



The
Historical Association
The voice for history

Curriculum Evolution

December 2013

TEACHING HISTORY

The Historical Association Curriculum Supplement

Although modifications to the content of the National Curriculum for history have not been as dramatic as once feared, the effective revocation of the previous attainment target is radical indeed. When these changes are considered alongside the fact that more than half of maintained secondary schools (all academies and free schools) now have no obligation at all to adhere to *any* prescribed curriculum, the revolutionary potential of current curriculum reforms is readily apparent. The word 'potential' is deliberately chosen, because there is no guarantee that history departments will capitalise on these new-found freedoms to shape their own curricula and assessment policies in response to their professional understandings of their subject discipline and the needs of their pupils. Heads of history may well find their options curtailed or constrained by whole-school policies and decisions made by senior leadership teams. Powerful financial pressures will militate against the acquisition of new resources, while the looming sense of more urgent priorities imposed by A-level and GCSE reform will undoubtedly limit the amount of attention that can be devoted to Key Stage 3.

The authors of the two articles in this special curriculum supplement are well aware of these constraints, but they are also anxious that history departments should not settle for the path of least resistance. Jamie Byrom seeks to highlight what he regards as the most important strengths of the revised curriculum, as well the distinctive features to which attention needs to be paid. He also outlines and exemplifies a series of well-tested principles to underpin *any* new planning – urging all those teachers who 'kicked off' against the appalling draft proposals published in February now to 'kick on', gaining as much as they can from the revised version.

Michael Fordham reminds us that history teachers' well-documented frustrations with the previous attainment target, and more particularly with the absurd ways in which they were required to use it, have long prompted thoughtful professional experiments with alternative approaches, supported by insights from research and an understanding of the core principles of assessment for learning. While he certainly does not underestimate the challenges we face in establishing workable alternatives to National Curriculum levels, the suggestions that he outlines here take account both of the nature of historical knowledge and of the legitimate demands that teachers will continue to face from parents and senior leaders to monitor and report pupils' progress in ways that can be readily understood.

Every curriculum reform has unleashed fresh waves of professional creativity and rigorous thinking about how to achieve the objectives to which we aspire – much of it reported in the pages of *Teaching History*. We look forward to supporting and sharing the fruits of that continuing debate and experimentation.

Katharine Burn, Chair HA Secondary Committee

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We don't often get an opportunity to send a copy of *Teaching History* to every school in England but, thanks to sponsorship from the Centre for Research in Holocaust Education at the Institute of Education, we are delighted to be able to share with you all this special edition of the journal dedicated to the teaching of the Holocaust and other genocides. We have taken the opportunity presented by this special issue to publish a slimmer supplement to support all history teachers in this transition year as they consider curriculum change.

This also gives us a chance to thank you all for your support over the last year – most noticeably the period between February and July 2013. We were glad that the government listened to the thoughtful and informed opinions of history teachers and historians that underpinned our response to the consultation. We would like to thank everyone who responded to the consultation and who answered our survey. The weight of evidence we were able to collate made a real difference.

The HA is a completely independent charity and the work we do is only possible because of the support we get. Membership income is a vital part of that support and I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your continued support.

Best wishes for a well-earned Christmas break!

Becky.

Becky Sullivan
Chief Executive Officer
The Historical Association



Thinking about ...

How the HA can support you, your department and your students

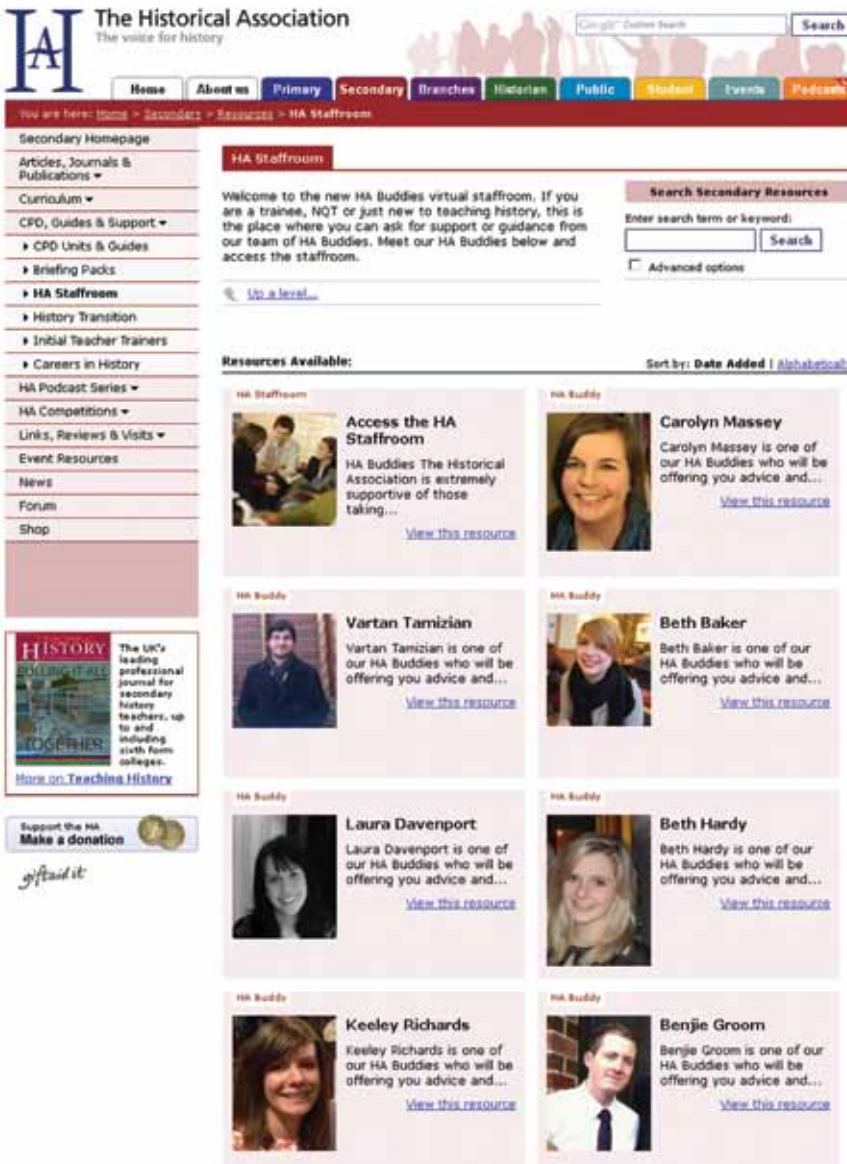
What comes to mind when you think about the Historical Association? [HA] Chances are you know *Teaching History* – you probably used the journal during your teacher training and have borrowed copies from friends over the years – but how much do you really know about the HA? Have you visited our website? We have a full archive of *Teaching History* from 1998 searchable by edition, by article, by author, by theme or concept all packed full of great ideas and practical advice. When you join the HA you can find support for your personal professional development, for your department's development and support for your GCSE and A-level students.

Supporting the individual

Are you a trainee or newly qualified teacher? *Teaching History's* regular new feature 'New, Novice or Nervous' with advice on a variety of problems and issues has been developed with you in mind; because every problem you wrestle with somebody else has also faced and has found ways to come up with some answers. Browse the website to find past problems or email the editorial team with your solution to a problem.

Why not join the HA staffroom?

The Historical Association is extremely supportive of those taking their first steps into history teaching and we understand how daunting the process of learning to teach history can be. We want to help



The screenshot shows the website for The Historical Association, specifically the HA Staffroom page. The header includes the logo and navigation tabs for Home, About us, Primary, Secondary, Branches, Historians, Public, Student, Events, and Podcasts. A search bar is located in the top right. The main content area is titled 'HA Staffroom' and contains a welcome message, a search bar for secondary resources, and a list of resources available. The list includes 'Access the HA Staffroom', 'Carolyn Massey', 'Vartan Tamizian', 'Beth Baker', 'Laura Davenport', 'Beth Hardy', 'Keeley Richards', and 'Benjie Groom'. Each resource entry includes a small photo and a 'View this resource' link.

you. Our virtual staffroom gives you the chance to join our peer-to-peer Buddy Scheme and ask for support and guidance from other teachers. We use a password-protected virtual learning environment for the staffroom so you can chat in complete confidence.

Others have contributed their experience of those early stages in history teaching to the HA, and you can read some of their ideas and guidance in the essential guide on how to *Survive and Thrive as an NQT* and access the associated support unit.



Feeling a bit anxious about subject knowledge?

We have a huge and growing library of podcasts by leading historians on a wide variety of subjects. Alternatively you might want to buy one of our new digital publications available on Amazon for Kindle and other devices and soon to be available on our website in PDF format.

