Evidence of Findings:

There are 24 students in the class with a wide mix of ability. The pre-test results were striking, if predictable. In the post-test two sets of essays were completed:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Pre-test | Post-test essay 1 | Post-test essay 2 |
| Number of Level 3 or above: | 13 | 18 | 18 |
| Number below Level 3: | 11 | 6 | 6 |
| Average score/25 | 9 | 12 | 16 |

It was notable that of the total of 17 essays in the post-test that used the 5-minute drill and most did so thoroughly.

The interesting evidence is the students who did not use the drill – whilst some more able students were capable of writing at a high level, most did not achieve above a 9/25.

Examples of Implementation:

As these are essays of 2-4 pages in length, they defy photographing into this space! They are available on request however. .

Preliminary Conclusions:

In terms of department collaboration, all teachers will start using this drilling technique in their Fountains Abbey lessons, and we will reflect on and improve this collegiately as per our normal working practice. The inquiry work shows sufficient promise to justify this.

The most important refinement is to make it as accessible as possible to those with lower starting points – there is perhaps mileage here in reducing the number of paragraphs to two, if that is all they can think of at the planning phase.

The limits on the success – principally the fact that XX students did not use the drill at all in the post-test is probably due to the balance of content and skills needed in the course and the limited opportunities to re-inforce the latter. A clear improvement may come from more ‘5-minute drill only’ activities where students just get more used to unpicking a question and planning an organised and well-argued response.

Preliminary Findings:

It was notable that of those 17 essays in the post-test that used the 5-minute drill all but one were above level 3, most significantly so. Conversely very few of the unplanned essays were L3 or above. One student used the plan for her first essay but not her second. She got 15/25 and 9/25 respectively. These trends suggest that the planning did help students achieve L3 and above, especially as they came from a mix of students across the ability range.

However it is worth acknowledging that there are other variables at play here, not least that students’ knowledge and understanding of Fountains Abbey developed significantly across a period of 15 lessons while the implementation took place. There was also no control group on this inquiry. It should also be noted that whilst students from across the ability range did use the drill, there was a disproportionate weighting towards the top of the ability range.

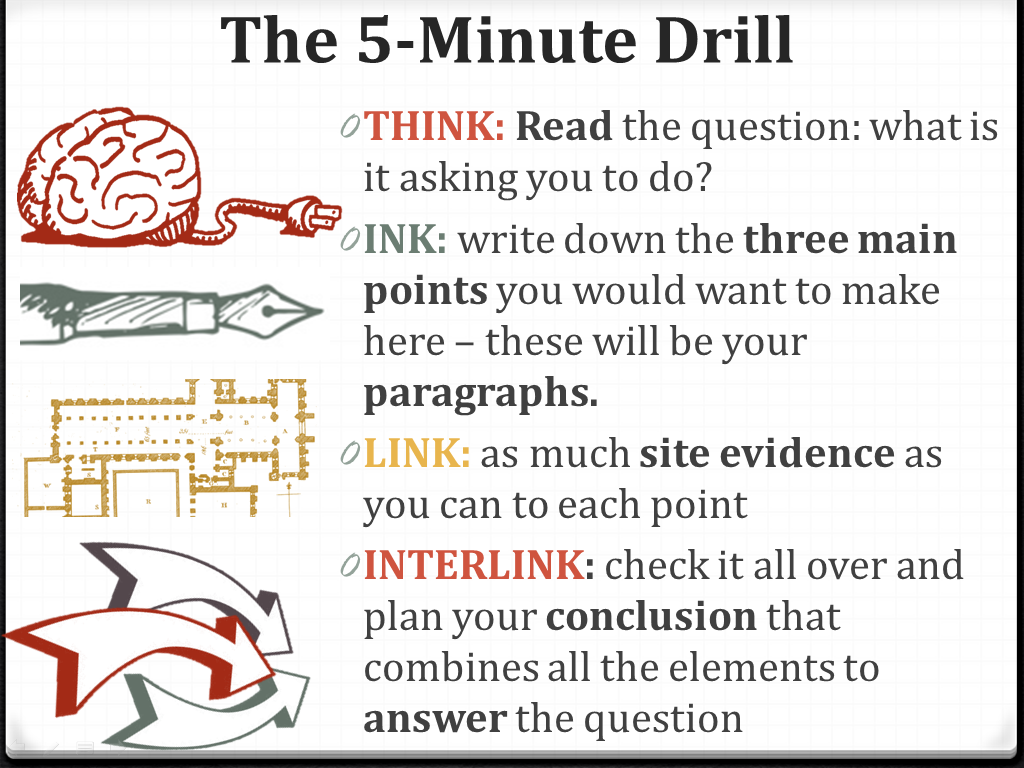
Final Thoughts:

