



WHERE DID WORLD WAR II ACTUALLY TAKE PLACE?

I taught this lesson at the start of the unit of work with a class of Year 5 children. This year, I wanted the children to understand World War II in a wider context than just the Home Front in Britain. After reading the Nuffield Primary History lesson on introducing the Empire through coins, I felt that I could adapt this by using commemorative medals from this period.

Learning objectives

For the children to:

- use medals as sources of historical evidence
- analyse and surmise the symbolism of the ribbon and other markings
- begin to understand that the war had an impact across the whole world
- begin to understand the chronology of the war.

Key questions

Why do these medals exist?

What clues do these medals give us about where World War II took place?

Resources

Each child had:

A3 world map

Atlas

Photocopies of campaign medals from World War II.

Copies of the medals were also on the Smartboard.

The teaching

After familiarising themselves with the map, the children were given their first medal. In pairs they had to make a note of any words, dates or place names. They discussed a possible name for the medal and the significance of the ribbon colour.

They were then given a short document, which gave more detail of countries that this campaign was fought in.

This was followed by a class discussion where children were given further clues about the significance of the colour of ribbon.

Finally the children coloured in the relevant part of the map, stuck a copy of the medal around the edge of the map, and annotated it with the campaign and the date.

Several medals later, the children had a completed map showing countries where World War II had been fought. The children were very surprised at the extent of the conflict and reflected on how many people were involved, and how the War evolved over the years.

We also discussed why the medals were given and the feelings of the recipients, which would later be linked to a lesson on Remembrance Sunday, and the poppy campaign.

Reflection

On reflection, I would have preferred to have some actual medals to show the children, although some of these came in later.

This activity could also have been extended to include medals from Allied countries and the Axis powers, to give a more balanced view of the war.

Nuffield Primary History project

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