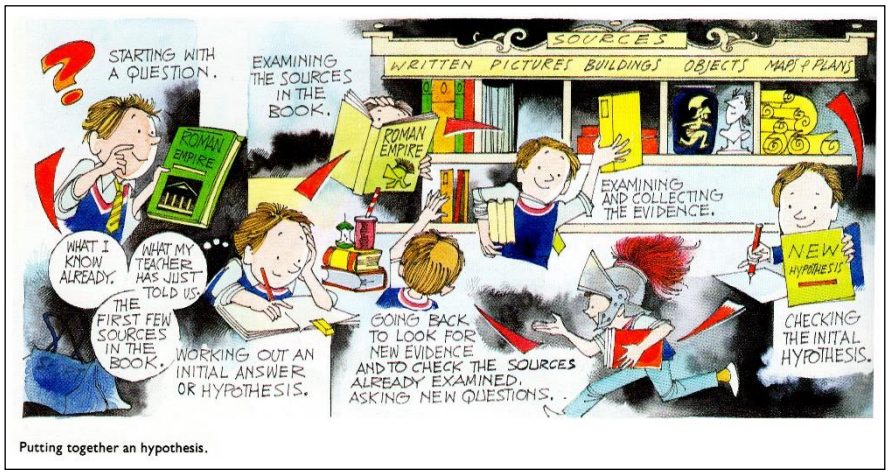
Enquiry Core Article (Section 7 added, August 2024)

The Nature and Significance of Enquiry in History Teaching

Enquiry questions began to appear in history teaching in the mid-1980s. My fallible memory suggests that they were being used by SHP as headings in specifications to give structure and coherence to what were otherwise bullet-point lists of content. By 1989 both Colin Shephard, then Director of SHP, and myself were running CPD sessions at SHP and HA Conferences and elsewhere on using questions – then usually referred to as key questions – to give coherence to KS3 courses and create direct routes into work on second-order concepts.

From there it was natural that such questions gave structure to the SHP KS3 textbooks written for the first National Curriculum in 1991. My own National Curriculum series for OUP used such questions to give coherence to whole units/books as well as individual questions for each chapter/topic within a unit. The Medieval Realms book, for example, had the over-arching question 'Was the Middle Ages a time of change?' and Y7 pupils explored the degree of change and causes of change in terms of key themes and events. None of this was very sophisticated use of enquiry questions but it was a start.

Looking back at this early use of enquiry questions it's clear that, as later, there were two layers to the use of these questions. The more common approach was to use questions to give coherence and shape to coverage of content and to lead into explicit teaching about concepts such as change, causation and significance. The second approach went further by using questions to introduce students explicitly to the process of enquiry as shown in this artwork from the 1991 KS3 NC book on *The Roman Empire* written by Ian Coulson that I edited for OUP:



Putting together an hypothesis.

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Why is it important to introduce students to this enquiry process in a very explicit way?

Later in this article I explore a series of reasons why enquiry should have such a central place in history teaching and learning but I'll introduce the most important of all here – that enquiry is central to students developing the ability to work independently. The capacity to study and think independently is clearly very much needed at A level, at university and in life beyond education and the enquiry process is so important because it provides a model for independent learning – so long as this process is made explicit so that students can describe and implement it. The enquiry process builds independence by:

- providing a clear structure and a sense of direction so students are much less likely to simply read as much as they can and hope an answer emerges.
- reassuring students that it is acceptable to know little or nothing at the outset, that uncertainty is a natural part of studying history and that 'changing your mind', otherwise known as 'developing your hypothesis' is a positive part of the process, not a weakness.

As a result, students become confident that they can move from knowing little to knowing and understanding a great deal about new topics. Enquiry is, in effect, a form of problem-solving.

Introduction out of the way, this article explores how to develop that understanding by making it explicit and visible, building it across students' entire experience of history in school and using it effectively in planning courses.

The sections of this article are:

1. What is the process of enquiry?
2. How big is an enquiry? Using enquiry to give coherence to courses at KS2 and KS3
3. How can enquiry be used constructively at GCSE and A Level?
4. Why is the enquiry process so important?
5. Making and keeping enquiry visible – the essential task
6. How does the enquiry process contribute to work at historical sites and museums?
7. The importance of keeping Enquiry Questions flexible

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Section 1. What is the process of enquiry?

Enquiry is at the heart of studying history effectively, the glue that holds everything together from asking questions at the outset to communicating what's been learned at the end. To put it very simply, the enquiry process guides students (of any age) from knowing nothing or next to nothing about a topic to knowing a lot more and so having a satisfying grasp of the topic that enables them to answer questions with confidence – be they informal oral answers or demanding written answers.

So what is the process of Enquiry? What follows is a student-friendly explanation, an outline template – NOT a deeply theoretical discussion – and one that will be varied within its broad outline as students mature. I've used the example of the Riccall skeletons enquiry to illustrate the stages.

This Riccall activity can be found at:

https://thinkinghistory.co.uk/ActivityBase/RiccallMystery.html

Stage 1: Show students one or two pieces of evidence:

Skulls and bones found at Riccall, near York.