Are you a mentor or beginning to take a mentoring role?

We have a wonderful archive of support material for mentors with *Teaching History's* regular 'Move Me On' feature designed to build critical, informed debate about the character of teacher training, teacher education and professional development. We actively encourage mentors or others involved in initial teacher training to

act as agony aunts (or uncles). Our website has a number of CPD units to help you reflect on your practice – whether you're thinking about pedagogical concerns or about your own career there's something there to help you.

Are you a curriculum leader or head of department?

Did you know that if the whole department joins the HA you get four membership passwords to access all our CPD units, our briefing packs, podcasts and – of course – copies of *Teaching History*? You also get member prices to HA events including up to four members of the department able to attend the HA Annual Conference at member rates. As a corporate member you can access our face-to-face and online-moderated CPD units at significantly reduced rates or arrange bespoke CPD for your school.



One to look out for is our new Quality Mark for history departments. A number of schools have signed up for the pilot and we will be rolling the scheme out to all schools in late 2014.

Are you looking for a seriously cost-effective way of supporting your students?

Did you know that when the school becomes a member you get a password for your students to access our Student Zone? Our podcasts were originally designed with students in mind and most albums are broken down into a series of questions that build into an interview with historians on a variety of topics.

We have developed a series of advice packs for students from how to make the leap from GCSE to A-level to how

to take notes and write essays and help with applying to university and writing your personal statement. In response to requests we have developed resources for GCSE students including revision guides with hints and tips from experienced teachers and examiners and topic packs to help with subject knowledge.

Why the Historical Association?

Our resources are freely donated by history teachers and historians: they are written by you for you. The HA is a completely independent charity – without history teachers, historians and those individuals who just love history we'd be nothing. We've been supporting history with your help for just over 100 years and are looking forward to the next 100! No other subject association offer quite so much for teachers, for schools and for students.

Alive ... and kicking?

Some personal reflections on the revised National Curriculum (2014) and what we might do with it

The overwhelming response of history teachers to the final version of the National Curriculum (2014) was one of relief that their insistent, penetrating critique of the first draft had been heeded. Jamie Byrom shares that profound sense of relief and celebrates the achievement of the history education community in making its voice heard. However, he also draws attention to two important strengths of that first draft that should be celebrated and built upon. One is the value that it places upon substantive historical knowledge, and the other is the potential inherent in its new emphasis on developing a sense of 'historical perspective', which promises much more than visions of an unproblematic chronological narrative or an inert framework. In setting out the distinctive demands of the new curriculum and the scope that it offers, Byrom gives teachers a set of key principles to guide their planning and urges them to 'kick on', now directing their passion and ingenuity towards achieving its full potential.

Jamie Byrom

Jamie Byrom is a former history teacher and advisor for Devon Local Authority and now works as a history education consultant.

Think back, if you dare, to 7 February of this year. In what may be, for you, one of those 'I can remember exactly where I was when I heard' moments, the draft National Curriculum for history was published.¹ The outcry among the vast majority of history teachers was immediate. Anger, disbelief and depression abounded. In this journal, Simon Harrison, then Chair of the HA Secondary Committee, was moved to describe the draft as 'an insult to those involved in history education over the last 20 years.'² Some even saw the document as the death of worthwhile history in schools: it was no more; it had ceased to be; it was an ex-subject.

And yet, even within that February draft, there was a discernible pulse. It could be detected above all in the final four aims where, strangely out of context with almost everything around them, there was a powerful formulation of history's preoccupations as a discipline. The subject was alive, albeit buried under bullet points.

And now consider the final document, published on 11 September.³ While there may not have been bunting hanging in the corridors of every history department in the country, there was among most of us a real sense of shared relief, not to mention surprise at the degree of change. By this time Katharine Burn had taken on the role of Chair of the HA Secondary Committee and noted that the proposed changes were less dramatic and that the new programme was 'significantly more coherent', particularly celebrating its 'wider vision of the past' and the re-statement that history should 'inspire pupils' curiosity'.⁴ This article explores what was changed in the six months between publication of the draft and the final programme of study, what that final programme actually requires and what the implications are for the body of history teaching professionals; a body that, like the curriculum, is alive and kicking.

Kicking off

It became clear at once that history teachers, academic historians and others sympathetic to their cause were not going to resign themselves to accept the February proposals. As the saying goes, it all 'kicked off'.

Without revisiting in detail the debate that ran for several months in media of all types, the number and the vitality of the responses calling for a change of mind from the Secretary of State were impressive and effective. By May Mr Gove announced publicly that there would be significant revisions to the February draft.⁵ The revised version appeared in August and was – with one or two changes – confirmed in September.

Before turning to the actual requirements of the 2014 history curriculum and what we may need to be doing to implement them, it is worth reflecting on some aspects of those feverish months of debate and what they reveal about the place and nature of history teaching within England today. There is no space here for a forensic analysis, but some broad points need to be noted.

Figure 1: National Curriculum History (2014) – aspects to develop

Key Stage 1		
Knowledge / understanding of British history	Knowledge / understanding of wider world history	The ability / disposition to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes within living memory – used, where appropriate, to reveal changes in national life See also wider world history 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Events from beyond living memory that are significant nationally or globally Lives of significant individuals in the past who have contributed to national and international achievements. Some should be used to compare aspects of life in different periods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be aware of the past, using common words & phrases relating to time Fit people/events into chronological framework Identify similarities / differences between periods Use wide vocabulary of everyday historical terms Ask and answer questions Choose and use from stories and other sources to show understanding Understand some ways we find out about the past Identify different ways in which the past is represented
Local history		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant historical events, people and places in their own locality 		

Key Stage 2 The following areas of study taught through a <u>combination of overview and depth</u> studies		
Knowledge / understanding of British history	Knowledge / understanding of wider world history	The ability / disposition to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes in Britain from the Stone Age to the Iron Age The Roman Empire and its impact on Britain Britain's settlement by Anglo-Saxons and Scots Viking and Anglo-Saxon struggle for the kingdom of England to the time of Edward the Confessor An aspect or theme of British history that extends pupils' chronological knowledge beyond 1066 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The achievements of the earliest civilisations; depth study of one of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sumer Indus Valley Egypt Shang Dynasty Ancient Greece – life, achievements, influence Non-European society that contrasts with British history. One of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> early Islamic civilisations including study of Baghdad c. 900AD Mayan civilisation c. 900 AD Benin (west Africa) c. 900-1300 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to develop chronologically secure knowledge of history Establish clear narratives within and across periods studied Note connections, contrasts and trends over time Develop the appropriate use of historical terms Regularly address and sometimes devise historically valid questions Understand how knowledge of the past is constructed from a range of sources Construct informed responses by selecting and organising relevant historical information Understand that different versions of the past may exist, giving some reasons for this (not explicitly stated but is natural progression between KS1 and KS3)
Local history		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A local study 		

Key Stage 3 The following areas of study taught through a <u>combination of overview and depth</u> studies		
Knowledge / understanding of British history	Knowledge / understanding of wider world history	The ability / disposition to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of Church, state and society 1066-1509 Development of Church, state and society 1509-1745 Ideas, political power, industry and empire 1745-1901 Challenges to Britain, Europe and the wider world 1901 to present day (including the Holocaust) An aspect or theme of British history that consolidates and extends pupils' chronological knowledge from before 1066 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least one study of a significant society or issue in world history and its connections with wider world developments <p>(See also British history)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extend and deepen their chronologically secure knowledge of history and a well-informed context for further learning Identify significant events, make connections, draw contrasts and analyse trends within periods and over long arcs of time Use historical terms and concepts in increasingly sophisticated ways Pursue historically valid enquiries including some they have framed Create relevant, structured and evidentially supported accounts Understand how different types of sources are used rigorously to make historical claims Discern how and why contrasting arguments and interpretations of the past have been constructed
Local history		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A local study 		

1 – Powerful responses to the February draft

When the National Curriculum was first introduced and whenever it has been reviewed, history has been the focus for fierce debate. But the reaction on this occasion reached new heights of intensity. We should not be surprised at this given the nature and the degree of the changes proposed, but it is worth noting that the responses had both energy and precision. In this way they reflected the strengths of the history teaching community across England and beyond. The blogs, local meetings, responses to formal consultation and letters to the press without doubt made it clear that there was a problem with the draft proposals that could

... we are like the medium- or long-distance runner who knows that this is not the time to settle for an easy jog: it is time to kick on.

not be ignored, but alongside and within these there was also a cogency of argument that made change possible. It is interesting to read the Secretary of State's responses to the Education Select Committee in May 2013 where he expressly stated that

*I do not mind if people say, 'Please change that', or, 'Please change the other', because it is through putting forward a strong case, listening to the contrary case and accepting the strong parts of the contrary case that you end up with the best policy. So rather than my saying that it is a case of saying something outrageous then retreating, it is better to say, 'Put forward a strong argument, expect strong response, listen to that strong response and accept those parts of it that are persuasive.'*⁶

It is a reasonable inference that the history community had substance as well as intensity on its side. Readers of *Teaching History* will not be surprised at this. Its pages testify to a tradition of intelligent, imaginative, industrious commitment to the cause of developing the teaching of a rigorous and life-enhancing understanding of the past. There is much to be proud of in our subject community, not least the commitment to take the work further and to strengthen relationships with academic historians who also engaged in the debate. Naturally, just as with teachers, some were more supportive of the February draft than others, but a feature of the consultation period was the way in which teachers and academics worked together, sometimes finding more in common than they might have expected.⁷ It will be important to build on these links. The Historical Association and the Royal Historical Society are likely to be prominent in this work.

