying different ways in which the past is represented. Linked with this also is the emphasis placed on using a range of sources of information to find out about the past. These requirements have the potential to introduce young children to historical controversy and in particular to the fact that history may be interpreted from a range of perspectives. These are important skills to develop in dealing with controversy.

Interrogation of different sources of information may be controversial. Sensitivity may need to be employed when young children look at pictures about different ways of life in the past. There is the tendency by some teachers to encourage children to note things which people in the past do not have – a deficit view of the past. Children can then get the impression that people in the past were not as clever as they are now – and everything is necessarily better now. This could be emotive if children began to compare life in the past in Britain with currently developing countries. For example – they didn't have any electricity in this Victorian house – that wouldn't be very nice would it? And then learning about a village in an African country or maybe where children's relations live which has a limited electricity supply.

Images which challenge stereotypes are important sources of information for young children. E.g.; female explorers such as Mary Kingsley; the black presences in England both before and after world war 2. However, such images are not always commonly supplied in many published resource materials.

Other misconceptions may arise from children's experiences of the present. Claire discusses children looking at school pictures 25 years ago and now. A child notices that most of the children in the old picture are white, whereas in her class they are now nearly all black. The student asks the children why this might be – and the child replies, 'Because in that picture the children prayed to God to make them white so that white people wouldn't say horrible things to them. (Claire :2005b).

Schemes of Work for history

Whilst there is the potential for children at Key Stage 1 to engage with emotive and controversial issues in history, few teachers appear to realize this potential. The schemes of work for history (DfEE and QCA: 1998) were designed to support teachers in their own curriculum planning and to provide models which teachers could adapt for their own schools. In fact the publication of the schemes of work has led many schools to abandon their own schemes in favour of those produced by QCA. This has had a reductionist effect on the curriculum which has been noted by OfSTED who comment on

children's limited historical experiences deriving from the schemes of work in several of their reports.

Many schools have adopted the scheme of work linked with Florence Nightingale. The Scheme of Work raises an important question – why do we remember Florence Nightingale, but there is little opportunity within the activities for children to compare her work with those of others living at the time which would develop children's more in-depth understanding of significance and also raise controversial questions. The recent publication of assessment materials linked to the life of Mary Seacole (see below) encourages children to explore more fully how and why people are remembered.

In general the schemes of work avoid investigations which may create controversy. How are our toys different from those in the past? provides a range of interesting investigations, and teaching activities but avoids any questions which might be viewed as controversial. A more critical approach to this scheme of work could be developed through the inclusion of questions such as Did everyone have toys like this? If not, why not? or how were these toys made?

Similarly the Unit on What were homes like long ago? could be made more relevant by drawing children's attention to the differences between rich and poor people's homes in the past and providing an opportunity for children to reflect on the disparity in life styles. Children could then be encouraged to explore questions such as if you were poor – what would you feel like and how would you try to make your life better? Similar questioning about lifestyles and opportunities could be developed in Unit 3 What were seaside holidays like in the past?

The above examples illustrate how more controversial issues may be addressed through the selection of questions which involve children considering the diversity of society and also in exploring different interpretations of the past.

The publication of the schemes of work has also had a profound effect on the publication of resources for history at Key Stage 1. There is a wealth of resources linked to people and events identified within the schemes of work, but little else is published to reflect the diversity of historical experiences beyond the schemes of work.

Teacher assessment activities Key Stage 1.

Recently published assessment materials for history at Key Stage 1 (QCA:2006) suggest opportunities for assessing children's knowledge and understanding which could potentially include sensitive and controversial issues. For example, unit 1 – what was life like for people around us in the past? has suggestions for assessing children's knowledge and understanding of family and community history. The unit on How should we remember Mary Seacole provides opportunities for children to consider the nature of historical interpretations and of historical significance. Exploring questions such as Why did British people remember Florence Nightingale but forget Mary Seacole? and How should we remember Mary Seacole introduces children to historical controversy and encourages a questioning approach to historical investigations.

Inclusion statement with the National Curriculum

The National Curriculum statutory inclusion statement has three principles for developing an inclusive curriculum which are relevant for the research (www.qcarespectforall) since

they draw attention to the importance of tailoring the curriculum to meet needs within a diverse society through:

- * setting suitable learning challenges
- * responding to pupils' diverse learning needs
- *overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups of children

Respect for all suggests that the following should be considered when planning a history curriculum.