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Stage 2: Prompt students to ask questions about this evidence:

> *For example: Who were they? How old are they? How did they die? Were they murdered? Where were they found?*

Stage 3: Give students a little more evidence and then prompt them to suggest answers (which we can call hypotheses) to some of the questions – thinking carefully about how certain they can be about those answers. This is a good opportunity to develop hypothetical language. Students could also think about which of their questions are the most important to answer:

> *For example: Riccall clues B, C and D tell students that two battles were fought near there in 1066, that this wasn't the site of a church and that cuts had been found on some of the bones. Hypotheses could be that the bones may belong to people killed in battle – but they may also be more lurid as skeletons have that effect on KS3 pupils!*

Stage 4: Provide more information and evidence for students so that students can develop their answers and decide if they can be more certain:

> *For example: the other Riccall clues cover the nature of weapons at the time, an extract from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, a map suggesting the movements of the armies and scientific evidence suggesting where the people whose bones were found grew up.*

In other, longer enquiries than this example, students can use textbooks, source material, pictures and web resources to build up and deepen their knowledge of the topic.

Stage 5: Develop stronger answers as conclusions – supported by evidence:

> *For example: the skeletons belonged to local people, men, women and children. This conclusion would be supported by evidence and again using appropriate language about degrees of certainty.*

[Stages 4 and 5 can clearly be repeated during deeper and lengthier enquiries –students need to revisit their hypotheses regularly in the light of what they learn en route to a final conclusion. For examples see the sections on How big is an enquiry and on Using enquiry at GCSE and A level).

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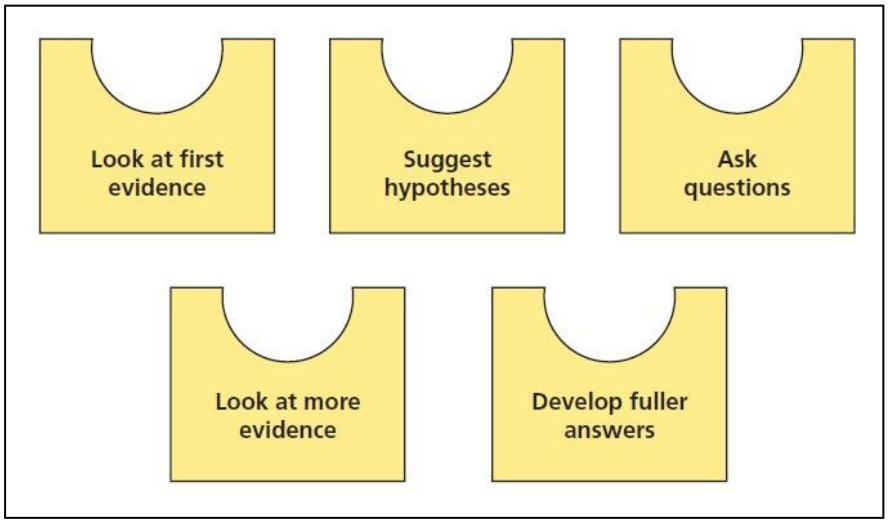
This outline definition of the enquiry process is a simple template but that simplicity is important in making it a clear and communicable sequence of activities that students can describe, apply and continue to apply as their History studies continue – and which therefore helps them tackle their History more effectively, more confidently and more independently as they mature. Hence it's crucial that the stages of the enquiry process are made explicit and become part of classroom vocabulary.

This emphasis on the enquiry process being visible to students is of paramount importance. When the process is implicit or invisible it's much harder for students to learn how to learn effectively. To put this in a wider content, John Hattie argued that 'Observations of classrooms typically show that there is little direct instruction in 'how to learn', or the development and use of learning strategies.' This is a crucial omission because, while students must have a deep foundation of subject knowledge, they also need to learn to take control of their own learning. Their ability to employ effective and flexible strategies that help them reason, memorize and problem-solve is vital in achieving success in history. Enquiry is the most over-arching of such strategies. Students who struggle are therefore the ones most in need of understanding the enquiry process to help them learn effectively.

One way to make the process clear is to use sugar paper tabards as shown in the illustration below – something I'd do with any age of students, including undergraduates, if it helps them understand the process. Five students wear the tabards and arrange themselves in the sequence of the process. The teacher and class can then use the information on the tabards as prompts to describe the process they have undertaken. [Or mix up the sequence of tabards to test students' ability to sort out the process they've carried out.]



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It’s also important that students appreciate that Enquiry is a common thread in their study of History. This requires low-key repetition built around reminders such as ‘do you remember when we did ….?’ ‘How did we begin?’ ‘What did we do next?’. All this stops the process being completely masked by the change from one historical topic to another.