2 – Significant weaknesses in the February draft

The responses needed to be both powerful and persuasive of course, because there were real problems with the draft proposals. While committed teachers made serious attempts to see how they might work with the draft should it go through without change, they could not escape the fact that,

despite their best efforts, it remained in the words of two such colleagues, 'a sow's ear'.⁸ Different people have seen different weaknesses but I would like to draw attention to two that Katharine Burn implied in her editorial.⁹ The February proposals lacked breadth and they lacked coherence. The content was narrowly focused on British, or English history and it was represented through long lists of bullet points indicating events and individuals whose inclusion was mandatory, but whose relationship to each other and to the whole was, to say the least, unclear. The effect was to suggest that the authors believed that teaching is mere telling, and this became for me the most worrying feature of the document. In the final version, for teaching in September

2014, there is now more world history (or at least, history of the wider world) and there is some greater shape and a greater degree of freedom for teachers to choose how best to teach the substantive content to meet the curriculum aims. There will be many colleagues, I am sure, who are still dissatisfied with the final version but it is at least broader and more coherent and there is a greater sense of how teaching works.

3 – Hidden strengths of the February draft

And now a surprise. Even within the much-mauled February version there were at least two real strengths. The first was well disguised and the other was staring us in the face, but we may need to work at it over the next few years to realise its importance.

The first of these strengths is that the February draft did at least, through that strange camouflage of bullet points, take substantive historical knowledge seriously. This was, to my mind, a welcome development. In my work as a Local Authority subject adviser, I had recently spent more time and energy than I care to recall trying to support history teachers who were struggling to persuade misguided senior leaders that it is a travesty to suggest that our subject is simply about 'The Skills'. Years 7 and 8 were most seriously infected by schemes where history had to assume some very strange shapes in cross-curricular studies. As so often, the pages of *Teaching History* once again showed committed teachers doing their best to make the very best of poorly thought-through integrated programmes.¹⁰ Perhaps more alarming still were the proposals for 'Historical, geographical and social understanding' within the draft primary curriculum that appeared in 2009 but that came to nothing after the change of government the following year.¹¹ Where teachers across a school took seriously the integrity of disciplines and thought seriously about what sort of knowledge pupils needed to think with as they tried to make sense of the world, there could be really valuable outcomes from interdisciplinary work, but the direction of travel was alarming. There appeared to be an abdication of any responsibility for deciding what substantive knowledge matters. Others were

less concerned than I was by this, but I cannot help thinking that the road was taking us to an altogether more slippery slope than the one we have negotiated in the past few months. We should be grateful that substantive historical knowledge is at least given status in the new curriculum.

The second real strength of the February proposals may have been missed because it was part of the one section of the document that most history teachers agreed was its most positive aspect: the final four aims.¹² I have already said that these were the pulse-beat within the document that showed us that life could continue. They have survived in the September 2014 version with a minor change (a welcome reference to historical enquiry) and can be seen in full within Figure 4; but for the moment I would like to consider the final aim that tells us that pupils should:

...gain historical perspective by placing their growing knowledge into different contexts, understanding the connections between local, regional, national and international history; between cultural, economic, military, political, religious and social history; and between short- and long-term timescales.

My interest lies with the term 'historical perspective'. The inclusion of this phrase here and the gloss given in the words that follow capture something that our discipline has always involved and that is close to the heart of why it is valuable. It takes us into territory that recent writers in *Teaching History* have referred to as 'historical consciousness'.¹³ It emphasises that getting better at history and, by implication, gaining the benefits of historical understanding, involves a process of continuous reinforcement, of seeing earlier learning in the light of new learning, of regularly challenging tidy narratives that seemed secure with new insights that may complicate but thereby enrich. It is, in short, a healthy counter to what some may still see as a static and inert 'framework' of British and some wider world history implied by the reference in the first aim to a single and apparently unproblematic 'chronological narrative'. By setting 'historical perspective' as an aim of the curriculum, and stating so clearly how that perspective is developed, the February draft gave us a demanding but potentially exciting standard for our own curriculum construction in schools. And it was sitting there quietly even as we all kicked off about the dreadful shortcomings of the that draft.

Kicking on

Now that we have the revised curriculum, the question is what will we do with it? There may be a temptation, having dodged the bullet points, to relax and to enjoy the continuity on offer. But, as was apparent in the spirit and perceptiveness of the resistance between February and September, and as has been shown in *Teaching History* for many years, that is not what we do. In an article in *Teaching History* in 2003, Michael Riley and I reached for a sporting metaphor to describe how history teams plan new work. Our piece was called 'Professional wrestling in the history department' and we tried to capture the intellectual challenge of effective planning. In a less developed analogy here I am suggesting that we are like the medium- or long-distance runner who knows that this is not the time to settle for an easy jog: it is time to kick on.

Our first task is to identify what is demanded in the new curriculum. Figures 1 and 2 set out the requirements in a format that is very different from that used in the DFE document.¹⁴ Figure 1 shows the programmes for Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 in three parallel columns. The first two columns show what must be studied. All non-statutory examples have been omitted, although they are often quite helpful indicators of what might be included. The third column takes the preamble paragraph that precedes each key stage and breaks it down into its key components. This sort of deconstruction can be helpful in making clear the sorts of learning experiences that we should be providing, but we must not let it lead us into an atomised curriculum where we teach a lesson or two on each aspect and tick them off as having been 'covered'.

Figure 2 may be the more significant table. It shows one interpretation of the relationship between the aims and the preamble and some broad pathways of progression from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 3. It is important to note that the whole of section 5 within Figure 2 uses wording from the 2008 curriculum to amplify and exemplify what each second-order concept is likely to involve at that stage. These are not attempting to show progression in the research-based way that has informed various articles in *Teaching History* over the years, but they will be of some use in guiding planning.¹⁵

It is worth picking out three aspects of Figure 2 for emphasis:

- 1 Chronology is not now included among the second-order concepts, listed here in section 5 of the table. While there clearly is a conceptual dimension to chronology, it is now situated more closely alongside aspects of knowledge, given the new curriculum's emphasis on building secure chronological frameworks into which new learning can be fitted.¹⁶
- 2 Diversity has not retained its status from the 2008 curriculum as a 'key concept', and is now to be found sitting comfortably within 'similarity and difference'. This is not just a clever trick to retain the important work that history does in exploring diversity; it is its rightful home. In 2008 the full wording suggested that 'cultural, ethnic and religious diversity' was a free-standing historical second-order concept, whereas it really is best understood as part of 'similarity and difference'. This is not concerned with similarities and differences over time (as these find their home within change and continuity) but with differences of all kinds within a period or a historical situation and encompasses diversity of all types. The fact that the word diversity no longer appears in the concepts listed in the new history curriculum does not mean exploration of diversity will stop in our classrooms.
- 3 In line with my comments about the revised aims of history, I have suggested within Figure 2 that 'historical perspective' can be seen as an indicator or even the goal of progression. This is not explicitly stated within the 2014 programme of study and is a purely personal interpretation, but I believe it can act as a very helpful organising idea in our planning: will the course of study that we plan build historical perspective? Or, to

Figure 2: Planning to achieve the curriculum's aims

The history curriculum aims to ensure that all pupils:

- know and understand the history of these islands as a coherent, **chronological** narrative, from the earliest times to the present day: how people's lives have shaped this nation and how Britain has influenced and been influenced by the wider world
- know and understand significant aspects of the history of the wider world: the nature of ancient civilisations; the expansion and dissolution of empires; characteristic features of past non-European societies; achievements and follies of mankind
- gain and deploy a **historically grounded understanding of abstract terms** such as 'empire', 'civilisation', 'parliament' and 'peasantry'
- understand **historical concepts** such as **continuity and change, cause and consequence, similarity, difference** and **significance**, and use them to make connections, draw contrasts, analyse trends, frame historically valid questions and **create their own structured accounts**, including written narratives and analyses
- 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 have been constructed
- gain **historical perspective** by placing their growing knowledge into different contexts, understanding the connections between local, regional, national and international history; between cultural, economic, military, political, religious and social history; and between short- and long-term timescales.

