

# Subject overview for: History

## 1. Subject overview

The History department at John Masefield has a mission to support our students to use the knowledge gained to help them understand the events of the past that in turn assists them in their future. History is perfectly placed to be a vehicle that can help young people make sense of the world, and understand their own unique place within it. By developing effective knowledge, we challenge students to take responsibility for their learning and to work in a productive way.

A high-quality history education helps students gain a coherent knowledge and understanding of Britain's past and that of the wider world. Our teaching aims to equip pupils to ask perceptive questions, think critically, weigh evidence, sift arguments, and develop perspective and judgement.

Key aims:

- a. Know and understand the history of Britain as a coherent, chronological narrative, from the earliest times to the present day.
- b. Know and understand significant aspects of the history of the wider world e.g. The reasons for and impact of the Transatlantic slave trade.
- c. Gain and deploy a historically grounded understanding of abstract terms such as 'empire', 'democracy' and 'parliament' e.g. The reasons for and impact of the English Civil War.
- d. Understand historical concepts such as continuity and change, cause and consequence, similarity, difference and significance, and use them to create their own structured accounts.
- e. Understand the methods of historical enquiry, including how evidence is used rigorously to make historical claims, and discern how and why contrasting arguments and interpretations of the past exist.
- f. Gain historical perspective by placing their growing knowledge into different contexts, including the connections between local, regional, national and international history e.g. The study of the rise and impact of the Industrial Revolution.

## 2. Key Stage Three summary (Year 7 and Year 8)

The History curriculum at Key Stage Three supports understanding by cultivating an overview of changes in the world from the medieval period until the present. We adopt a predominantly chronological approach to delivering units where we embed knowledge which is reviewed in every lesson and at the end of each module. Alongside the knowledge of the past we challenge students to consider key historical areas such as empathy, cause and consequence, change and continuity, and significance.

In Year 7 we begin with a unit on medieval England, followed by the Tudors. This provides a grounding of knowledge in some of the most engaging 'stories' of British history. We move on to a unit on Black peoples' history covering African civilisations, American slavery and the abolition campaign. We will finish the year by studying the Stuart period of monarchy, encompassing the English Civil War, Cromwell's republic, Restoration and Glorious Revolution.

In Year 8 we will begin, due to the circumstances involved in reducing History curriculum time, by teaching the Stuarts unit before studying the Industrial Revolution which includes a local study on change in Herefordshire. The struggle for women to gain the vote comes next taking us into the twentieth century. Then we study the causes, key features and consequences of the First World War, including the British home front, before completing the year by learning about conflicting political ideologies and the inter-war years in the USSR and USA.

Our vision is that our students will be empowered with the required knowledge, and furnished with the conceptual understanding that will see them prepared to take on the challenge of History at the next stage.

### **3. Key Stage Four summary**

#### **a. Year 9: Transition year**

In the History Department we see Year 9 as an opportunity to reinforce the skills and historical understanding inculcated during Key Stage 3. In the two terms before we begin to teach the GCSE content, students will continue to develop their historical knowledge and understanding so that they have an effective platform before studying the subject at GCSE. We achieve this by employing some of the most exciting topics of modern History. The ideological battle between democracy and dictatorship sits comfortably with the causes of the Second World War in the autumn term. This is followed by an investigation of the reasons for the eventual outcome of the War. They will also continue the development of their ability to demonstrate resilience, particularly when dealing with emotionally and intellectually demanding topics such as dictatorship, civilian bombing and the Holocaust. A unit on the causes, key features and end of the Cold War will provide a grounding in the context for international relations in the second half of the twentieth century. With no focus on this at GCSE we feel this is a good time to support students' knowledge in a way that allows them to put current international affairs into a historical framework. Before we move onto GCSE content, we will teach a brand new unit on popular protest in Britain from the Roman period until the present. Utilising these topics to engage curiosity, we hope to ensure our students are prepared for the demands of GCSE History.