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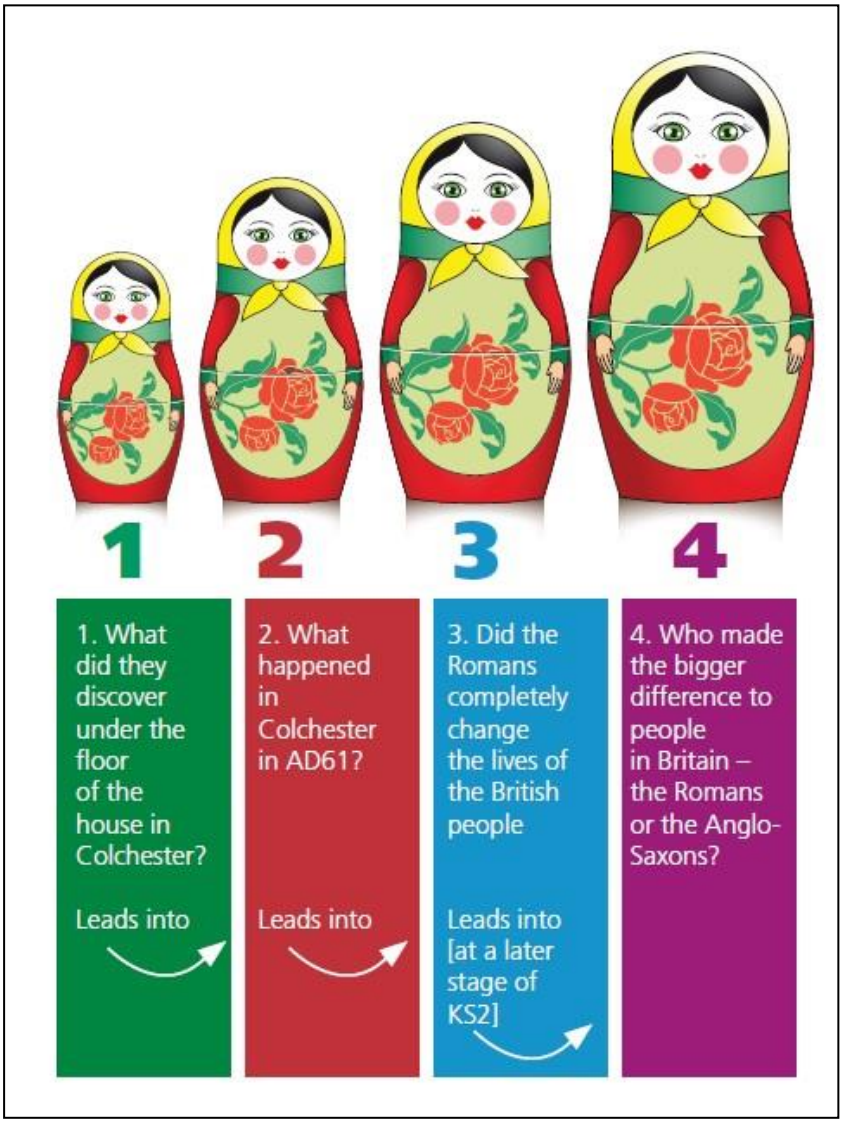
Section 2. How big is an enquiry? Using enquiry to give coherence to courses at KS2 and KS3

An enquiry can last an hour, a morning, a half term, whole term or longer. In fact, one important way to develop overall course coherence is to have an overall enquiry which links a series of shorter, contributory enquiries. Here are two examples of using enquiry as a planning tool to create coherence across courses at KS2 and KS3.

Example A: KS2 Romans and Anglo-Saxons

This enquiry begins with a single discovery, Roman jewellery found at Colchester, that acts as a 'mystery starter', an intriguing doorway into a much more substantial enquiry. This planning approach resembles a series of Russian dolls:



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What did they discover under the floor of the house in Colchester?

leads into

What happened in Colchester in AD61?

leads into

Did the Romans completely change the lives of the British people?