- o Teaching Britain within a world perspective
- o Exploring personal, family and community identity
- o The history of minority ethnic groups in Britain, including the development of Britain as a multicultural society
- o Understanding that migration, movement and settlement are recurring experiences
- o Pupils reflecting on their own cultural identity and debating, 'what does it mean to be British?'
- o Key political concepts, including resistance, democracy, rights, equality, justice, citizenship
- o Studying diversity (social, cultural, religious, ethnic) in British and world history
- o Recognising that for a particular historical event or process there will often be a diverse range of feelings and experiences
- o Studying different perceptions of, and narratives about the same event.
- o How different versions of the past have been arrived at
- o Challenging stereotypes
- o Including the viewpoints of non-British societies
- o The motives and achievements of significant individuals or groups who have opposed others and/or struggled for justice
- o The culture of minority ethnic groups who have been persecuted, and their contributions to other cultures.

Most of the principles above could be adopted within the Foundation and Key Stage 1 curriculum and could open up possibilities for developing more children's awareness of controversy more fully.

Opportunities within the current frameworks.

Developments in line with the Every Child Matters Agenda provide closer opportunities for working with local communities and families. This may raise teachers' awareness of particular family and community history sensitivities. It might also provide greater opportunities for tapping into these histories to resource children's learning in school.

Excellence and Enjoyment (DfES:2003a) outlines ways in which schools are to be encouraged to develop the curriculum to meet the needs and interests of their children. Particular points of relevance to the research are the requirements that schools will develop their distinctive character and ethos which might include developing close links with the community: be creative and innovative in their teaching and take ownership of the curriculum. These requirements do provide potential opportunities for schools to explore more controversial and emotive issues in history.

The new Primary Framework also argues for developing opportunities of learning literacy and mathematics across the curriculum. Speaking, Listening, Learning: Working with children in Key Stages 1 and 2 has examples of links between history and speaking and listening objectives (DfES and QCA: 2003b)

History and citizenship – citizenship and history?

There are close links between history and citizenship and several examples (particularly in terms of personal histories) used later in this report clearly exemplify these links. Many teachers may find it difficult to distinguish between the two subjects. It may be worthwhile for the project to provide some guidance here. In terms of early years education, it might be helpful to remind teachers of the key questions linked to history - how do we know? What sources of information have we used? Are they reliable? to remind teachers that history is a critical analysis of the past.

Constraints, barriers and poor practice.

OfSTED subject report (www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/annualreport0405/4.1.5.htm)

HMI note the improvements in history achievement, teaching, leadership since 1998. They comment that improvements have been greater at Key Stage 1 than at Key Stage 2 and suggest that this may be due to the flexibility of the Key Stage 1 curriculum which permits teachers to build around pupils particular needs and interests, as well as introducing them to particular historical methodology.

However, HMI note that history still remains a subject where the progress that pupils make and the quality of teaching are weaker than in most subjects. This is because of

- schools' narrow interpretation of the National Curriculum. (At Key Stage 1 the events and personalities linked to the history schemes of work dominate the curriculum and provide few opportunities for extending children's knowledge and understanding of controversial and emotive issues).
- Pupils' knowledge and understanding of key events are too fragmented; they do not know enough about key events, people and issues.
(Limited range of people and events noted above and teachers do not always make links between the children's existing knowledge, prior learning experiences in history and new learning opportunities).
- Assessment insufficiently used to support pupils' progress and not enough clarity about standards attained.
(Teachers tend to assess children's progress in history through content coverage or children's enjoyment of the subject rather than the development of specific historical skills and understandings).

Of the issues identified for future consideration by HMI several have relevance for the research.

- Lack of effective planning in many schools which leads to piecemeal and fragmented knowledge. Also insufficient attention to planning for skills and concepts.
(Teachers need to take into account children's developing skills and thought processes and plan for their development. This would include planning for opportunities for children to engage with controversial issues and to build on them through the foundation stage and Key Stage 1).
- Schools don't address relevance of history to children's everyday lives.
(History activities which link to children's own families and communities are important here. Also teachers need to become more experienced in creating analogies

between past events and ways of life and the ways of life of children within their class).