Progression in history involves developing historical perspective through

- wider, more detailed and chronologically secure knowledge
- sharper methods of enquiry and communication
- deeper understanding of more complex issues and of abstract ideas
- closer integration of history's key concepts (see section 5 in the adjacent table*)
- greater independence in applying all these qualities



use another word that I think helps us move beyond the sterile 'skills/knowledge' debate, will the students' learning experiences over the course develop in them a disposition to view the world with an informed sense of historical context, drawing on existing knowledge and understanding and curious and capable enough to learn more? If we are to 'kick on' in developing the quality of history teaching we must go beyond the stringing together of engaging lessons (important as that is) and achieve an enduring historical perspective that helps young people make sense of their world and their own place in it.

The preamble paragraphs for each key stage begin with a statement about the development of pupils' chronological knowledge and understanding. This has clearly been a driving force behind the changes – and rightly so. With honourable exceptions, we have not given this aspect of our work the attention that it deserves. Too many young people emerge from their study of history with fragmented and disjointed knowledge and understanding of the past. There is debate about exactly how wide ranging and secure any young person's chronologically informed framework can be, but even allowing for this, we have tended to hope or assume that that some sort of secure framework will emerge at the end of their studies rather than plan for it. We do need to kick on, and work on balancing overview and depth study will be an important aspect of this.

The short linking paragraph between the preambles and the areas of study at Key Stages 2 and 3 specifically requires a blend of overview and depth so that students understand the 'long arc of development' as well as the 'complexities' of particular events and issues. This is not simply a question of pace or detail, as if walking more quickly through an art gallery would improve our chances of becoming an effective critic or even painter. We need to devise big picture activities that demand high-order thinking, supported by valid and well-grounded historical evidence. Sometimes these will tackle entirely new areas of study (a big picture understanding of the history of the USA might be exciting and important). Sometimes they will require students to think back over work already done (maybe pulling together their understanding of change and continuity in beliefs and ideas, exploring how religious beliefs live on alongside a scientific world view). This is exactly what is implied by the helpful phrase 'historical perspective'. Often – but not always – the focus for the thinking will be about change and continuity and here too, recent work in *Teaching History* will sharpen our thinking and improve our practice.¹⁷

And finally we arrive at the substantive history that must be studied. What is new here? What specific challenges are presented?

There are some specific new requirements but before considering those it is important to look carefully at the

(Italics are non-statutory explanations, examples or suggestions)

Work likely at KS1 to → ... work likely at KS2 to → ... work likely at KS3

<p>1. Chronological knowledge/ understanding <i>(including characteristic features of periods)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an awareness of the past • Use common words and phrases relating to the passing of time • Know where all people/ events studied fit into a chronological framework • Identify similarities / differences between periods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to develop chronologically secure knowledge of history • Establish clear narratives within and across periods studied • Note connections, contrasts and trends over time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend and deepen their chronologically secure knowledge of history and a well-informed context for further learning • Identify significant events, make connections, draw contrasts and analyse trends within periods and over long arcs of time
<p>2. Historical terms eg <i>empire, peasant</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a wide vocabulary of everyday historical terms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the appropriate use of historical terms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use historical terms and concepts in increasingly sophisticated ways
<p>3. Historical enquiry – Using evidence/ Communicating ideas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask and answer questions (see section 5 below*) • Understand some ways we find out about the past • Choose and use parts of stories and other sources to show understanding (of concepts in part 5 below) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly address and sometimes devise historically valid questions (see section 5 below*) • Understand how knowledge of the past is constructed from a range of sources • Construct informed responses by ... • Selecting and organising relevant historical information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pursue historically valid enquiries (see section 5 below*) including some they have framed • Understand how different types of sources are used rigorously to make historical claims • Create relevant, structured and evidentially supported accounts
<p>4. Interpretations of history</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify different ways in which the past is represented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand that different versions of the past may exist, giving some reasons for this 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discern how and why contrasting arguments and interpretations of the past have been constructed

*** 5 – Questions relate to these key concepts that underpin all historical enquiry, developed through regular re-visiting in a range of contexts:**

<p>5a. Continuity and change in and between periods</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Identify similarities/ differences between ways of life at different times</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe/make links between main events, situations and changes within and across different periods/societies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and explain change and continuity within and across periods
<p>5b. Cause and consequence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise why people did things, why events happened and what happened as a result 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and give reasons for, and results of, historical events, situations, changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyse/explain reasons for, and results of, historical events, situations, changes
<p>5c. Similarity/Difference within a period/ situation <i>(social diversity including beliefs and attitudes)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make simple observations about different types of people, events, beliefs within a society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe social, cultural, religious and ethnic diversity in Britain & the wider world 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and explain/ analyse diverse experiences and ideas, beliefs, attitudes of men, women, children in past societies
<p>5d. Significance of events/people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about who was important eg in a simple historical account 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify historically significant people and events in situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider/explain the significance of events, people and developments in their context and in the present day

Figure 3: The Mughal Empire – a case study in effective history planning¹⁸

Four principles of planning

1 – Teaching with a purpose: Why study this?

We must have strong reasons for our content selection. Among these must be a valid rationale for its historical significance. It is not enough to say that the students will enjoy it.

2 – Engaging with subject knowledge

All our planning should be grounded in strong subject knowledge. Amidst all the other pressures of teaching we need to find time to engage with scholarship through exhibitions, documentaries and reading, where we find:

- ‘Stuff’ – i.e. the substantive historical events and developments: what happened, when and where. But ‘stuff is not enough’!
- Issues – i.e. the areas of scholarly debate and/or fundamental human dilemmas that will connect with the students’ lives.
- Nuggets – i.e. wonderful, small-scale human stories, artefacts or images that have the power to pull the students into the past ... such as the Mughal emperors’ love of pigeons!

3 – Wrestling with the enquiry

Before we start to teach we need to have pinned the enquiry down. We need to be clear about three related aspects that must be carefully aligned:

1. The enquiry question: this needs to capture the conceptual focus of the enquiry and engage interest. It may be necessary to compromise on precision in order to maintain a ‘punch’. In this case we focused on the values and attitudes of the Mughals while knowing that change would be a significant element of the study.
2. The structure of the enquiry: this will make the learning manageable and allow students to be aware of the process and to internalise the way our subject works
3. The outcome: naturally the learning outcomes should be clear, but students also benefit from having a clear sense of what they will be doing as they proceed and/or at the end to pull their thinking together.

4 – Exploiting the particular

Build the enquiry around particular people, moments, images, objects or places so that abstractions are made human. Use those ‘nuggets’! In this enquiry we structured the work around three old emperors each on his deathbed looking back over his life. What mattered to him? What would he have made of what followed his death in the next few years? As the story of each emperor unfolds, the students learn about the rise and fall of the Mughal Empire, the lives of its people, the values, attitudes and beliefs of its emperors ... and the empire’s interaction with the British, first as eccentric visitors, but ultimately as imperial overlords.

headings of each of the areas of study within Key Stage 3. These are not ‘units’. There is no requirement that they be taught as self-contained tidy narratives. There is no requirement that they must be taught sequentially. The bullets below the headings have no statutory force, they merely guide. What is required is set out in the preamble and in the wording of each heading.

Departments will need to think carefully about their current planning and its effectiveness and decide how far these satisfy the requirements. Some departments may be teaching an area of study that they call Medieval Realms, a title that dates back to the first National Curriculum of 1991. The continuity in the title may hide enormous and thoughtful curriculum change in the actual planning and teaching ... or it may indicate that it really is time to ‘kick on’ and re-think this part of their work. The area of study called ‘Ideas, political power, industry and empire: Britain 1745-1901’ is about far more than the industrial revolution. Departments need to be satisfied that they do justice to all the aspects in the title and to the full sweep of time encompassed. What did the Georgians do to be sidelined for so long? How will they be welcomed back into the fold? By ignoring them we quietly let the 13 American Colonies slip off to become the USA with barely a mention – is that acceptable? What may have to go for them to find their place? (But what fun awaits! It is a fascinating era.)