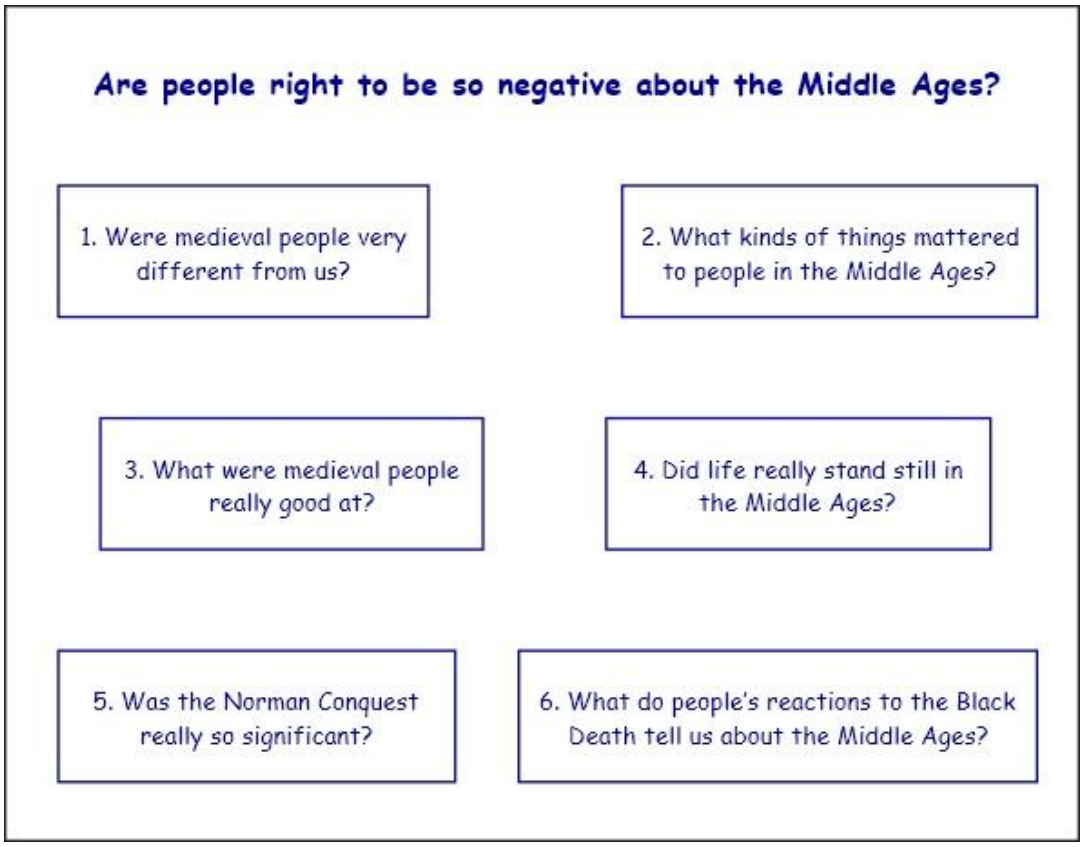
leads into [at a later stage of KS2]

Who made the bigger difference to people in Britain – the Romans or the Anglo-Saxons?

Although this enquiry would develop over an extended period it's important to explore, however briefly, the ultimate question about who made the bigger difference, early on – perhaps after the Colchester find – to gauge students' ideas about the Romans and Saxons i.e. their preconceptions and/or lack of knowledge.

Example B: KS3 The Middle Ages

This example is different in structure, not a set of Russian doll enquiries but one big overall enquiry which a series of other enquiries feed into – these smaller enquiries are represented by the boxes within the big enquiry box shown below.



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Big enquiry questions about the nature of periods are particularly useful at KS3, partly to give coherence to work on a series of topics that all feed into the overall enquiry (as in the example above) but also because they tap into students' preconceptions, thus emphasising the importance of identifying preconceptions in advance. For extended discussion of this see the article on building periodisation into KS3 planning:

https://thinkinghistory.co.uk/MedievalArticles/Periodisation.html

As a final note on the enquiry above, you may feel that a lot of events have been missed out of those enquiries! In fact many events are covered in the enquiry on whether life stood still and in an overview chapter called **Telling your Big Story of the Middle Ages** at

https://thinkinghistory.co.uk/MedievalBase/Section4.html

Enquiry can therefore be a supremely valuable planning tool which links topics together and so gives students a sense that they are following a coherence course and not just studying a series of individual topics. Further examples of using enquiry to create overall coherence for GCSE and A level can be found in the next section of this article.

Enquiry questions also create the opportunity to bring the whole of a KS2 or KS3 course to a coherent close by asking students to look back across several years of History lessons by exploring questions about the comparative significance of the events, topics and people they've studied or even asking students who or what they have most enjoyed learning about and why.

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Section 3. How can enquiry be used constructively at GCSE and A Level?

This section discusses

a) Using enquiry to give greater coherence to units within exam specifications

b) building the enquiry process into post-14 teaching to help students learn more independently

In many ways all the points below relate to both GCSE and A level but as I was writing this I felt they were clearer if separated into the two age-groups.

GCSE specifications

These notes use the thematic unit Medicine through Time as an exemplar but the principles are transferable to all courses at this level.

a) Creating coherence

Whichever specification you follow you can build your 'Medicine' unit around a core enquiry such as

'Why do people today have better health and live longer than people in the past?'

The benefits of pursuing such an over-arching enquiry are:

i) It unites the whole course and helps students to organize their knowledge. It is easier for students to develop an overview narrative of medical history in relation to a specific question than in a vacuum where information is acquired for its own sake rather than for a purpose i.e. to undertake an enquiry and answer a core question.

ii) It gives a rationale/context for enquiries on individual periods so that students see that these 'period' enquiries have been set up because they contribute to the overall enquiry.

iii) This question has the great advantage of helping students relate their thematic unit to the present day, showing how history provides a perspective on life today.