- Emphasis on the core subjects and history is seen as light relief – ‘fun’. HMI argue however, that history needs rigour. It can also support the development of pupils’ literacy and numeracy. Schools do not take enough opportunities for this at the moment. Playing safe and sticking to QCA SOW rather than addressing own pupils’ needs and interests.
(History generally has a limited time allocation on the timetable and is generally timetabled in the afternoon, following the basics in the morning. Many schools do not take opportunities of linking history with other curriculum areas – in particular literacy skills).
- History can provide good context for studying citizenship. It can contribute to each of 5 outcomes of ECM e.g. by providing key information and understanding which will help them as adults; providing knowledge of personal histories and others – leading to emotional health.
- Freedom accorded by Excellence and Enjoyment – more creativity.
(Schools are not generally responding fully to the new freedoms yet).
- Assessment not for learning in many schools. High attainers suffer most.
- Lack of appropriate CPD, LA advisers and lack of time on ITE courses.

In her annual report 2005-2006, HMCI makes several comments which are pertinent to history. She notes that the quality of teaching overall is best in the foundation stage and in year 6, with the weakest years being Years 1, 3 and 4. Continued improvements are reflected in the teaching of English, maths and ICT, but the foundation subjects and science demonstrate little significant improvement. HMCI attributes this to teachers’ weak subject knowledge and lack of professional development. These are key factors in teaching controversial and emotive issues.

In the foundation years, HMCI note that, ‘ Children’s achievements are highest when their interest and imagination were captured from the time they arrived.’ This provides a good rationale for developing more history in the early years!

In Key Stages 1 and 2 HMCI notes evidence of a broader approach to English teaching although speaking and listening is under- represented. Teaching controversial and emotive issues provides a real context for a wide variety of talk.

History and geography continue to be marginalized through little available time. The subjects are taught using disjointed activities which fails to build up children’s subject knowledge, skills and understanding.

Outside the core, assessment procedures are very limited and have an adverse effect on pupils’ achievements. Few teachers are secure in assessing pupils performance against national benchmarks. Lack of detailed information concerning pupils’ progress in foundation subjects detracts from the rigour and quality of schools self evaluations.

Although school leaders generally welcomed the emphasis in the PNS on greater flexibility and freedom the literacy hour and daily maths lesson remained in nearly all schools – some schools providing greater flexibility.

Is teaching about controversial and emotive issues appropriate for young children?

Teachers often view that it is not appropriate to confront children with controversial and emotive issues. This view has its roots in several approaches to pedagogy. Alexander suggests that childhood as an age of innocence where children need to be protected (1984) is firmly rooted in primary ideology. Ross (1984) also argues that primary teachers reluctant to engage with controversial issues.

On the other hand, children are faced with puzzling and sensitive occurrences in the world all the time and teachers need to support them in making sense of them. Many teachers are afraid or reluctant to deal with controversial issues and this does create lost opportunities.

However there remains controversy as to whether certain topics are suitable for very young children. Totten(1999) argues that attempts to teach the holocaust to young children should be discouraged. The holocaust is too complex for children to be able to acquire any understanding of what occurred and he also argues it is too horrific. Although teachers do attempt to teach the Holocaust to young children, lessons are often about respect and tolerance and efforts to reduce prejudice. Totten argues that this dilutes real Holocaust education. His view is supported by Short and Reed (2004) who suggest that teachers of young children should spend time on matters 'relating to prejudice and social justice rather than on the Holocaust itself (Short and Reed 2004:127). The importance of the relationship between class teachers and their children in helping them understand the Holocaust and in responding to their questions is emphasized by Deckert Peaceman. In terms of history at Key Stage 1, this debate provides an interesting context for considering whether the story of Anne Frank should be taught and in what ways.

Children's cognitive development

It could be argued that dealing with controversial issues in history is too abstract for young children. Piagetian constructs of cognitive development posit the view that young children are unable to think in the abstract and deal with fairly sophisticated concepts. Piaget's (1932) research on moral development suggests that children would find difficulty in appreciating reasons behind certain events.

More recent scholarship however, suggests that children are more sophisticated in their thinking and are more capable in thinking in the abstract than Piaget would have suggested (Donaldson: 1978, Dunn:1998, Wood:1998). Donaldson (1978) found that children were capable of deductive reasoning and that this was dependant on how relevant and related to their immediate concerns their reasoning was based. .

