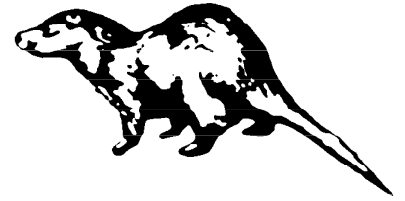


NUFFIELD PRIMARY HISTORY



KS1 CASTLES: HOMES IN THE PAST

TEACHERS' NOTES

The school is situated in the small market town of Otley, where I was based part-time as part of a 'Returning to teaching' course. Towards the end of the course we spent three weeks full-time in school, and it was during this time that I taught the Castles topic to a Year 1/Year 2 class.

I relished the chance to teach some history as a relief from the seemingly relentless domination of literacy and numeracy in the school. This term the key stage 1 classes were looking at castles in terms of homes in the distant past. The lesson below was the second on the topic. In the first lesson we had debated and decided the best place to build a castle.

As part of my teaching I wanted to build the children's thinking skills. In this lesson, the skills I tried to foster were enquiry skills, information-processing skills, reasoning skills and evaluation skills. These were complemented by the key skills of communication, working with others, problem-solving – they led the way in this lesson, where the class investigated what a castle was like in terms of the different parts and rooms within the walls.

Year group/class, and teaching time

Split class of 20 children: 8 in Year 1 and 12 in Year 2, for 1½ hours.

Learning objectives

For the children to:

- investigate a range of sources to find out about the past
- begin to understand the functions of, and relationships between, various rooms/areas of castles
- understand and draw plans of castles, using knowledge gained from the sources and from reasoning about life in a castle
- extend their vocabulary by reading, discussing and applying new 'castle' words learnt.
- work collaboratively and supportively, learning through peer scaffolding.

Key questions

- What were castles like?
- What can we find out about castles from photographs, pictures and plans?

Resources

Audio tape of mediaeval music (www.amazon.com has a range of mediaeval music audio tapes, as do most good music shops)

Topic books about castles

Several castle guide books (my father is obsessed by castles, and has a good collection of guide books)

Plans of three castles, photocopied from the guide books

Various postcards, posters and photographs of British castles

Cardboard model of a castle (with detached keep which would fit inside the walls; children can make this themselves from a cardboard box – see the photograph supplied with this lesson)

THE TEACHING

Episode 1

Focus: Linking with prior learning; giving the big picture.

With the children sitting on the carpet, we reviewed what they'd found out last week about choosing sites for castles. I told them that today we were going to find out about all the parts of a castle by being history detectives, looking at evidence about castles. We were then going to draw our own castle plans, based on what we had learned from the sources.

We began by creating a class concept map to record the children's ideas about what rooms/areas might be found in a castle.

Episode 2

Focus: Pair work; investigating the source material.

The class teacher and I set up the class to work on the sources. We put the children into supportive pairs, giving them 15 minutes for their investigations. While they worked I played the tape of mediaeval music to give them a feeling for the period.

I had differentiated the sources according to year group: the Year 1 children used topic books with pictures of castles, so they could identify the different rooms and decide how these were being used. The Year 2s looked at the three castle plans, the photographs, posters, postcards and guide books. Their task was to:

1 find at least five different parts of a castle and think about what they were used for – what happened in these rooms?

2 think of any questions they might want to ask about the castle parts.

3 write down what they found and be ready to report back to the class.

The class teacher worked with the less able Year 1 children with IEPs, and acted as a scribe for them. They responded really well to the visual material, particularly Alex, who was brilliant at linking rooms with their function.

The Year 2 supportive pairings were a great success, with those who might have found the task difficult being scaffolded by their more able partners. Altogether they discovered fifteen different areas within a castle. The investigative work captured the attention of even those children who normally find it difficult to concentrate.

Episode 3

Focus: Class discussion of findings, questions.

Now we gathered on the carpet for the children to feed back what they had discovered.

Excitedly they volunteered their place and room words: dungeon, bedroom, kitchen, storeroom (for food), great hall, dining room, chapel, weapons room, stable, feast room, workroom/classroom, garden, entrance. The Year 2 pairs had picked up some specialist vocabulary, and enjoyed the sound of new words such as 'solar' and 'crenellations'. I recorded all the names on the board.

Next we discussed function: what the different rooms in a castle were for. We also discussed categories, debating which areas were for living in and which were for defence, guarding the castle if attacked. I focused this with more in-depth discussion on seven main areas, so as not to overload the children for their next task – drawing their own plans.