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b) Using enquiry to help students develop more independence

Enquiry helps students develop and appreciate their ability to learn independently by:

i) continuing to emphasise the centrality of enquiry in History and giving them a clear process to follow – a route-map to take.

ii) giving them further practice in developing a quick overview of topics which not only creates an initial hypothesis but also, importantly, gives students confidence because they get a sense of the whole of the unit. If you don't build an effective overview early in the course then students can become confused and demoralised because they can feel they're drowning in detail and can't see the patterns behind the details.

iii) showing students that they can begin to build an answer from early in their work and don't have to wait until the very end of a unit of work (when do I stop reading and taking notes?) to start putting their answer together. As an example, I began each period in a number of textbooks with a 'Medical Moments in Time' page, providing key points through the medium of people talking in a scene from 1347, 1665 etc. This gives students enough information to suggest an answer to each period's enquiry question e.g. 'Why was the medical Renaissance important when it didn't make anyone healthier?' Having established their hypothesis, students then look at the period in more detail – in the context of that outline. This helps confidence – they already have an answer to build on. They don't have to learn all the detail before they can begin to see the pattern of the period.

iv) creating a sense of achievement for students as they develop a deeper answer to the enquiry than they can offer at the beginning. This confidence-boosting feeling cannot be underestimated for its ability to motivate students further.

For further discussion of these issues – and lots more examples of successful teaching – for Themes, Depth Studies and other units see the Raising Attainment section:

https://thinkinghistory.co.uk/Issues/attainment/index.htm

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A Level

a) Creating Coherence

As with GCSE units, there's always the danger that A level units break down into a sequence of individual topics and questions which lack an overall coherence. This doesn't help students get the most out of their studies – seeing periods and topics as a whole gives them an additional perspective on the history and the kinds of questions historians ask. Therefore it's worth setting up an A level unit with an overall enquiry question. It probably won't be a question that's asked in an exam but it will create a different angle which expands their understanding of people and/or the relationship between the past and the present or … whatever strikes you as valuable! Here are some examples of such light-touch questions to come back to and discuss occasionally and at the end of the course.

> If loyalty was important and people did not want civil war, why the Wars of the Roses break out and continue so long?
>
> How should we remember Tudor Rebellions?
>
> Did the French Revolution achieve the aims of those who led the first protests?
>
> Can the course of Italian Unification help us understand a little about Italian politics today?

b) Using enquiry to help students develop more independence

As with GCSE, A level students often think they have to learn a great deal of information before they can begin to make sense of a topic or start to put answers together. This creates the danger of lots of reading and note-taking without any clear sense of direction. That in turn leads to frustration and reduced motivation – 'I've done loads of reading but haven't retained much/can't make sense of it.' Therefore, having a question and hypothesis to work on from the beginning make a huge difference, guiding reading constructively and making for much more effective learning. This process also combats the fear of 'not knowing', making explicit that it's OK to know little or nothing at the outset and that uncertainty is a natural and accepted part of getting to grips with a new topic.

Here's one way of developing an initial hypothesis. Don't worry if you don't teach this topic – it's the process that's critical and is transferable to any context. This is most easily demonstrated using an example. Imagine you're about to set your Y12 to work on the events of 1471 within the Wars of

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the Roses, focussing on why Edward IV was able to regain his throne after being deposed only months earlier.

Begin by presenting students with the question – Why did Edward regain his throne in 1471? Then ask them for ideas – after all, they'll have looked at why he lost the throne – but some students won't have the confidence to make the mental leaps across topics. So use a card-sort – the cards list possible reasons or factors for Edward's success – and ask them to organize the cards into group. This leads students towards a hypothesis – the cards can be grouped into:

a) reasons which seem to link to Edward's own strengths and qualities

b) reasons which seem to be his opponents' mistakes or weaknesses

c) other factors which don't seem to fit into (a) or (b)

Note the use of the word 'seem' which is deliberately hypothetical, reassuring that they're not meant to be certain or to know the answer at this stage. This has created a hypothesis – the answer is a mix of Edward's strengths and his opponents' weaknesses – which do students think were likely to have been more important?

Students now have a list of factors, organized into a pattern – factors such as 'Edward's military leadership' and 'Clarence changes sides' – so the next step is to look for evidence of these factors in their books – in what ways was Edward a good military leader, when and how did his leadership play a part, was this a factor at critical moments? Thus the initial identification of a question and hypothesis helps students read more effectively because they've got a target for that reading. The pages of their books no longer comprise an obstacle course full of completely unfamiliar material. The benefits of the approach are confidence, a sense of direction, improved motivation, and improved reading. And, in the long-run, better writing because knowledge is more secure, having been built up in layers, from outline to depth.

Thus creating a hypothesis at the outset of 4 or 5 lessons-worth of work provides a structure that students can follow, realising that it's OK to know only a little at the outset but that they can build that knowledge and understanding as they go – and you're giving them the tools to become more and more independent in their learning. At some stage reduce or take away the scaffolding – the list of possible reasons – and insist they come up with their own ideas. Creating independent thinkers

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and learners is what A level should be about – not students who can't cope without a book covered in exam board logos and detailed guidance on how to get from level 2 to level 3!

