

KEEP THE VICTORIANS AND WW2!

Six reasons why you should plan to keep these tangible, relevant and essential topics in your new 2014 primary curriculum

"One of the major complaints from primary school (teachers) about the February draft was that it denied them the chance to teach some of the more popular units, in particular the Victorians and the Second World War. These complaints have been heard and it is now possible for schools to continue teaching these topics through the local history study option and the beyond 1066 study" Tim Taylor, The Guardian, July 2013

Dear Teacher / History coordinator,

You will be no doubt be aware that the revised National Curriculum for History which is set to become statutory from September 2014 has an apparent 1066 cut-off date in Key Stage Two which initially appears to exclude the much loved Victorians and WW2 topics from the primary curriculum. However, there is provision for both coverage of a 'local history' study after 1066 and the study of a 'significant event after 1066' (as stated above, by the History teacher and lecturer Tim Taylor) that will still allow you to include these essential topics in your new syllabus, and we here at Balestra Living History offer the following reasons why we think you should retain them:

REASON 1: RELEVANCE and TANGIBILITY – buildings, artefacts and recent memories

The fact that these are our two most recent periods of history means that they are extremely accessible in terms of pupil learning, whether it is from conversations with family members about WW2 memories; bringing in artefacts from their own family; or even passing local Victorian architecture on the way to school, pupils are literally more closer to these two periods than any other in the curriculum. This is history that is still alive all around the experience of their daily lives.

REASON 2: THE LIVES OF CHILDREN – evacuees, chimney sweeps and school days

It was no accident that the old QCA WW2 unit was entitled 'The lives of children in the Second World War' because the evacuee experience offers an excellent route into history for boys and girls alike, making it perhaps the most fitting topic in the whole of the primary history curriculum. Added to this the teaching and learning opportunities offered by studying the lives of Victorian children both in school and at work and you have two perfect topics for the primary stage.

REASON 3: CROSS CURRICULAR OPPORTUNITIES – letters, science, art and inventions

With the Creative Curriculum and topic approach now being very popular in many schools, the cross curricular opportunities for these topics have already been vastly exploited to the great benefit of pupil learning. Examples include evacuee letters, science investigations of the material to use for blackout curtains, Victorian Invention activities and school room activities for Maths and English in addition to many more such activities already used by creative teachers throughout the country.

REASON 4: CURRENT AVAILABLE RESOURCES – internet, print and much more

The fact that we have been teaching these topics for a very long time means that a vast amount of excellent resources are already available both in and out of school, which would be silly to waste! In addition, the wealth of internet information on these two topics is perfect for independent pupil research.

REASON 5: LOCAL WORKSHOP PROVIDERS, ARCHITECTURE AND MUSEUMS – history on your doorstep

If we were to list the amount of museums alone devoted to the Victorians and WW2 topics we would need a document many pages long. From local wartime sites such as Air raid shelters and living history museums, to Victorian mills, local architecture and science museums, as well as the vast amount of visiting providers such as ours at www.blitzschool.co.uk and www.victorianworkshop.co.uk, there is a wealth of opportunities to extend learning both inside and outside the classroom.

REASON 6: PUPILS LOVE THE TOPICS - and we love teaching them!

We deliver Victorian and WW2 workshops to a lot of schools, numbering in the many hundreds at the time of writing, and the sheer enthusiasm for these topics from both pupils and teachers is constantly overwhelming. In our experience, these two topics offer one of the most engaging learning experiences for primary children, across all subjects and topics.