Episode 4

Focus: Drawing castle plans.

Next I set the children the challenge of drawing their own castle plans on large sheets of paper, working in the same pairs as before.

They set to busily, again to the sound of the mediaeval music tape. I noticed that the children talked about the music while drawing – they discussed the speed, what instruments were used, and a couple even tried to predict repeating patterns in the music by humming along. As I planned to use part of the tape in a mediaeval dance the following week, I was delighted that they were becoming familiar with the music's mood and rhythm.

Every pair managed to draw sensible plans – although all drew gardens outside the castle walls! Midway through the activity two pairs changed their minds about the best place for the keep. One pair initially placed it outside the walls, then said to each other: 'This wouldn't be very safe, would it?' The second pair moved their keep to a more central position, 'to move it away from the stables.' I also overheard discussions about the relationship between the great hall and the kitchen: 'It'll have to be close or the food will get cold!' These conversations provided good evidence that the children were thinking beyond

labels, reasoning about the way people in the past lived, and about the functions of the different areas.

Episode 5

Focus: Reviewing our learning; locating the keep.

To end the lesson we held a plenary, with all the children bringing their plans to the carpet. Pairs volunteered to show and explain their plans to the class. We looked at different plans for common features – what areas does every castle have?

I showed the class the cardboard model castle, with detached keep, and asked for volunteers to place the keep in the right place. Several volunteers came forward in turn, with much discussion about the best location ensuing.

I told them I'd make labels of the names they had identified today, and they could try sticking them onto the model in the right places.

We finished with a mediaeval fashion show: Sarah had brought in a mediaeval costume, which she now modelled for the class. This formed a lovely link into people's roles in the castle – the subject of our next lesson.

Learning outcomes

The children:

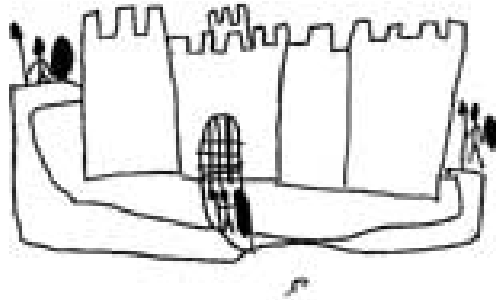
- were able to name different parts of a castle and explain why they were situated where they were
- were able to draw their own castle plans, based on the sources they had investigated and on discussion about rooms and their functions (thinking, deciding, planning)
- worked collaboratively and supportively in pairs, scaffolding each other's learning
- used investigative skills and techniques to make deductions from historical sources (they observed, described, investigated, read, recorded, solved problems, explained, reasoned)
- used sources of information in ways that went beyond simple observations to answer questions about the past (Level 3, history attainment target).

During the following week ...

I put the children's plans and words on display, together with the castle posters, pictures and plans. I arranged the topic books and model castle on a table, together with red labels for the children to stick onto the castle. The display was very popular with the children, provoking much discussion and interactive use. Some of the Year 2 children particularly tackled this with a great deal of thought, showing that they understood the layout of the castle – other than the garden again. I discussed this misconception with the class during the week.

Ellie, a very able Year 2, drew more castle plans in her own time, relating them to castles she had visited in the Czech Republic. These formed a good way of widening our study of castles, with the children realising that they were not built only in Britain.

Sam, a Year 2 child who struggles sometimes, was so fired up that he drew castles all week in 'morning time' before school. The school reproduced one of his drawings on the cover of the next newsletter to parents – notice the keep poking up in the middle of the castle!



Sam's castle

Reflection/evaluation

Everyone enjoyed the lesson – castles is a gift of a topic, and all the children were enthusiastic about the work and the subject.

It was a shame that we were not able to take the children to visit a castle during this topic. While some of the children have visited castles with their families, not all have – it would have been useful to have had a common experience and been able to apply some of their learning to a real situation. This was definitely a missed opportunity for enriching the children's learning.

However, the children found using the resources exciting and real (the resources were also seized on by the other key stage 1 teachers, who borrowed them to use with their classes). The interactive display proved a useful technique for assessment, and also enabled the children to be involved in what happens on their classroom walls.

Nuffield Primary History project

General editors: Jacqui Dean and Jon Nichol

Author of this unit: Liz Jones, Otley, Yorkshire

© in this format Nuffield Primary History 2003

downloaded from www.primaryhistory.org