Three explicitly new and potentially different areas of study are considered below:

An aspect or theme in British history that consolidates and extends pupils’ chronological knowledge from before 1066

The requirement to study something from before 1066 is particularly welcome and the examples given suggest some really interesting possibilities. Before settling on one of those or selecting a home-grown version, it is important to stop and think what exactly is the purpose of the study. There are various valid approaches. If the aim is to allow pupils towards the end of Key Stage 3 to revisit an aspect of a period they will have studied when much younger then a study asking what was so great about Alfred the Great or a teasing enquiry on ‘Just how Roman was Roman Britain?’ might stretch earlier learning and show how there are always extra layers of enquiry in history. A study of the Neolithic Revolution would raise all sorts of interesting evidential questions but would also allow comparison with other ‘Revolutions’.

Given the emphasis on securing chronological frameworks, however, there are many good reasons to think in terms of a development study that stretches from before 1066 and into modern times. The examples given (political power in Britain and migration of peoples to, from and within Britain) may already feature in the work of some departments if they chose to adopt more thematic planning in 2008. The suggestion of a study of Britain’s changing landscape would allow this area of study to be combined with, or to complement, the required local study. Decisions on each of these would also need to consider what may eventually

'What mattered to the Mughals?'



Akbar 1556-1605



Aurangzeb 1658-1707



Bahadur Shah Zafar 1837-1857

The enquiry focuses on The Mughal Emperors and their changing relationship with the British, 1526-1858.

After an introductory overview, pupils focus on the reigns of three Mughal Emperors: Akbar, 1556-1605, Aurangzeb, 1658-1707, Bahadur Shah, 1837-1857. They find out about the very different character and concerns of each emperor and reflect on what mattered to him during his reign. Pupils also find out about his relationship with the British and how British involvement in India developed in the years following the death of each emperor.

The teaching resources include paintings of the emperors (and a photograph of Bahadur Shah), and excerpts from programme 5 in Michael Wood's BBC documentary series on India.¹⁹

As pupils pursue the enquiry they complete an A4 booklet, annotating portraits of each emperor at the end of his reign to show:

1. Looking back on his life – what mattered to him?
2. Looking beyond his life – what would he have made of the way British involvement in India developed?

appear within GCSE history where thematic studies and possibly studies of local history may be part of the revised requirements. If new, valid and interesting thematic studies appear at GCSE some schools may in time choose to adapt a current GCSE development study and move it to Key Stage 3.

A local study

Once again the listed examples are helpful and any of those approaches might work, as might combining the local study with a development study in the way explained above. As local studies are also incorporated into Key Stages 1 and 2, it would be sensible to check as far as possible what local sites pupils may have studied in earlier years. It is worth bearing in mind, too, that some primary schools may well use their local study as a way of keeping work they would otherwise have to drop under the new orders, so sites that allow them to study the Tudors or Victorians or World War II are particularly likely to have been the focus for enquiries within Key Stage 2.²⁰ Of course, whatever approach is adopted for a discrete 'local study', it is important to give a strong sense of place and locality when studying any part of the course. This may involve examples of the typicality or atypicality of the area around the school when studying national events or it may involve making faraway places and landscapes real through the study of photographs and paintings and artefacts.

At least one study of a significant society or issue in world history and its interconnections with other world developments

The title for this area of study is worth considering carefully. The intriguing nudge towards doing more than one study of an aspect from the history of the wider world, may represent a deliberate attempt to counter charges of an Anglocentric curriculum. Some schools will be eager to exploit this freedom but they will need to be sure that the other areas of study are given due prominence and that the requirements of the preamble for Key Stage 3 are fully met. They will also need to note the way that this study is characterised in its title: the selected society or issue must be deemed to be of some historical significance and it must allow for exploration and understanding of 'interconnections with other world developments'. Some existing studies of wider world history may not do this. It is an important shift. It moves gently in the direction of 'world history' rather than merely a study of some place in the wider world beyond Britain.²¹ For a long time I have wondered why we do not make more of the concept of interdependence in history. Geographers make much of this, quite rightly; but if it is a powerful concept in understanding the workings of the present world, it must, by definition, have been at work in the past.

The examples given are all valid, but there are plenty of other options available. There is no distinction between European and wider world history here so a study of the French Revolution and the Revolutionary Wars might work well. A study of the Ottoman Empire would be intriguing and valuable and support understanding of so much twentieth- and twenty-first century history. However it may be helpful to end these reflections on the arrival of the 2014 history curriculum with a case study in planning to teach one of the suggestions listed within the document. In November 2012, Michael Riley and I briefly returned to 'professional

wrestling' and led some training at the Schools History Project London Conference. The conference was held at the British Library where a splendid exhibition was running entitled 'Mughal India: Art, Culture and Empire'. We took the opportunity to exemplify some principles of planning in the context of teaching aspects of the history of the wider world. It is included here as Figures 3 and 4 in the hope that the principles we explored, and maybe the plan itself, may help you as take a deep breath, lift your head high and 'kick on' with your own curriculum development.

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- ² Harrison, S. (2013) 'HA Secondary News' in *Teaching History*, 150, *Enduring Principles Edition*, p. 5.
- ³ www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-history-programmes-of-study
- ⁴ Burn, K. (2013) 'HA Secondary News' in *Teaching History*, 152, *Pulling it all together Edition*, p. 3.
- ⁵ See for example the reporting of his speech to the NAHT www.naht.org.uk/welcome/naht-events/conferences/annual-conference-2013/annual-conference-news-and-opinion/?blogpost=608
- ⁶ www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmeduc/uc65-i/uc6501.htm Note that this is what is known as an 'uncorrected' record of the Select Committee's deliberations, subject to correction by those involved.
- ⁷ The response of the Royal Historical Society to the DfE consultation on the draft curriculum can be found at www.royalhistoricalsociety.org/rhsnewsarchive.php
- ⁸ Hall, K. and Counsell, C. (2013) 'Silk purse from a sow's ear? Why knowledge matters and why the draft NC will not improve it' in *Teaching History*, 151, *Continuity Edition*, pp. 21-26.
- ⁹ Burn, *op. cit.*
- ¹⁰ See, for example, the range of articles in *Teaching History*, 138, *Enriching History Edition* (2010).
- ¹¹ These proposals have been preserved on-line by the National Archives and can be read at: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100202100434/http://curriculum.qcda.gov.uk/new-primary-curriculum/areas-of-learning/Historical-geographical-and-social-understanding/programme-of-learning/index.aspx?tab=6>
- ¹² Another interesting aspect of the aims that there is no space to explore here is the explicit inclusion of the development of abstract terms deployed in history. These should of course be developed in context – unused lists of key words on walls will not be enough!
- ¹³ For a helpful way into this see Instone, M. (2013) 'Moving forwards while looking back: historical consciousness in sixth-form students' in *Teaching History*, 152, *Pulling it all together Edition*, pp. 52-60. The article is useful not only for its readiness to apply and test recent thinking in this area but for endnotes that provide a helpful reading list for anyone interested in this work.
- ¹⁴ Should it be of any use, the tables shown in Figures 3 and 4 will in due course be available as Word documents from the website of the Schools History Project, where they have been included within a section of the site that will be supporting teachers of history in primary schools. The main web address is www.schoolhistoryproject.org.uk/index.php The pages for primary history are not active at the time of writing but that should change shortly.
- ¹⁵ See for example Lee, P. and Shemilt, D. (2003) 'A scaffold, not a cage: progression and progression models in history' in *Teaching History*, 113, *Creating Progress Edition*, pp. 13-23. Further articles in this series by Lee, Shemilt and Blow can be found in *Teaching History* 117, 137, 143, 145 and 147.
- ¹⁶ See Hall and Counsell, *op. cit.*
- ¹⁷ For an example of a teacher wrestling with maintaining high challenge while studying a long sweep of time see Fordham, M. (2012) 'Out went Caesar and in came the Conqueror, though I'm sure something happened in between ...' in *Teaching History*, 147, *Curriculum Architecture Edition*, pp. 38-46. On how to ensure high-level thinking about change and continuity, see Foster, R. (2013) 'The more things change, the more they stay the same: developing students' thinking about change and continuity' in *Teaching History*, 151, *Continuity Edition*, pp. 8-17.
- ¹⁸ For a more detailed exploration of planning processes in history, including suggested criteria for content selection see Byrom, J. and Riley, M. (2003) 'Professional wrestling in the history department: a case study in planning the teaching of the British Empire at Key Stage 3' in *Teaching History*, 112, *Empire Edition*, pp. 6-14.
- ¹⁹ Wood, M. (2007) *The Story of India with Michael Wood*, Complete BBC series (DVD). Some of the most useful images that we found came from the British Library and the Victoria and Albert Museum using search terms such as 'Akbar' or 'Mughal'. See www.bl.uk/learning/ and <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/>. Another invaluable resource was an animated map of the Mughal Empire's growth and decline, available at www.timemap.net/index.php?item_id=147&id=124&option=com_content&task=view
- ²⁰ Primary colleagues are faced with more change in the history curriculum than are secondary teachers. If structures and energy allows this would be a very good time to contact partner primary schools to offer help with, or at least awareness of, their developing history curriculum. Given that Key Stage 2 takes pupils up to Edward the Confessor – but stops short of the Battle of Hastings – it may be possible to do some interesting 'bridging units'.
- ²¹ Note the discussion of this point in Hall and Counsell, *op. cit.*

O brave new world, without those levels in't:

where now for Key Stage 3 assessment in history?