#### **b. Year 10 and Year 11: GCSE History**

Students who opt for History GCSE will start by studying 'Crime and Punishment, 1250-Present day' in the summer of Year 9. We begin with this unit because as a thematic 800-year study it provides a backdrop against which the other units can be given historical context. It also revisits the time periods covered in Year 7 and 8. The social theme also offers a chance to reinforce some of the concepts that will provide a grounding for the units with less familiar themes. The second unit is the 'History Around Us' Ludlow Castle topic. This fits in with the change over time nature of the Crime unit and covers a similar time period, offering chances to reinforce the pace and nature of social change over the chronological range. A particular benefit is that students get to explore the important role local communities played in nationally important events. We then move onto 'The Elizabethans', a depth study for which the exam is largely interpretation based. Their learning is supported by reference back to the time period already covered twice, so familiarity with the nature of society at the time is intended as a 'buffer' to allow them to focus on the distinctive skills required for the exam. The last unit covered in Year 10 is 'Living under Nazi Rule'. This is a source-based depth study and the reason for placing it here is to allow time to revisit and reinforce the source skills involved periodically before the end of Year 11, as well as to reinforce the learning from Year 9 before too long a gap. We leave the 'Making of the USA' unit until last because it is content heavy, with a wide-range of demanding conceptual knowledge required, being best suited to Year 11 students.

### **4. Sixth Form courses**

The A Level History curriculum starts with 'Britain 1930-97'. This is a two-part paper, with a case study on Winston Churchill's career from 1930-51 coming first. The second part covers British politics from 1952 to 1997. This makes a natural starting point because the domestic context makes it less demanding for students approaching the step up from Key Stage 4. This is followed in the spring of Year 12 by 'Democracy to Dictatorship: Germany 1919-1963'. This partially overlaps with the GCSE Germany unit, offering some prior knowledge for students and dovetails well with the Britain unit, largely covering the same time period. We introduce the coursework in the spring of Year 12, providing students with a

gradual approach that allows them to experiment with a range of potential topics before they make a final choice in the summer term. This will eventually take the form of a 4000 word independently researched and written essay. The summer term is split between revising the Britain and Germany units in preparation for end of year exams and researching material for their coursework essay.

During the summer break students are given a small text book on the Tudors to read as contextual background for the final exam unit, Disorder and Rebellion under the Tudors, 1485-1603. They are also required to produce a first draft of their coursework essay with a target of completing at least 2000 words.

We begin Year 13 with a review of work done on the coursework over the summer break. We then spend one week on each of the two units taught in Year 12, reinforcing knowledge and understanding and the exam technique required. The rest of the autumn term is used to complete teaching of the Tudors unit with frequent teacher check-ins on their progress with their project. From January onwards the focus is on our revision schedule, reviewing their knowledge and practising exam technique to ensure students can face their summer exams with confidence.

## **5. Contribution to preparing for life in modern Britain/equalities**

Studying History constitutes an excellent preparation for young people to understand the modern world. Political, economic and social change are at the heart of everything we study, and the focus on critical thinking is designed to develop a questioning approach to information imparted by television, in print and via social media. The knowledge we teach embraces the principles of democracy, mutual respect and tolerance, whilst always encouraging students to reach their own interpretations. This, we believe, encourages our students to have empathy with others and using events of the past to make their own decisions about current affairs.

By teaching challenging topics (examples include Transatlantic Slave Trade, social reform in the Industrial Revolution and the struggle for voting equality in Britain and America), we empower students to use their knowledge to understand injustice and a lack of humanity. Students use their knowledge to understand what happened and how change was enacted. We passionately believe that our moral purpose is to inspire students to use the events of the past to create a more equitable world for all.

In a world where many opinion formers rely on often limited sources of information, the importance of being able to cut through the propaganda to find your own truth has never been more important. The ethos shared amongst the History team is that students should be encouraged to show independence and take responsibility for their own learning. We encourage debate and discussion, intended to promote self-esteem, confidence, and a belief that each individual's viewpoint is valid. These qualities, we feel, will give our students a better chance of navigating their way successfully through the years after their formal education is behind them.

## **6. Contribution to careers provision**

History qualifications, whether GCSE, A Level or higher, are highly valued by a wide range of employees and educational establishments. The knowledge needed to achieve well in our subject means that those who succeed in History are resilient, critical thinkers with analytical and evaluate skills that benefit a vast array of future employment options.

Historians go on to have successful careers in the law, in finance, the military, politics, education and the media. Many top journalists, lawyers, bankers have a background in studying History, as do a large proportion of leading figures in archaeology and heritage work, as well as conservation and politics.

Museums, art galleries and libraries are also common destinations for History graduates. Employers recognise that even for careers in which History is not a specific requirement, the skills and qualities demonstrated by those who study the subject make them an enticing prospect.

We use the teaching of History to inspire students to make a difference in the world and this is reflected in the wide range of future careers that History potentially leads to.