The legacy of Piaget and child centred notions of learning based in the Plowden Report (CACE:1967) that 'learning should always begin with the child' has been interpreted by some teachers to mean that children should only learn about and through first hand experiences. Consequently some teachers have been unwilling to teach children about distant times past since it was removed from children's immediate experiences. Ofsted (1999) found that at Key Stage 1 teachers tend to neglect the distant past and places.

Teachers' concerns about teaching controversial issues.

Holden (2005) notes some primary teachers' reluctance to engage with possible controversial issues, with concerns about 'what parents might think' if anything political was to be discussed. Her research with parents on whether they would support teaching about topical issues, democratic processes and the law is of some significance for

TEACH. She comments that some parents from the inner city school where she was researching thought that children were too young to learn about topical issues and would not be interested. However, other parents commented that they found issues such as Kosovo difficult to explain and welcomed teachers in school spending time on this. She quotes one mother as saying; 'I'm a mother, you know, I didn't pay that much attention in history....If there was someone else who was more able to explain why, it would be nice, because there's lots of questions they're asking.' Many parents from this school disliked the idea of teaching about politics. One parent said she did not vote and did not think her daughter would. Consequently she thought learning about this 'a waste of time' and didn't want her child to learn about this. This comment provides a useful insight and perhaps needs to be taken into account in schools where the Pankhursts have been selected as significant people for Key Stage 1 children to learn about. Parents from a village school interviewed by Holden were more enthusiastic about teaching about topical events in the classroom, but thought democracy and law should be left until secondary school. Holden notes that there was some concern about teacher bias when topical or political issues were discussed – p5.

Assessment for learning and working from children's misconceptions

HMI note that assessment of historical understanding is not addressed well in Key Stage 1. Assessment is often based on topics covered rather than the development of children's historical skills and understandings. Worksheets which require children to colour in or respond to very closed questions are inadequate for assessing their historical understanding and this is particularly relevant for assessing their responses to controversial and emotive issues in history.

Teachers need support in accessing children's misconceptions and in planning assessment activities which will enable them to plan for future learning. This requires support in the way activities are planned; questions which are asked; and ways in which teacher directs thinking and intervenes.

Planning for progression in children's experiences.

The different models of the curriculum which separate Key Stage 1 and the Foundation Stage create challenges in planning for progression both within and across the key stages. In particular, both key stages focus on personal and family histories yet there is little indication what progression in children's understanding of their own histories or those of their families might entail.

Examples of good practice . The report includes discussion on particularly successful approaches to teaching emotive and controversial issues.

Importance of story in early years for developing understanding of emotive and controversial issues.

Story is central to the development of young children's understanding of history. Stories permit children to engage with ideas and concepts outside their own immediate experience and to explore ways in which the past was different/similar to the present. They introduce children to people's different beliefs and values; what people in the past thought was important and what motivated them to act as they did. In doing so, stories enable children to reflect on their own understandings and things which are important to them as well as to appreciate other people's points of view. Egan (1991:103) reminds us that story is of crucial importance for making sense of the world by introducing learners

to emotions such as joy, sorrow, anger, love, hate, fear and security and to concepts such as good and bad.

A useful reminder of the centrality of story in developing understanding of human values is outlined at www.becal.org.uk which states: 'Both individuals and communities construct stories as a primary means of understanding and negotiating their lives. Key characteristics of stories can be summarised as follows:

- o the use of story in making sense of human experience
- o the construction of meaning and purpose for our lives
- o stories giving us reason for action
- o stories are built on an underlying structure of beliefs and commitments
- o the use and abuse of story in building community identity
- o the importance of our own story in rendering self-identity
- o hearing the stories of others is a means of negotiating truth and right
- o hearing the stories of others is a means of negotiating the values that others hold .'

Bage (1999) identifies key characteristics of story within the Teaching- as- story-telling project (TASTE). Characteristics which are most relevant for the TEACH project are:

- o stories change people;
- o stories explain and moralise
- o stories initiate people
- o stories explore people
- o stories analyse consciousness

(Bage 1999:32).