For a fuller description of this activity (with resource cards) see:

1471: Why did Edward IV win his crown back?

https://thinkinghistory.co.uk/ActivityBase/WhyDidEdwardCrown1471.html

For a longer discussion of developing students' independence at A level see:

Ideas for developing independent learning amongst A level students

https://thinkinghistory.co.uk/Issues/IssueIndependentLearning.html

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Section 4. Why is the enquiry process so important?

Enquiry questions, as we've seen, can play a significant role in teaching and learning by providing coherence, challenge and interest for students' work. However the benefits that stem from understanding the process of enquiry are more wide-ranging and, I think, more important as they can extend far beyond the classroom and years of schooling. I've set out these benefits below.

Developing students' ability to work independently

I make no apology for repeating this argument from the introduction to this article because I believe that the paramount reason for introducing students explicitly to the enquiry process is because enquiry is central to developing the ability to study independently. The capacity to study and think independently is clearly very much needed at A level, at university and in life beyond education and the enquiry process is so important because it provides a model for independent learning – so long as this process is made explicit so that students can describe and implement it.

The enquiry process builds independence by:

- providing a clear structure and a sense of direction so students are much less likely to simply read as much as they can and hope an answer emerges.
- reassuring students that it is acceptable to know little or nothing at the outset, that uncertainty is a natural part of studying history and that 'changing your mind', otherwise known as 'developing your hypothesis' is a positive part of the process, not a weakness.

As a result, students become confident that they can move from knowing little to knowing and understanding a great deal about new topics. Enquiry is, in effect, a form of problem-solving.

Continuity in students' experiences in history – producing confidence, satisfaction and enjoyment

One reason students can find History difficult is because they feel they're constantly starting again on new topics, each one featuring new names, dates, places etc which act as camouflage, preventing students realising that what they've learned before about how to 'do history' can help them with the new topic. This is where enquiry is so central. The process provides a common thread as students progress and mature from primary to and through secondary school. Following a similar enquiry process on each new topic gives students confidence because they have the anchor of knowing the steps to take in investigating a new topic – and confidence is so important for successful learning. That learning, in turn, can enhance students' satisfaction and enjoyment. Being allowed to be

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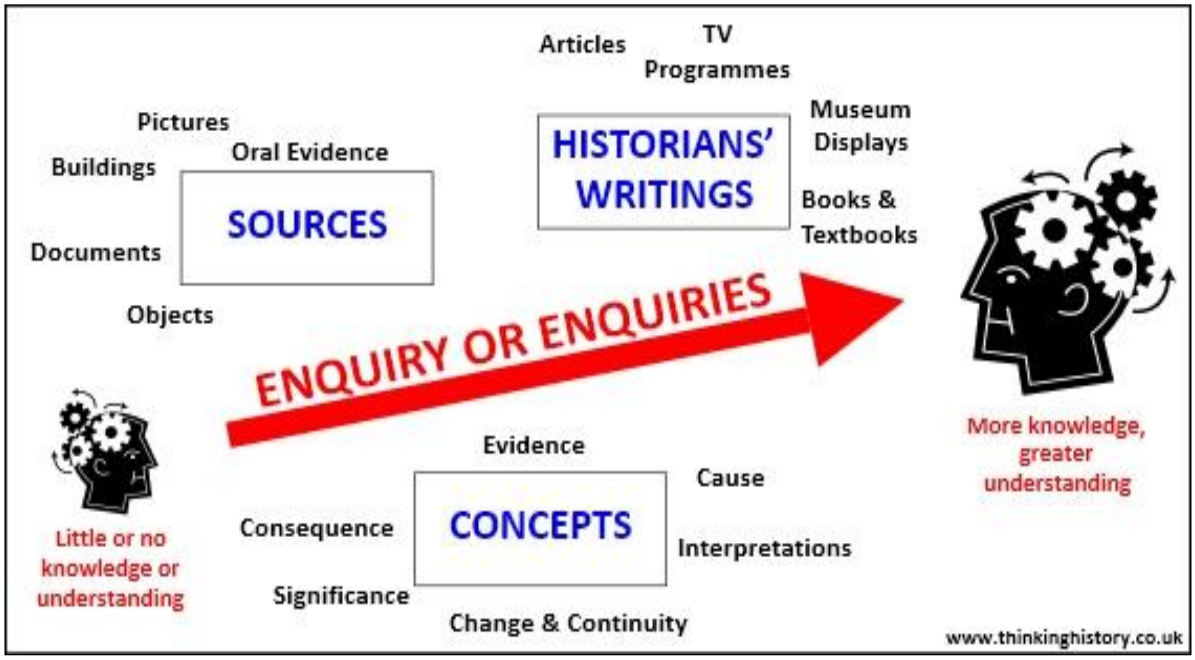
uncertain at the beginning takes away an unexpressed fear and the final answer is a demonstration of how much has been understood and learned – visibly different from what they understood and knew when the question was first posed. That progress is satisfying and enjoyable

Helping students see the process of 'doing history' as a whole

Another problem that students can face is seeing the process of 'doing history' as a whole. They know they're tackling work on sources, causation, significance etc but how does it all fit together? The danger is that doing history becomes just one darn concept after another – but enquiry can be the glue that holds everything together, as the diagram below shows – a diagram that students need to see and understand. Concepts, sources and the writings of historians are brought together during enquiries, used by students in different ways to develop their answer to the enquiry question.