Although history teachers have long been frustrated by the limitations of the National Curriculum Attainment Target and by demands to use it for purposes for which it was never intended, its official abolition has come as quite a shock. As Michael Fordham makes clear, we now have an unparalleled opportunity to rethink the way in which we assess and report on students' progress, capitalising on research insights and the best formative assessment practice. While existing reporting and monitoring structures may demand certain kinds of data, Fordham urges teachers not to 'muddle through' in response to others' requirements, but to think carefully about the nature of progression in history and about the distinctive purposes that different forms of assessment serve. Fordham's identification of the key questions to ask and his own tentative solution - a 'mixed constitution' - provide a clear focus and possible template for teachers eager to establish a new, more enlightened regime.

Michael Fordham

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Plus ça change?

If you are reading this, you are probably worrying about how you will assess pupils in Key Stage 3 history. It might be that you work in an academy that has already moved away from the National Curriculum. Alternatively, you might be working in a school that has continued to use the National Curriculum, but which is faced with the fact that, from 2014, we shall have a new version that has scrapped the level descriptors and put nothing in their place. All history teachers are left with as guidance is an instruction that 'by the end of each key stage, pupils are expected to know, apply and understand the matters, skills and processes specified in the relevant programme of study.'

Those history teachers who entered the profession in the last 20 years, of whom I am one, have known nothing but the National Curriculum in its various incarnations. Its introduction provided a common curriculum that all schools were statutorily required to teach, and with this came the attainment targets which specified the levels by which pupil attainment in history would be measured. From 1995 the four attainment targets were reduced to one and we were introduced to the 'level descriptors'. The level descriptors were positively Gallifreyan, regenerating every few years into a different form, though maintaining important characteristics that have changed little over the last 20 years. The final demise of the level descriptors leaves a void that will, in a number of ways, need to be filled.

That is the purpose of this article. The history teaching profession has, over many years, built a considerable body of professional knowledge about assessment for pupils below examination age, often in response to the demands of the National Curriculum. The task facing history teachers in designing a new assessment framework for Key Stage 3 is considerable, but we can take solace in the fact that this undertaking proceeds not from some tabula rasa, but from the cumulative professional knowledge that we have built in recent years. I want to draw on the criticisms and proposed alternatives that this professional discourse has offered before suggesting one way in which schools might proceed. I then offer a few questions which, to my mind, have yet to be addressed and which require urgent consideration, before ending with a set of questions that heads of department can use to guide their discussions over the coming months.

National Curriculum Level Descriptors: where did it all go wrong?

Many have criticised the level descriptors of the National Curriculum attainment target, and rightly so, but before advancing to consider those critiques, it is worth pausing to consider the great achievement that the attainment target was. That was not a misprint. We, as a country, should be ruefully impressed at the audacity of thinking that we might make some national statement about what 'good history' is and construct a detailed model against which pupils of different abilities might be judged. Perhaps the

Figure 1: 'Exceptional Performance' level from the 2008 National Curriculum attainment target

Pupils show a confident and extensive knowledge and understanding of local, national and international history. They use this to frame and pursue enquiries about historical change and continuity, diversity and causation, constructing well-substantiated, analytic arguments within a wide frame of historical reference. They analyse links between events and developments that took place in different countries and in different periods. When exploring historical interpretations and judgements about significance, pupils construct convincing and substantiated arguments and evaluations based on their understanding of the historical context. They evaluate critically a wide range of sources, reaching substantiated conclusions independently. They use historical terminology confidently, reflectively and critically. They consistently produce precise and coherent narratives, descriptions and explanations.

greatest challenge facing those who designed the National Curriculum attainment target was the question of *what* it is that is being assessed.

Historical knowledge can be characterised as either 'substantive' or 'second-order'.¹ Substantive knowledge comes in multiple forms including names (of people, of events), dates and ideas (such as 'communism' or 'liberal'). Clearly one cannot be said to be getting better at history without developing a more extensive substantive knowledge of the past. Second-order knowledge entails the ways in which the past can be given structure and meaning, particularly in terms of the kinds of questions that can be asked. Second-order concepts such as 'cause', 'consequence', 'change' and 'continuity' are all organising ideas: we might ask about the causes of an event, or the extent to which something changed over time.² There are also particular, discipline-specific tasks by which we might communicate our knowledge (substantive and second-order) of the past, especially the construction of argumentative essays.³ A powerful assessment model allows teachers to make normative judgements (i.e. whether something is 'good history' or not) about pupils' substantive knowledge, their knowledge of the discipline and their ability to express that knowledge in some form or other.

So far, so complex. History, like all disciplines, is a hard thing to define, though it is essential to note that if we are committed to the idea that what we are assessing is a pupil's ability in history, then we need to be clear that we have to make value judgements about what is 'good' history. Teachers who construct their own assessment frameworks need to feel confident in giving a response to the question 'why is this a good piece of work?' We have to operate with a working sense of a gold standard for assessment to be possible.

Further problems emerge, however, when one has to model the steps towards the 'gold standard'. It is worth looking at the highest possible assessment level in the existing National Curriculum as a starting point (See Figure 1). Although some may quibble over emphases and weights within this statement, I think few would challenge this as a reasonably strong description of what a pupil who is 'good at history' might look like. The challenge, however, is how we make judgements about pupils who are *not* at this level, by definition the vast majority of our pupils.

Figure 2: Progression in understandings of cause and consequence in the original (1991) National Curriculum.

Level 1	Recognise everyday time conventions
Level 2 (b)	Demonstrate, by reference to stories of the past, an awareness that actions have consequences
Level 3 (b)	Demonstrate an awareness of human motivation illustrated by reference to events of the past
Level 4 (b)	Understand that historical events usually have more than one cause and consequence
Level 5 (b)	Understand that historical events have different types of causes and consequences
Level 6 (b)	When explaining historical issues, place some causes and consequences in a sensible order of importance
Level 7 (b)	When examining historical issues, can draw the distinction between causes, motives and reasons
Level 8 (b)	Produce a well-argued hierarchy of causes for complex historical issues
Level 9 (b)	Demonstrate an awareness of the problems inherent in the idea of causation
Level 10	Demonstrate a clear understanding of the complexities of the relationship between cause, consequence and change

Figure 3: Extract from the Ofsted report *History for All* (2011), pp.29-30

In most of the history departments visited, teachers were using sub-levels in their assessments, usually in response to demands from senior leaders. This trend affected not only history but has also been noted in other foundation subjects, notably religious education and geography. Such practice was largely unhelpful since the levels were not intended for such minute differentiation or to be used so frequently. They were intended to be used sparingly and holistically to judge several pieces of work at the end of a key stage or, at most, at the end of a year. They were never intended to be used, as inspectors observed in some of the schools visited, to mark individual pieces of work. However, schools that had developed portfolios of students' work, and used level descriptions to assess achievement across a range of work, were much better placed to judge students' progress accurately.

One approach would be to break down this statement into different strands. This is, in practice, the approach taken by examination boards who, in different 'assessment objectives' distinguish different strands of historical ability. This was also the approach of the earlier versions of the National Curriculum. For example, the 1991 National Curriculum had one strand on 'causation' (See Figure 2) and then modelled the ways in which pupils would (note would, not might) progress up the ladder. The benefits of such an approach are obvious: there is little point judging a pupil's essay on social changes in Britain during the industrial revolution on the basis of a mark-scheme that incorporates causation. We do not, as history teachers, expect pupils to be able to do everything at once: even an article from an academic journal would probably not fulfil all of the requirements of the Attainment Target in one go. Breaking down the Attainment Target into different strands turns a gold standard into a workable assessment framework that can be deployed to assess individual pieces of work.