In the early years folk tales may be used to explore human emotions and different beliefs and values. In the story of Goldilocks, was it right for her to steal the porridge, break all the furniture and then run off? Surely the giant was right to become angry with Jack for stealing the golden goose? These are initial questions which introduce young children to some of the processes and thinking skills which are needed in addressing learning about controversial and emotive issues in history. Stories which provide alternative explanations of well known stories are also important here e.g.; the story of the 3 Little Pigs from the Wolf's point of view (Scieska:1989), the wolf's version of Little Red Riding Hood.

Traditional tales and fables may be used to introduce children to a range of human emotions and dilemmas. The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse provides opportunities for children to explore difference; the mice and the cat's bell – bravery; King Midas' golden touch – greed; feeling the elephant – knowing and believing. Fisher (1996 and 1999) identifies a range of stories for developing thinking. Discussion questions which may promote thinking are suggested and their links with cognitive development identified. The cognitive functions of the questions which he suggests are all key for developing children's abilities to deal with controversial and emotive issues.

Stories for Thinking: discussion questions	
<i>Questions</i>	<i>Cognitive function of questions</i>
*What do you think.....	<i>Focusing attention</i>

What is your view/opinion/idea about this?	
*Why do you say that? Can you give me a reason?	<i>Reasoning</i>
*What do you mean by...? Can anyone explain that to us?	<i>Defining/analyzing/clarifying</i>
* Has anyone got another thought/idea/example? Who else can say something about it?	<i>Generating alternative views</i>
*How could we tell if it was true? How do you/we know?	<i>Testing for truth</i>
*Who agrees/disagrees with....? Why? Can you say who/what you agree or disagree with?	<i>Sustaining dialogue/argument</i>
*Who can remember what we have said? What are the ideas/arguments we have come up with?	<i>Summarising</i>

(From Fisher:1996)

Research investigating young children's responses to stories indicates some developing complexity in their thinking and their ability to draw inferences. Initially, children may demonstrate a capacity linked with the Piagetian view of 'immanent justice'. For example, in fairy stories children may say the bridge broke because it knew the boy crossing it had stolen the apple – at this stage children expect good characters in stories to be successful and stories are constructed around what they believe to be true. However stories provide opportunities to question motives and why things happen even for very young children. For example, young children could reason that the 3 Little Pigs recognized the wolf because of his gruff voice (Cooper: 2002). There is also a half way stage; for example did Cinderella exist? – (Applebee in Tucker 1981:70) argues that most 6 year olds said yes, but that she couldn't be visited since she lived too long away. Another example of this intermediate stage concerns a 5 year old's response to Jack and the Beanstalk; he knew the story was not real since he knew there are no such things as giants, but thought Jack's mum was real, 'because my mum talks to me like that' (Cooper 2002:69). Cooper discusses how 5 and 6 year olds coped with different interpretations of the same story and their search for meaning. Farmer and Heeley (2004) have evidence of similar reasoning by young children on whether a story is true or not.

Such research provides useful insights into children's potential approaches to dealing with controversial and emotive issues.

Through story young children learn to sequence events and to explain their order. The ability to reason, identify reasons for particular events and the consequences of them are fundamental in helping children get to grips with understanding of controversy and recognition of emotive issues. Vass (1999) argues that historical skills integrated through

stories make the past more intelligible to children and he identifies a range of different approaches to telling stories.

Children often confuse fact and fantasy; they are not always aware that a story or event is true. The horrific nature of some stories told in the past has less relevance/fear for children than a story which they could actually imagine happening to them. For example, all children are fascinated by the ancient Egyptian mummification process but it is unlikely that they are able to connect that such procedures were conducted on real people.

Stories which represent histories from a range of cultures develop young children's awareness of diversity, alternative viewpoints and ways of life – all of which are important in helping children begin to grasp the nature of controversy in studying history. In selecting history books therefore which reflect a range of cultures and societies it is important to ensure that different communities are represented accurately and that stereotypes are not being perpetuated. In evaluating the appropriateness of certain stories it is useful to note whether the customs and lifestyles of different peoples and societies are explained together with the values which underpin them.

Sherwood and Spafford (1998) in their teachers' pack on *Whose Freedom were Africans, Caribbean's and Indians defending in WW2?* make the observation which is relevant for all age ranges. ' If pupils are not taught about these diversities, the result will be a (perhaps unintended) view of the world as composed exclusively of people of European ethnicity. This must inevitably result in a sense of superiority in those pupils who are European and a sense of inferiority in those who are not. This is equally damaging to both groups- those who have been taught that only they have history and those who have been taught that they have none.'

