Context

The chapter presents three case studies which detail how to develop strands of political literacy (e.g. laws, justice, debating different viewpoints etc.), social and moral responsibility, and community involvement. It also highlights how history can be used as the vehicle for processes, knowledge and understanding of citizenship education.

Case Study One – Significant People for KS1/2

Focussing on a significant person in history provides opportunities to explore the economic, political and social issues the person was involved or associated with – and therefore the social and moral issues that arise. This case study outlines a scheme based on the life of Sylvia Pankhurst, who broke away from her mother Emmeline’s and sister Christabel’s organisation, the WSPU. Sylvia worked amongst the women of the East End of London, was committed to anti-racism and the peace movement as well as universal suffrage. Readers are invited to use different approaches and exploit cross-curricular opportunities e.g. art, literacy, drama and role play etc in order to link the topic to a contemporary issue. For example in discussing the suffragette movement children can use role-play to consider the moral issues surrounding protest movements and can explore rights and responsibilities.

The role-play around the campaign for women’s votes also developed skills of political literacy – speaking, arguing and presenting a persuasive case and recognising differences in opinion. The community involvement angle was pertinent in recognising and understanding how women as well as men in the East End of London got involved in suffrage and other issues of social justice.

The critical point is that whilst it is imperative to learn about significant people and events, it is vital to actively engage with the dilemmas and challenges these people faced. Therefore, history and CE is not about learning the facts and figures in relation to e.g. Nelson Mandela, but is about ‘empathy’ – putting the child in the shoes of the key figure to think through for themselves the moral and ethical issues of apartheid and racism – what it must have been like for that person to experience their struggle.

Case Study Two – The Victorians and Irish Famine

The second case study described activities to develop Citizenship Education through role-play with a year 3 class in work on the Victorians and the Irish famine. The initial work on the Victorians focussed on child labour in the mid 1800’s, and compared this with child labour today. Role-play enabled the children to empathise with children who had been in the textile mills of the day, and also to appreciate the moral and ethical questions arising from child labour in India. For example, why children in India may need to work, whether they are exploited, and by whom?

The work on the Irish famine explored the factors of limited government support, charities and emigration, comparing this to contemporary issues of homelessness and famine, and the ‘interventions’ of government and charity. The children expressed themselves through a series of freeze frames thinking through the reasons why people
become homeless such as famine, flood, emigration, war etc. Claire highlights how this work takes a cross-curricular approach, builds in CE from the start and how to make connections to contemporary issues, and the need to consider the history of Great Britain and not just England.

Case Study 3 – The World Study Units
Case study three looks at how to incorporate CE into the world study units. This included looking at ‘rights and responsibilities’ in relation to Ancient Egypt and whether ancient treasures should be returned to Egypt. The format of a mock trial developed skills of political literacy.

The unit on Mesopotamia (now Iraq) raised questions around the importance of water and drought, enabling a modern day comparison to drought hit areas suffering from famine.

The unit on Benin looked at the rights and wrongs of the British invasion using the ‘Sack of Benin’ as a drama focus, as well as the massacre of British troops due to religious intolerance.

The unit on the Aztecs generated debates about the ethics of war and conquest, as well as revenge and treatment of the defeated.

This chapter enables trainee teachers to understand and reflect upon how CE can be woven into our history schemes of work. In particular the processes of political literacy – learning about laws, trials etc; social and moral responsibility – e.g. the rights and wrongs of war, the actions of significant people; community involvement; identity and self-esteem – through heritage study; and understanding and respect for other people and cultures.

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