Understanding why studying History is of value beyond the classroom

Enquiry also has a particular importance in arguments for the value of studying History. Explicit focus on enquiry helps students, parents and school management see that history helps develop experience in problem-solving – how to think and plan a way through a problem, ask questions, identify relevant evidence and evaluate its reliability, move from tentative to firmer conclusions on the basis of that evidence, reach a judgement and know how certain that judgement is, balance arguments for and against conclusions and finally communicate conclusions effectively.

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This is all the more important given the research of Richard Harris and Terry Haydn which concluded that 'large numbers of [pupils] have a limited grasp of the intended purposes of a historical education …'. To make significant in-roads on students' ideas about the purposes of studying History it's essential to make clear the transferability of the process of enquiry to the world outside the classroom. It develops widely-transferable skills – and in History through the most important context of all, the actions and motives of real, individual people.

For the research by **Terry Haydn** and **Richard Harris** on www.uea.ac.uk:

> *Pupil perceptions of history at Key Stage 3: Final Report, October 2005* HERE …
>
> *Factors influencing pupil take-up of History post Key Stage 3, Final Report September 2007* HERE …

Section 5. Making and keeping enquiry visible – the essential task

This is a very short section and maybe the key points don't need repeating – but they're so important I'll repeat them anyway! At all ages – and I really do mean all ages – the enquiry process needs to be visible to students and it needs to be discussed explicitly with them:

> What is this process? Can you explain it in your own words?
>
> Do you remember the enquiry we did on … – what did we do next that time?
>
> How certain are you about your hypothesis at this stage? Which words sum up your degree of certainty and uncertainty?
>
> How has your hypothesis developed as a result of the work you've done this week?
>
> What are your conclusions – and why can't you be completely certain?
>
> How has following this process helped you study this topic effectively?
>
> Can you think of other questions we could have asked about this topic?
>
> Do you think enquiry could be helpful outside the classroom?

To aid discussion there are several things you can do to keep the process explicit:

> a) give students regular practice in asking their own good historical questions. A wall display of types of historical questions is a great prompt, creating a menu of questions we ask.
>
> b) Use a physical 'Certainty-Uncertainty' washing-line to help students become comfortable with degrees of uncertainty and that it's normal to develop or change an initial answer. Doing this with physical movement gets this point across much more strongly than words can do by themselves. Ask students to stand on the washing line, showing how certain they are about their first hypothesis, then ask them again as the enquiry progresses to see if their views have changed. You can also use vocabulary cards (possibly, might be, hypothesis etc etc) by scattering them alongside the washing line to reinforce the kind of language students

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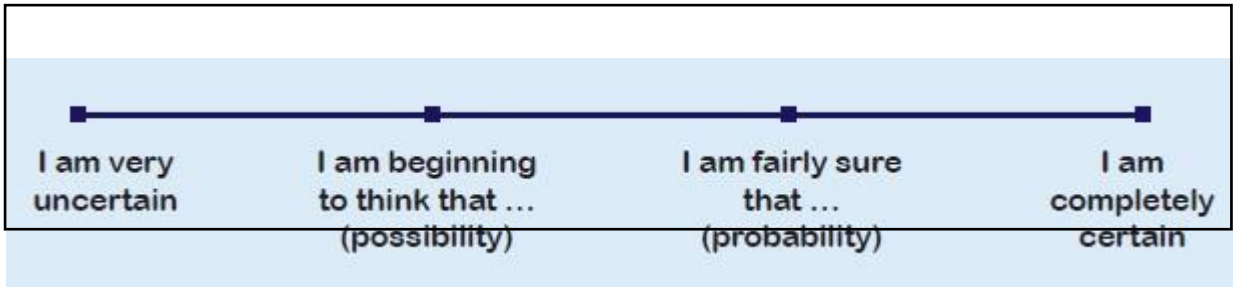
should be using. As students provide answers focus on their use of language – pick out and praise use of hypothetical language



c) create a powerpoint sequence showing your class using the enquiry process which can then act as a reminder for them of the process – 'do you remember when we did an enquiry on …… ?'

Here's an example based on the Riccall mystery which began by 'Digging up the Mystery' – a spot of in-class archaeology!

https://thinkinghistory.co.uk/EnquirySkill/EnquiryUsingPowerPoint.html

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Section 6. How does the enquiry process contribute to work at historical sites and museums?