Importance of play

Play based activities are important for developing and reinforcing children's knowledge and understanding of the past and offer ways for children to explore potentially emotive and controversial issues (Cooper: 2005, Claire: 2005, Woodhouse:2005). A classroom play area provides opportunities for children to act out their developing historical understanding; to try out what they have learned and to modify it within their existing understanding. Play provides opportunities for children to explore alternative occurrences and outcomes as they introduce their own interpretations and viewpoints into their play. Through play children may explore stereotypes which may be controversial e.g.; different gender roles within the home; attitudes to child rearing and they may develop awareness of different lifestyles and values.

Potentially controversial and emotive issues may be addressed through play. For example, a museum educator uses puppets to talk about potentially sensitive issues which might affect children whom she is working with. The puppet 'did this', or 'thought this' or 'this happened to the puppet' are all possible ways to enable children to distance themselves from the events and emotions being expressed. Using puppets may also encourage children to offer advice – what would you have done? and suggest resolutions to conflict. This approach to teaching about sensitive issues has also been adopted by persona dolls (Claire:2005b). .

Children may be encouraged to act out situations in a story which they have heard. Freeze framing enables them to reflect on particular events within a story. Children could

re-tell the story in their own words and may be helped to do this by props from a story sack. 'I'd like to ask' and hot seating are valuable ways to develop children's questioning skills. Hot seating provides opportunities for children to acquire information concerning questions which genuinely interest them and also enables teachers to assess their understanding of key historical issues. The device of a conscience alley provides opportunities for children to explore what decisions they might have taken when confronted with controversy in the past.

Planning for emotive and controversial issues in the curriculum for early years.

Children's engagement with emotive and controversial issues may be both planned and unplanned. Experienced and confident teachers are able create safe learning environments and to respond on the spot to children's questions/comments which might be controversial e.g.; negative responses to different family histories.

Children's different experiences also need to be monitored and planning needs to take account of progression in exposure to different experiences, together with children's developing understandings and skills. Guidance for teachers to help them plan for progression would be useful.

Cooper (2002:133) identifies links with key skills and history activities across the foundation stage and Key Stage 1.

Key Skills	Foundation Stage Activities	Key Stage 1 Activities
1. Communication skills: working with others.	Role play, stories, speaking and listening, experimental writing for different purposes	Play, oral history, stories, discussion, reading and writing for different purposes
2. Application of numeracy skills	Counting, ordering, calculating, similarities/differences, sets, patterns, space, shape, measures including time.	Sequencing (in own lives, stories, photos, artifacts) time-line calculations, sets, similarities/differences.
3. Thinking skills	Problem-solving, information- processing, reasoning, enquiry, creative thinking, enquiry skills, exploration, observe objects/materials., predict, use critical thinking, awareness of differences.	Deductions and inferences from sources, investigate materials/artifacts, photos.

Controversial issues in history would provide opportunities for the development of thinking skills listed above.

Similarly core values may also be linked to historical activities.

Core values	Foundation Stage	Key Stage 1
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1. Physical development	Recognise importance of keeping healthy, how to do this; physical skills.	Changes in diet/work/play; imaginative play; models and constructions, using large and fine motor skills.
2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.	Respect for beliefs, cultural backgrounds of others; valuing children as individuals, their ideas; art, design, dance, play, stories	Value children's ideas, biographies, stories and pictures from different cultures, understanding that interpretations may vary, cross-curricular links.
3. Equal opportunities	Inclusion; ethnicity Special educational need; challenging thinking about gender.	Challenging stereotypical images; stories of influential women, women as story-tellers.

These core skills and values would need mapping onto curriculum programmes of study across each Key Stage.

Alternatively, Wood and Holden (1995:10) provide a checklist of questions designed to promote planning for gender and cultural diversity in the early years. The checklist has been adapted below to help teachers plan for controversial and emotive issues in history.

Has the planning ensured that.....