It will be interesting to see how this approach matches up to the instruction I will receive as an examiner on this unit in 2018.

In terms of thinking and practice, it is interesting to think much harder about how we ensure mid-to lower-ability students are able to access and succeed with the much longer written tasks of the new GCSE as well as to compare the success of interventions that attempt to get students to appreciate the whole picture versus interventions that ask students to focus on much more elemental aspects of the tasks. Above all, it has taught me that there must be a slow-burn, progress over time approach taken to these types of skills, in a very direct contrast to the previous GCSE. It is profoundly important that this understanding shapes pedagogy, as we will need to take a distinctive approach to building a wide variety of written skills over the full two year course.

Implementation:

* The intervention strategy involved a simple 4 part checklist that formed the core of a “5-minute Drill” that students were instructed to do at the start of each 30-minute essay.



Students were taught this as the intervention but not reminded about it during the post-testing.

Much of this came from previous TLF’s about metacognition and the power of checklists, and it has been successful with Sixth Form students writing similar essays but not transferred to KS4.

**Context:**

Year 10 now have an assessment model which prioritises independent thought, explicitly defies attempts to teach a ‘structure’ or a particularly ‘checklisted’ response. The Fountains Abbey course uses 14 different areas of focus and combines 2-3 of them in each question to allow for a vast series of permutations – at least 500 possible essay questions. We must develop a new toolkit for students needing to meet this challenge. Giving them the subject knowledge and disciplinary ability to think and write about the past with genuine independence is now utterly critical.

Aims:

* Improve students ‘conscious competence’ when handling unexpected 25-mark essay questions by using metacognitive approaches
* Consider if/how this can positively impact the wider teaching and learning approach of the department across the key stages.

Rationale:

Following an introduction to the ‘four levels of competence’ at ResearchEd in 2014 (albeit in the context of professional development) Noel Burch’s suggestion of a development from unconscious incompetence to unconscious competence has proved an interesting framework for learning. The crucial stage is undoubtedly conscious competence – which is to say the point at which demonstrating a skill or knowledge still requires concentration. This seems to chime with the EEF’s championing of metacognition, the TLF sessions we have attended as well as the approaches recommended by the Historical Associations *Teaching History* journal.

As a department we have been working on metacognitive strategies for students, especially at KS5, to support their understanding of subject and disciplinary knowledge in preparation for new, more expansive A-level study. Therefore the students have used some metacognitive strategies (for example our ‘Old Lady Complaining in the Post Office’ analogy for writing an argued essay) to develop their generic essay writing, but the Fountains Abbey Paper 2 essays demand expertise in the site and its story as well as an excellent understanding of how to communicate it.

**How does metacognitive teaching of historical writing impact on the percentage of Level 3+ writing in GCSE History for students of mixed starting points?**

Getting into the habit – how do we equip our students to handle assessment that is deliberately constructed to prevent prepared answers?

Next Steps:

As a department we now need to use the 5-minute drill each time we re-visit Fountains Abbey content and skills to ensure students use the metacognitive approach more habitually.

The next major step would be to find a way to ensure that students from lower down the ability range both remembered and used the drill to develop the quality of their answers.

For my next inquiry I will focus on more elemental aspects of essay writing and ensure that the impact of the intervention is less susceptible to variables not being tested.

Testing:

The pre-test was to simply give the students a sample question, after about 5 lessons of content learning and the site visit itself, and ask them to write without any guidance or support from the teacher. There were a series of skills sessions that helped the students develop their understanding and ‘competence awareness’ of the skills. A final test was completed at the end of the unit from which average scores, and improvements from the pre-test point could be analysed.

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