It is here, however, where it all began to go wrong. The 1991 National Curriculum proved so complex and fragmentary that, following the Dearing Review, it was replaced with a set of broad level descriptors in the 1995 National Curriculum,

encompassed in just one Attainment Target, that was designed to be used *only at the end of a key stage*.⁴ Indeed, when the guidance on using the levels was published, it did not contain any sample work for pupils from Years 7 and 8 so as to avoid the idea that the levels were to be used at any point other than the end of a key stage as a final, holistic judgement.⁵ For various reasons, however, this did not translate into practice. I do not, in writing to an audience of history teachers, need to explain the effect that senior management demands have on assessment procedures in schools. Often these requirements are underpinned by intentions that sound perfectly reasonable: it is right that pupils are regularly assessed so that schools can identify those falling behind and intervene where possible; it is right that parents and external accountability bodies (such as Ofsted) can have a sense of the extent to which pupils are making progress; it is right, perhaps, that teachers should be held to account for whether or not their pupils are progressing in their knowledge of the past.

The effect of such demands is well known. Level descriptors, designed as best-fit, end-of-key-stage judgements, are not fit for purpose when used to mark individual pieces of work, or even to make half-termly judgements about pupil progress. To make this supposedly possible, schools began breaking level descriptors down into 'sub-levels', perhaps recreating the strands of the 1991 Attainment Targets in the process. The outcome was highly complex mark-schemes in which pupils would be marked as 'Level 5b' in causation, or 'Level 6a' in evidential reasoning. The level descriptors had already succumbed to a form of word-play to create the illusion of smooth progression: the 1995 attainment target stated that a pupil at Level 5 would use their knowledge 'to describe and to begin to make links' and at Level 6 'to make links'. The splitting of levels turned illusion to farce: a pupil at Level 5a, presumably, was 'beginning to begin to make links...!'

The proven impact of helping pupils to understand the means by which they might make progress meant that teachers took this mess and plastered it across classroom walls, pupil books and school reports in 'pupil-friendly' language which gave lie to the idea that the attenuated complexity of the bastardised level descriptors could be made meaningful in a few brief words. In the 2011 Ofsted report *History for all* earlier criticisms of the ways that levels were being used were stated once again (Figure 3). It is worth emphasising that, with the possible exception of a few data-obsessed deputy heads, nearly everyone involved in this process did it out of a desire to help pupils get better at history. The story of the National Curriculum level descriptors is a tragedy where the ship of historical education foundered upon rocks of good intention.

The professional response

The challenges involved in using the level descriptors in the classroom placed history teachers under considerable intellectual pressure: they were not found wanting. Over the course of the last ten years or so, the professional response to the assessment challenge has been careful, considered and constructive, and a number of possible ways of making the most of the levels, or even circumventing them, have been advanced by history teachers and other researchers in the field across the country. The irony of the level descriptors is that

Figure 4: A mark-scheme for a piece of independent causal argument developed by Burnham and Brown⁶

How far was Hitler responsible for World War Two?	
Response Type [Mark]	Characteristic features of pupils' response
Lowest [1-2]	Does not directly answer the question. Will probably refer to Hitler or events in the lead up to war and may provide simple descriptions of these. May simply conclude that war was/was not Hitler's fault without minimal or no detail to support this.
Low [2-4]	Describes some factors that led to war. I.e. describes Germany's actions and/or policy of Appeasement, etc. This may be a chronological description and will probably show little evidence of planning processes such as independent efforts to find structure through classification. Those factors chosen are mostly relevant but <i>how</i> they led to war by 1939 is not explained.
Medium [3-5]	Beginning to explain the role of some factors as well as describing them. For example, may describe Hitler's beliefs and actions in the 1930s and go on to explain how some of these, such as the invasion of Poland, led to the outbreak of war. Facts and ideas have been selected according to some discernible criteria, even if these are not explicit. They have been organised to produce a structured account, even if the relationship between elements of that structure are left implicit. There is some use of the idea of relative importance of causes may be manifested in various ways. Their conclusion may still leave it implicit (e.g. conclusion may focus on causes of WWII rather than directly on how far Hitler was to blame), or else address the title very directly but without much linking to the substance of the essay. Causes are plausibly identified, but juxtaposed, suggesting some awareness of connections, rather than fully linked.
High [6-8]	Explains importance of a variety of factors and <u>uses</u> some links between them in order to develop simple arguments around cumulative effect of causes. Overall, the answer shows a degree of conscious development, making effective use of specific historical knowledge and some well-judged command of the language of causation that suggests independent reflection on the appositeness of qualifying terms (such as 'underlying', 'inevitable' or 'chiefly'). Account shows evidence of careful, deliberated selection and organisation of information to produce a structure that is directly and explicitly analytic. Beginning to consider the relative importance of factors and reach a conclusion about 'how far' Hitler was to blame. Might integrate awareness of views of historians.
Highest [9-10]	Thorough explanation and analysis of how factors acted together to bring about the start of the Second World War, using a range of analytic ideas and language to link the causes. Answer is a sustained, focused, analytical argument exploring the importance of various factors vis-à-vis Hitler, leading to a well-substantiated and persuasive conclusion. Properly considers the views of different historians, showing knowledge of those historians and awareness of the reasons why solutions to this causal problem are so contested. Others' arguments are tackled and rejected for defensible reasons.



they forced us, the history teaching profession, to design the very tools that might be used in a post-level descriptors world.

It is worth beginning with the more formal research into how pupils progress in their understandings of the past. Few who have trained as history teachers in recent years will have escaped the work of (*inter alios*) Peter Lee and Denis Shemilt. Their research has given us an insight into the ways in which pupils make progress in their historical understanding.⁷ If nothing else, this research shows us the poverty of the progression model underpinning the National Curriculum attainment target. Lee and Shemilt are clear, however, that their empirically-derived progression models are not designed to be used as an assessment framework: their conclusions apply to populations and not to individuals and, although generalisations can be made about the ways in which pupils progress in their understanding of the past, this does not imply that *all* pupils progress in the same way. As a research base on which to plan teaching,

such progression models serve as a vital tool, allowing teachers to plan for the likely changes in pupil understanding over time; they are not, however, appropriate as short-term, task-specific mark-schemes.

One of the most influential studies in education in recent years is Black and Wiliam's work on formative assessment, pushing the case that 'assessment in education must, first and foremost, serve the purpose of supporting learning'.⁸ A strong emphasis placed on 'assessment for learning' is widespread in British schools, though it is worth noting that it can be interpreted in differing ways. The Key Stage 3 National Strategy in 2003 rather unhelpfully 'defined' Assessment for Learning as incorporating 'objective-led lessons, making use of summative data, use of criteria, oral and written feedback, peer- and self-assessment, target setting and questioning (added in 2006)'.⁹ By reducing formative assessment to a sequence of tasks, the emphasis was shifted from the quality of the feedback given to a set of activities which, if implemented, would constitute Assessment for Learning. There is, for example, nothing inherently formative about lesson objectives, peer-assessment or questioning: what matters is always how these activities are used, which brings us back to quality.

Broadly speaking, task-specific formative feedback was advocated by Burnham and Brown.¹⁰ In particular, they criticised the idea that putting a National Curriculum level on an individual piece of work was meaningful; they directly challenged their senior managers who wanted them to do this. Instead, they created their own mark-scheme (see Figure 4) for each assessment task that they wanted pupils to complete. Importantly, these mark-schemes were not derived in any sense from the National Curriculum levels:

they were based on a good understanding of the history and the question asked, and a professional judgement about what a high-quality response to that question might look like. Having an eye to the 'gold standard' meant that the feedback they were able to give on particular 'landmark' pieces of work was pupil-specific and not shackled by the level descriptors.

The main issues come in terms of tracking pupils. Formative comments are not easily quantifiable and do not sit easily on a graph. There is a degree of relativity involved in this model as pupils are not judged against one fixed unchanging mark-scheme (which in theory, if not in practice, allows progress to be demonstrated): the gold standard for each piece of work is determined by the teachers in a department. One way around the 'tracking' issue is for teachers at fixed points in the year to have the opportunity to 'flag up' any concerns about pupil progress. Every half term, for example, teachers might record some numerical score for each of their pupils which is a professional judgement on whether that pupil is

Figure 5: An example of a 'mixed constitution' approach to assessment

Assessment Mode 1: 'Spot the chronologically lost!'

WEEKLY / FORTNIGHTLY

The denigration of factual recall is widespread, but assessing pupils' propositional, factual knowledge is vitally important. The whole discipline of history rests upon the ability of people to remember people, dates and events and, importantly, to sequence these in time. I frequently make use of factual recall tests when teaching exam classes, but always felt rather dirty about doing this for Key Stage 3, working under the perverse assumption that this did not constitute a valid form of assessment. If nothing else, this mode of assessment is *vital* for spotting those pupils who are chronologically lost: regular, factual knowledge testing is like the big, yellow rescue helicopter that shines its light on pupils swimming in a sea of knowledge who are powerless to structure it in a meaningful way. Assessing factual knowledge regularly in 'low-stakes' testing is how we, as teachers, conduct our search-and-rescue operations.