1. the experiences of ordinary people (men, women and children) are included? *(including some of their diverse experiences and experiences which have created controversy or conflict)*
2. examples of images and situations which challenge stereotypes are include? *(Native American female chiefs; female explorers, pioneers, social activists; black soldiers in the world wars)*
3. a variety of teaching strategies which actively involve children are used? *(opportunities for questioning and reflecting on puzzling situations, exploring alternatives and drawing conclusions)*
4. past and present links are made? – showing a continuum of experiences? *(use of time lines, past to present)*
5. issues of justice, fairness, respect, identity are introduced?*(rights of people to their land, rights to vote, have an education. Issues of disparity in wealth and opportunities)*
6. the histories of minority groups (including the views of the minority group) are portrayed? *(Voices of different communities and their experiences)*
7. local-global links are demonstrated? *(Trading links now and in the past; movement of peoples;)*
8. children acquire language to enable them reflect and communicate their ideas to others in sensitive ways? *(Talking in different contexts; vocabulary and phrases to support children in recognizing different opinions and being able to express their own views sensitively. Use of tentative words such as probably, perhaps, might have).*

In introducing young children to historical skills and processes teachers need to make opportunities for introducing possible controversial issues. Karen Thomson has a whole school plan for Citizenship Education taught through RE, geography and history which

demonstrates children's progression in understanding key issues through these subjects. For history this includes;

Year 1: Homes _ linked to the right to shelter today

Year 2: Victorians – the right to play and to education

Year 3: the Greeks - democracy – how did the Greeks govern their states contrasted with different forms of government today?

Year 4: the Romans – Was it fair that the Romans invaded and occupied Britain? Did they have the right? Positive and negative effects of consequences. How have other civilizations affected Britain's culture? Ownership of land as a source of conflict; how is the occupation of countries being mirrored today?

Year 5: the Tudors – government and power – was it right that Henry commanded ultimate power and authority? How should countries be governed to allow fairness and equality? Should humans have the right to sentence each other to death?

Year 6: the Victorians – rights of the child – laws and acts of parliament. How changes in Victorian times are being mirrored today in the developing world.

In terms of implementation, Karen Thomson adopted a whole school approach; teachers observed each others' lessons using a citizenship lesson observation plan. They fed back to each other ways in which citizenship issues had been addressed through their lessons. The article includes comments on how useful the teachers had found it and children's responses (Thomson:2006).

Recommendations

Teachers need further support in developing techniques to enable children to explore controversial issues. They need to develop approaches which support children's questioning and investigations. Such approaches would include:

- Helping children to make links and connections between what they already know;
- Making distinctions between different answers to enable children to learn about different ways in which questions may be answered;
- Encouraging children to explore different points of view and to explain the points of view which they have;
- Discussing with children any disagreements or inconsistencies which they find in the answers which they have given;
- Modelling talk including specific phrases and vocabulary and responses to different sorts of questions;
- Considering the different roles of the teacher in developing children's appreciation of the issues (the neutral chair approach; the balanced approach and the stated commitment approach – after Crick).

Further resources and case studies are required to enable teachers of young children to explore how to address sensitive and emotive issues.

Drawing on the most recent report for 2005-2006 from HMCI, the following recommendations are made.

- More professional development to strengthen teachers' weak subject knowledge and assessment of children's progress in history. Teachers need support in benchmarking children's progress against national criteria.

Although there is some evidence of a broader approach to English teaching, speaking and listening is under – represented. Since speaking and listening is crucial for teaching controversial issues in the foundation stage and Key Stage 1, teachers need further support in planning activities for talk in a variety of contexts, in supporting children’s talk and in providing alternative models of discourse.

History and geography are often taught through disjointed activities - teachers require further professional development in identifying useful links between subjects and in planning for children’s progression across different curriculum areas.

There could be greater links with citizenship education and also human rights education for example. In terms of history learning this would introduce have the potential for introducing more controversial opportunities. Teachers need support in planning within new found curriculum freedoms.

Resources

Useful picture books – personal and family histories.

These books provide opportunities for children to sequence events in individual lives and to grasp some understanding of a past which is different from the present. However, they present few opportunities for dealing with controversial or emotive issues - although some such as Burningham (1984) and Waddell (1992) do introduce the idea of the death of a beloved grandparent. However, the value of these stories to the project lies in the teacher’s imaginative and creative use of the story. Many teachers might need further support to develop these skills with their children. Children could be encouraged to identify similarities and differences with their own lives and to explain them. Recognition that people experience different lives and that different things are important to them are early opportunities for children to engage with alternative viewpoints and interpretations which are at the heart of controversial history.

