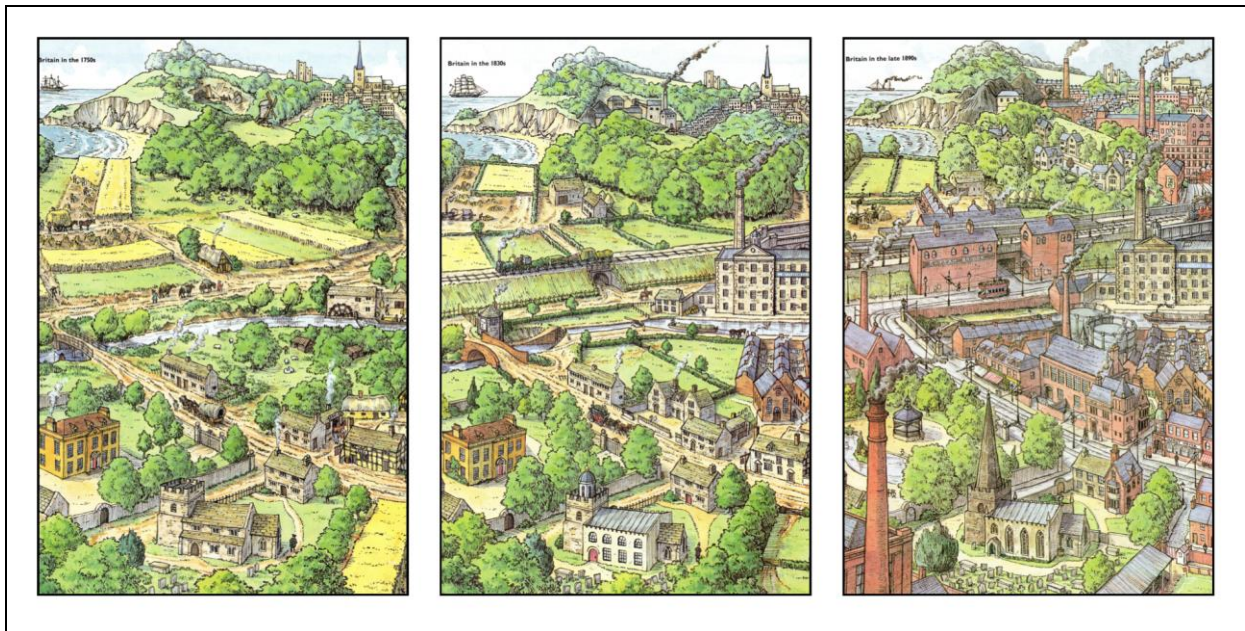


Using reconstruction drawing to introduce the Industrial Revolution

This activity is based on three reconstruction drawings in a KS3 book I edited for the first National Curriculum and published in 1993 by OUP – Expansion, Trade and Industry by Jon Cresswell and Peter Laurence. The three drawings show the same place in the 1750s, 1830s and 1890s and were used to introduce the topic of the Industrial Revolution. Over the years teachers have remembered these drawings but forgotten where they came from – so now you know! – so I thought I'd add them to the website with some suggestions for using them, though there must be many other ways of doing so.



The Three Reconstruction Drawings

1. Before students look at the drawings

Don't leap into showing students the drawings! If this is the start of work on the Industrial Revolution it's crucial to find out what that phrase means to students so start without any stimulus material so you can identify students' preconceptions. For example:

a) ask students to jot down or discuss what ideas they have about the Ind Rev, what images come into their minds when they hear that phrase.

b) ask students to ask questions – what do they want to ask/find out about the Ind Rev – it’s really important to give them practice whenever possible at asking questions and then discuss with them what makes a good history question.

Keep notes or ask students to do so of their preconceptions and their questions so you can come back to them at the end of the unit.

2. Now they can look at the reconstruction drawings!

Decide whether they look at them all at once or just the first two and then add in the third later.

a) Begin with open questions e.g. what do you notice? What do they tell you about what was happening at this time? (maybe avoid specific words such as ‘change’ and ‘continuity’ to see if they use them effectively) – build up a class list of things they notice without specific prompts.

Then ask then how this list fits in with their ideas about the Ind Rev before they looked at the drawings? Push students to make explicit reference to their preconceptions and whether these have begun to change or the drawings support their ideas.

A follow-up might be to ask ‘if you’d been born in the 1750s what would surprise you about life in the 1830s?’ (when you were very, very old!)

b) Use guided questions to help students look in detail at the drawings – e.g. look for changes and continuities, look for transport, forms of power, building materials etc etc – and then explore students’ answers, building up a more detailed picture of the nature of the Ind Rev.

3. Think about the enquiry questions you could explore about the Industrial Revolution

You have a list of questions students asked earlier – do they want to add more to that list?

Chip in ideas of your own, perhaps trying to prompt students about particular questions. For example, the book that these drawings appeared in had an overall enquiry question of ‘Did the Industrial Revolution make people’s lives better or worse?’ – a question that takes us into ‘it depends’ territory and helps students move away from and understand the nature of generalisations – it depends who you were, where you lived, at what stage of the Ind Rev you lived etc etc.

4. Deciding on an Enquiry Question

Now you have a list of questions you can as a class decide on what your main enquiry question is going to be – and, importantly, students can use the drawings to suggest an initial hypothesis in answer to the chosen question.

Even if you have succeeded in steering the students to the kind of question you'd had in mind all along, this process of exploring questions with students gives them a sense of involvement and ownership in the Enquiry Question/s they are going to investigate rather than simply answering a question set by the history department.

5. Other questions

Other valuable questions to ask as you start to explore the Ind Rev in detail are:

- How do you think we'll find out? i.e. what kinds of sources will we be able to use?
- Why do you think the Ind Rev is so important?

6. After your enquiry ends – revisiting the reconstruction drawings

Apart from work on the answers to your enquiry question, you could return to the drawings and ask students questions such as how they might improve the drawings now they have a lot more knowledge, what do they think is missing from them, are they misleading in any way, are drawings a good way of showing the nature of the Ind Rev or are words better?

Related material on Thinking history

For my detailed article The Nature and Significance of Enquiry in History Teaching see:

<https://thinkinghistory.co.uk/EnquirySkill/index.htm>

In relation to point 4 above, see The Importance of Keeping Enquiry Questions Flexible:

<https://thinkinghistory.co.uk/EnquirySkill/KeepingEQsFlexible.htm>

For Enquiry at KS2: Developing puzzling, enjoyable, effective historical investigations, see:

<https://thinkinghistory.co.uk/EnquirySkill/index.htm>

Other resources on the Industrial Revolution can be found here:

<https://thinkinghistory.co.uk/Resource/AllResources.html#d1700>