Approaches to spotting the chronologically lost might include answering simple propositional questions (e.g. in what year was... who was... what happened when...), multiple-choice questions, making timelines from memory and placing events in a sequence.

Assessment Mode 2: historically meaningful outcome tasks

MONTHLY / EVERY HALF TERM

One of the most powerful approaches to the history curriculum that has emerged among the professional community over recent years has been the use of the enquiry question to structure knowledge over sequences of lessons with an outcome task at the end of those lessons that directly addresses the question set. These questions are historical in that they are conceptual guides: they might include questions about causes, change over time or the extent of differences within a society. Through the careful deployment of factual knowledge, these questions can be answered by pupils in quite sophisticated ways, and many of the articles in *Teaching History* demonstrate ways in which this can be achieved. I would follow Burnham and Brown and assess the outcomes using task-specific mark-schemes which evaluate the quality of the answer given.¹¹ As Burnham and Brown show, it is possible to assign a numerical value to such marking without any need to tie it to some broader set of levels.

Approaches to outcome tasks might include writing essays, writing narratives, representing something diagrammatically or, perhaps, by pupils producing spoken presentations, designing museums guidebooks or their own television documentary.

Assessment Mode 3: diagnose substantive conceptual development

ANNUALLY

The new National Curriculum is explicit in demanding that pupils learn how to use substantive historical concepts such as 'peasant', 'empire' and 'civilisation' in a meaningful way. One can learn these concepts only through encounters in the particular: one might, for example, study peasants in medieval France, or serfs in nineteenth-century Russia. At some point, however, we should expect pupils to be able to move from the particular to the general and to begin talking about abstract nouns in abstract ways. This mode of assessment is particularly powerful as an end-of-term or end-of-year assessment and, again, there is no reason why a context-specific mark-scheme might not be designed that enables a numerical value (say out of ten) to be given to different pupils.

Approaches to diagnosing conceptual development might involve pieces of writing, or perhaps one-to-one spoken assessments in which pupils are asked questions such as 'are empires based on military conquest?' or 'what does it mean to be a peasant?' Although very hard to construct, multiple-choice questions could be designed that address the substantive conceptual understanding of pupils.

making satisfactory progress. This model, crucially, depends on having faith in the professional judgements that teachers in a department are making; while many would advocate that this should be the case, a degree of realism is perhaps required in terms of whether or not this will always be the case.

So what shall we put in the place of levels?

The professional response to the challenge of assessment was made in the knowledge that history teachers were bound to the level descriptors: it is worth taking a moment to step back and appreciate the challenge and opportunity that a brave new world with no levels in it offers us. We, as teachers, have been constrained by the level descriptors for so long that it is hard to imagine a world without them, yet, I would argue, imagine this world we must! The worst possible outcome for pupils from this quiet revolution would be for us to muddle through in a rather English way by making a few tweaks here and there so as not to cause a fuss. The introduction of Key Stage 3 levels was revolutionary, and it will take a radically similar act to be rid of them.

It is at this point that I am going to stick out my neck and offer some thoughts, and I want to begin with an analogy. Most history teachers will be familiar with the difference between Plato's and Aristotle's views on the best form of government. Plato argued that *aristocracy*, the rule of the learned philosophers, was the best way to run a country. Aristotle did not disagree in principle that the best form of government would be that of an enlightened philosopher king or aristocracy. He argued, however, that these forms of government are very easily corrupted and that a *mixed constitution* of different forms of government (monarchy, aristocracy, constitutional government) was best.

We have a broadly equivalent situation with Key Stage 3 assessment. In an ideal world, the idea of having one clear overarching assessment model (e.g. the level descriptors) might be best, but, as we have seen time and again, this so easily becomes corrupted. I would tentatively suggest, therefore, that we need a *mixed constitution* in terms of assessment. Figure 5 shows one way in which this might be achieved. For each assessment mode pupils can receive marks using a simple numerical value (e.g. a mark out of ten) which allows, if nothing else, teachers and senior managers to track those falling behind.

Crucially, an approach like this, which disassociates *summative* marking from an overarching progression model, is highly dependent on excellent *formative* marking (see Figure 6). The benefit of this, however, is that formative marking *can* be informed by a clear sense of both a 'gold standard' in terms of what makes good history, and a research-informed progression model (such as those of Lee and Shemilt) which enable us to give feedback about how pupils can get better at history.¹²

Next stages: key questions for your department meeting

Invariably what you do in your department is going to depend greatly on what your school does as a whole. The

pressures to report on pupil progress, to identify those falling behind and to track particular groups of pupils over their school career will necessarily lead to a series of demands being placed on you as a history teacher. The great challenge, of course, is to respond to those demands in a way that does not require you to abandon your historical principles. The case studies outlined above may provide you with a means of achieving this but, like all complex intellectual endeavours, this is something that will most likely need to be ironed out over several department conversations. I offer, by way of conclusion, a set of questions which I think *all* schools will need to address now that National Curriculum levels have seen their demise.

(1) What do we think good history is?

I have argued throughout this article that all history departments now have to make professional judgements about what constitutes *good* history. It might, for example, be a good idea to begin with the current Attainment Target and to critique it within your department meeting. Although every history teacher will have a slightly different conception of what 'good history' is, you will need to have some form of agreed standard if your new assessment framework is going to be meaningful.

(2) What do we think it means to get better at history?

If you are going to mark work formatively without using level descriptors then you will need to think about your working progression model. You might, for example, read Lee and Shemilt's work as a department and then discuss the implications of this for the formative feedback that you give in lessons. You might dig out some old assessments that you marked with levels, strip away the feedback, and work out what formative comments you would give without being tied to the levels.

(3) How are we ensuring that pupils build up a sophisticated substantive knowledge of the past?

Substantive factual knowledge matters. In your department, you might discuss how you are assessing the extent to which pupils are building up a sophisticated knowledge of the events of the past. This might be through regular factual knowledge testing (particularly getting pupils constructing timelines from memory) as in my Assessment Mode 1, or alternatively it might be achieved by assessing pupils' knowledge of substantive concepts (as in Assessment Mode 3).

(4) How can we get our senior managers to understand the rigour of what we are doing?

Chances are that if you want to do something radical then you are going to have to fight for it. All schools will now be introducing new school-wide assessment frameworks: some of these will be benign and some of them will not. You will need, in your department, to work out how your history assessment framework fits within a wider school system, and that may require you to fight your corner.

Figure 6: Feedback to a Year 8 pupil on his essay

Why was the slave trade abolished

At the beginning of the 19th century, the Atlantic slave trade was banned. There many reasons for this including petitions being signed by the public, people not buying sugar(sugar boycott) and many, many more! The most important reasons were some of the things the Abolitionists did. E.g. petitions, organising plays and paintings and taking the slave trade case into court. *

The most important reason the slave trade was abolished was the actions of the abolitionists. They helped get slavery abolished because of their unusual methods of abolishing slavery. It was more important than the other causes because without them slavery still might not be abolished. For example, the Zong trial. The Zong trial is when a group of abolitionists brought people to see a big boat that brought the slaves from Africa to England to help change their minds about the slave trade.

The other reasons the slave trade was abolished were the public opinion and the actions of black people. They helped get slavery abolished because without the public opinion no one could sign the petition and there would be no one to take to a Zong. And without the actions of black people Olaudah Equiano wouldn't have written his book. They were not as important as the actions of the abolitionists because without the actions of the abolitionists there wouldn't be anyone to stop eating sugar, or no one to say that it is unchristian.

Overall, I think the main reason slavery was abolished was the actions of the abolitionists because they went to court about the situation, helped with the sugar boycott, got people's awareness by using the Zong trial, and used plays and paintings to get the point across. *

A strong introduction! You make clear how many different kinds of action were involved and you set out your arguments that the abolitionists were most important.

The Zong trial was important yes. But the exhibition was much later - in 2008 (200 years after the transatlantic slave trade was banned.)

Add a sentence: How did Equiano's book help in the campaign against the slave trade?

Add a sentence: How did the sugar boycott help the campaign?

Your conclusion makes clear your overall argument about the importance of the abolitionists

You set out a strong argument using several examples to show the ways in which abolitionists campaigned. You are also beginning to show how different forces worked together. Your next steps (→) focus on explaining exactly how each element you've picked out made a difference.

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