Ahlberg, J and A. (1982) *The Baby’s Catalogue*. London, Puffin.

Ahlberg, J. and A. (1988) *Starting School*. London, Puffin.

Burningham (1984) *Grandpa*, London, Jonathan Cape.

Bradman, T (1989) *The Sandal*. London, Anderson Press.

Fox, M. (1987) *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge*, London, Picture Puffins.

Paton Walsh, J and Williams, S. (1993) *When Grandma Came*. London, Picture Puffins.

Williams, M. (1989) *When I was little*. London, Walker Books.

Waddell, M. (1989) *Once there were giants*. London, Walker books.

Flournoy, J. (1985) *The Patchwork Quilt*. Oxford, Bodley Head.

Paton Walsh, J, (1997) *When I was little like you*. London, Puffin.

Rogers, P. (1995) *From Me You to You. A family history through three generations*.

London, Orchard Books,

Humphrey, P. (2000) *When Grandma was Young*. London, Evans.

Ives, P. (1995) *Granny’s Quilt*. London, Puffin.

Phillips Mitchell, R. (1997) *Hue Boy*. London, Puffin.

Waddell, M. (1992) *Grandma’s Bill*. Hove, McDonald.

Baker, J. (1992) *Window*. London, Random House.

Other biographies – these are of ordinary people’s lives.

Bridges, S.Y. (2002) *Ruby’s Wish*. San Francisco, Chronicle Books. Biography of little Chinese girl who was one of the first girls to attend a Chinese university.

Coles, R. (1995) *The Story of Ruby Bridges*. Leamington Spa, Scholastic

Hoffman, M.(2002) *The Colour of Home*. London, Frances Lincoln. Story of little boy from Somalia during his first days in an English schools. Hassan paints pictures of his old home in Somalia and of the night when the soldiers came and set fire to his house. He tells his story to his teacher through a translator.

Joseph, L. (1998) *Fly Bessie, fly*. London, Simon and Schuster.

Keenan, S. (1995) *Frederick Douglas: Portrait of a Freedom Fighter*. Leamington Spa, Scholastic.

Walvoord Girard, L (1994) *Young Frederick Douglass: The Slave who learned to read*. Albert Whitman and Co.

Picture books which provide alternative viewpoints

Willis, J and Ross, T. (1988) *Dr Xargle's Book of Earthlets*. London, Andersen Press. Provides an alternative view of babies through the eyes of Dr Xargle. Useful for encouraging children to recognize alternative viewpoints and to question their own understandings.

Scieszka, J. (1989) *The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs*. London, Viking.

Trivizas, E (1995) *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig*.

Other history stories

Gerrard, R. (1998) *Wagons West!* London, Puffin Books. Story about traveling across the US, describing the dangers which they encountered.

Brill, M.T. (1993) *Allen Jay and the Underground Railroad*. Minneapolis, Lerner Publishing Group. Recounts story of a young Quaker boy who helps a fleeing slave escape on the Underground Railway.

Mahy, M. (1987) *The Man whose mother was a pirate*. London, Puffin.

Martin, S. (1980) *Pirates*, London, Macmillan.

Oppenheim S.L. (1992) *The Lily Cupboard. A story of the holocaust*. London, HarperCollins. The story describes how a young Jewish girl is hidden in the countryside away from her parents.

Waddell, M (1985) London, Puffins. Story going west again describing adventures including being attacked by Indians. Mentions that Indians don't like them because they are stealing their land. Also his sister dies on the journey.

Other resources

Refugees: A Resource Book for Primary Schools. Contains activities, personal testimonies and background information. www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

Kosovan Journeys. Two refugee children tell their stories in this A3 book for Literacy Hour Reading. www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

Why Do they have to fight?
Refugee children's stories from Bosnia, Kurdistan, Sri Lanka and Somalia. A source book of refugee children's stories and paintings. Although planned for KS2 and KS3 – some of the information may be useful for KS1 teachers. www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

Rowe, D and Newton, J. (1994) *You! Me! Us!* Citizenship Foundation. The full story of Farouk and activities linked to the story may be found at The Citizenship Foundation website. www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk

Resource Pack
Who Needs Florence Nightingale? CD Rom resource form Ireland in Schools. www.irelandinschools.org.uk

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