Another virtue of the Enquiry process is that it is the ideal way to integrate work in school with work carried out during visits to museums and historic sites. Such visits build children's enthusiasm and awareness of the past, their knowledge and understanding of a topic or period but there can be a danger of visits becoming separate from core work in the classroom. However both the approaches below use the enquiry process to embed the visit in a sequence of lessons rather than being a one-off 'trip' whose value is likely to be limited because it is just a one-off.

a) Using a visit to initiate an enquiry

Use the site at the very beginning of an enquiry to stimulate questions and create initial hypotheses. Then return to school to use other resources to test and develop those hypotheses and build fuller answers to the questions. For example, take a question such as 'Did the Romans change the way the Britons lived?' One very good way to begin developing an answer is to go to a Roman site or a museum with Roman objects and use the evidence there, making comparisons with what pupils have already learned about life in prehistoric Britain – what does the evidence of the site tell you that begins to answer the question? Then take those hypotheses and follow them up using a wider range of resources in school. Another example is a question such as 'How important was religion to people in the Middle Ages?' or 'Did monks and monasteries matter to people in the Middle Ages? Again, begin developing an answer by going to a monastery or cathedral and use the evidence there – what does it tell you about the importance of religion?

b) Using a visit to build up or challenge answers that students have already suggested in school

Begin the process in school with students suggesting and developing answers to questions over several lessons. Then undertake the site or museum visit to see if their answers stand up against the evidence they see, whether it's a building or a range of objects in a museum or an interpretation presented by an actor at the site.

One example could be KS2 students exploring the everyday life of the Anglo-Saxons who have begun to build an answer using books, pictures and sources in the classroom. Then use a visit to your local museum or site to test their hypotheses and build better answers, using evidence they have now seen and even touched.

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A second example is of KS3 students may be exploring the story of everyday life and could build a graph or description in the classroom, based on the national picture, using books, pictures and sources in the classroom. But was that what it was like in their town? That's where a visit allows students to use their local museum to test the hypothesis in the national picture – was it like that here?

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Section 7. The importance of keeping Enquiry Questions flexible

This brief item is idealistic. It's a plea to adopt a flexible approach to asking enquiry questions with all age groups, from KS1 to A level. I accept that it won't appeal to departments who want everything cut, dried and adhered to, especially regarding assessment but I hope it may encourage those who put learning before assessment and want to help students develop the abilities to use the enquiry process independently and ask good history questions for themselves.

1. Firstly, a reminder of why we want to develop students' ability to pursue enquiries. It's to help students:

- Gain confidence, satisfaction and enjoyment from their work in History because the enquiry process provide continuity in students' experiences throughout their studies of history
- See the process of 'doing history' as a whole rather than involving work on individual concepts and content
- Understand why studying History is of value beyond the classroom

Finally, and crucially, the enquiry process develops students' ability to work independently by:

- Providing a clear structure and a sense of direction that students can follow
- Reassuring students that it is acceptable to know little or nothing at the outset, that uncertainty is a natural part of studying history and that 'changing your mind', otherwise known as 'developing your hypothesis' is a positive part of the process, not a weakness.
- Helping students become confident that they can move from knowing little to knowing a great deal about new topics. Enquiry is, in effect, a form of problem-solving.

2. To help students develop the ability to study independently we need to help them ask questions themselves. It's impossible for students to do this if they're only ever answering questions posed by teachers. This means creating the opportunities for students to investigate their own questions or to adapt the questions initially posed by teachers – this, in turn, requires a flexible approach from teachers and departments to the enquiry questions students explore. Teachers therefore need freedom to adapt lessons and sequences of lessons as those lessons develop, even if this means moving away from pre-planned departmental assessment opportunities based around specific second-order concepts.

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3. It's therefore essential to give students of all ages practice in asking questions – and to be explicit in explaining that they're practicing asking history questions and why this is important in studying history. You can, for example, start a new topic with a brief story, source or other stimulus material and ask students 'what questions do you want to ask?' 'what do you want to find out?'. This helps to give students agency – they can suggest questions that matter to them – and then you can help them decide which specific question or questions you'll explore – and with a little guidance this may not be far from the direction you want to take!

4. Another way forward is to suggest alternative wordings for questions around the same theme and conceptual area. From there it's a small step to remaining flexible in the questions you and the class pursue – with the aim of the questions becoming 'their questions', giving them a sense of ownership rather than the questions being yet more tasks set by teachers.

5. As I said at the beginning, this is a plea to adopt a flexible approach to asking enquiry questions with all age groups, from KS1 to A level – enabling students to gain practice in asking questions. Without the ability to ask and pursue their own questions, students are not truly developing independence as learners and they're missing out on learning about a key element in the enquiry process. Students also need to feel they have agency in determining the questions they're exploring, not just answering them! Asking good historical questions is a key part of students understanding of how to study history and a sign of inventive and high-quality thinking.

This may, in turn, mean being much more flexible with a department's assessment scheme but sticking rigidly to a pre-ordained set of enquiry questions does seem to be putting the administrative needs of assessment before educational aims.

It's also very rewarding for teachers to feel they're developing students' ability to ask questions and work independently – and the value of professional satisfaction should never be under-estimated.

For a lengthy discussion of *'The nature and significance of Enquiry in history teaching'* see:

https://thinkinghistory.co.uk/EnquirySkill/EnquiryImportance.html

And for other material on enquiry and independent learning see:

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

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