



OUR TOP TIPS FOR MAKING HISTORY REALLY EXCITING!

We often hear “I wish history had been like this in my day” from teachers and parents. The good news is that for more and more pupils it is getting better, but sometimes it can feel a little daunting to introduce this approach to your sessions.

We’ve distilled our experience and ethos here in this Handy Hints leaflet so everyone can have a go.

ENGAGE YOUR PUPILS IN 3 WAYS – EMOTIONALLY, PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY.

The best way to do this is to think of history like a story – there should be atmosphere, characters, a plot, it should be multi-sensory and should actively involve the pupils, so they feel an emotional connection with it.

WHAT DO WE MEAN?

Physical Engagement

- a) This means children should actually move around – perhaps by being soldiers on a battle field, or by being chased in a game. It could also be static, such as taking the stand in court, or hiding. The idea is that the child embodies a character in a scenario and is not in their usual seat in a classroom.
- b) Multi-sensory – Think of all the senses; touch, taste, smell, hearing as well as sight. How can you make a scenario more real by using one or more senses other than sight? It can be really simple, like burning an incense stick, or playing some appropriate music/sound such as monks singing or a thunderstorm. Let pupils handle real objects and props wherever possible – ditch the digital! This is all about physical connection. Dress them up (even if its just a hat or a sash), give them props and add a few key decorations if you can, to make the room/space feel like the period you are depicting.
- c) Don’t forget to think about the actual space you are using – can you make it feel different by making it darker? Or smaller by dividing the room somehow? Sitting in a tight circle on the floor in the dark and speaking in a low voice can make a classroom feel totally new. Alternatively, get outside, or stand up on stools to change perspective. Think about the story you are telling and how these things will make the children feel.



Emotional Engagement

- Start by thinking about how the person or people at that point in history would feel – would they be angry, feel wronged, or were they feeling victorious, or competitive, or were they nervous or uncertain?
- Pick the feeling that is most relevant, then create ways to make the pupils feel like that.
- The choices you make about the physical engagement will make a big impact on this – create an atmosphere, then run the activity.
- Role play, particularly in two or more opposing groups, can really help bring historical conflict to life – then one group can remove something of value from the other either through a game or a competition and the pupils will feel the loss or the injustice (change the rules to make them more or less fair), or will feel smug and victorious with a win.
- The power of the unknown.....silence and waiting can help to create a feeling of uncertainty. Its surprising how long a minute feels when you don't know what is coming next.... Try it and see what happens.

Mental Engagement

- Problem solving
- Team work
- Competitions
- Discussion and debate

All of the above, when set in the context of a story, are great for getting lots of grey cells working. Try doing activities that avoid writing for at least one lesson/session. You can come back to it another day for that.

That's it! We hope it helps and inspires you to give it a go.

If you want more, we offer training courses in style of delivery, content and confidence to try these things out. Just drop us a line! We can come to you.