

Using **ORAL HISTORY** for engagement and creativity to support a varied and rich curriculum.



Oral History is a powerful way to engage with the past. Through the words and recollections of people from all walks of life, we can glimpse how they experienced the world. Whether they are recalling their experience of a different time period, a world changing event, or simply recalling their past- it is wonderful to hear their testimonies, in their own words.

The skills and techniques that young people will acquire by engaging in an Oral History based project are numerous. The intergenerational engagement brings communities past and present together in a unique way and there is so much that we can learn from one another.

These activity suggestions are intended to be used to support the use of Oral History to enrich learning. Specific examples are given of the use of Oral History in a local history topic where community engagement is at the heart of the project. However, Oral History is not confined to History lessons and can be used to enrich learning across the curriculum.

Links

Article- Breathe life into your lessons with oral history -

<https://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/2011/dec/28/oral-history-olympics-diamond-jubilee>

A guide to oral history for schools and youth groups - <http://www.ohs.org.uk/advice/how-to-do-oral-history/>

ENGAGE - Sounds from past using sound clips

Sound clips, like video clips, are easy to build into any lesson and are a good introduction to an oral history project. Pick the right clip and you can really boost engagement with the topic being studied.

Activity

- Play a relevant sound clip through a couple of times and get the children to close their eyes to really imagine what is being described. Can they picture the person talking?
- Ask a range of inferential and deductive questions to explore the sound clip
- Pair talk to discuss what they have heard
- Ask evaluative questions - what does this sound clip tell us about the past?

Variations

- Display a related image whilst the sound clip is being played; or display several images and children guess which one matches giving reasons for their choice
- Ask children to draw what they think is being described
- Play clips which provide opposing viewpoints - discuss the validity of each
- Identify unfamiliar words and guess at the meaning

Incredible Sound Clips

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/titanic/>

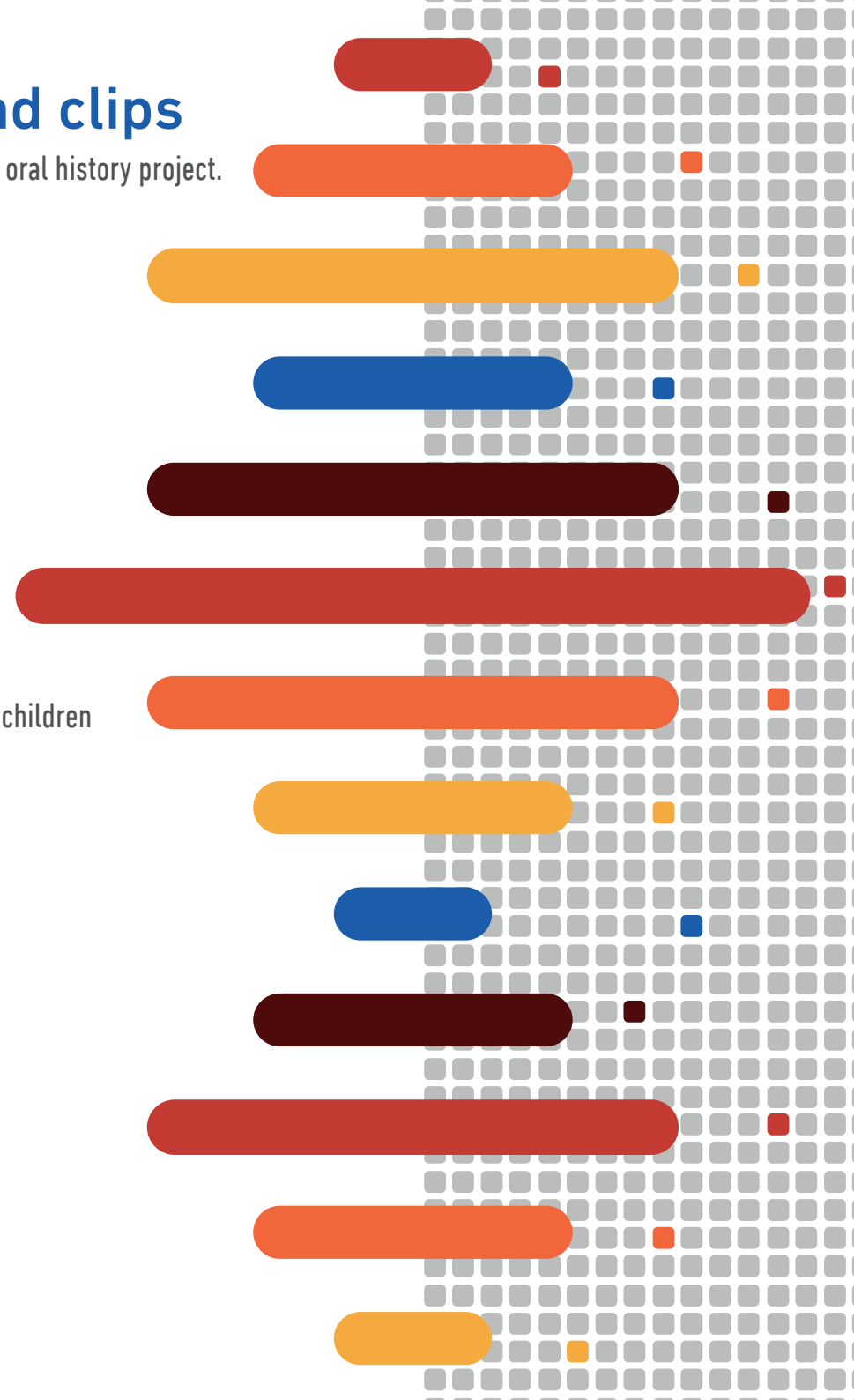


Other Resources

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schoolradio/subjects/history/ww2clips>

<https://sounds.bl.uk/>

<http://www.ohs.org.uk/advice/how-to-do-oral-history/8/>



Getting ready to INTERVIEW

Devising questions.

Before formulating questions for research, make it clear what the subject matter is that you are researching and who you will be interviewing.

Activity

- Mind map as a class the different areas you would like to find out about
- Discuss what makes a good question (open questions) and the 5Ws as well as other good question stems. Eg. Tell me about, how did... differ in the past. Model some closed questions and discuss how they limit the answers to short answers
- Split the class into groups of 4 and ask each group to come up with some questions linked to one of the areas-how many questions can they come up with in 5 minutes; for additional challenge, ask children to vary the start of each question
- Discuss some of the questions and encourage pupils to consider which questions may need clarifying
- Write the children's questions up on the board and consider the order in which you might ask the questions. Every story has a beginning, middle and ending- which questions would ensure that you start at the beginning and don't ask an 'end' question first? You could give out a range of questions and ask children to order them with a chance given to explain their choices.

Variations

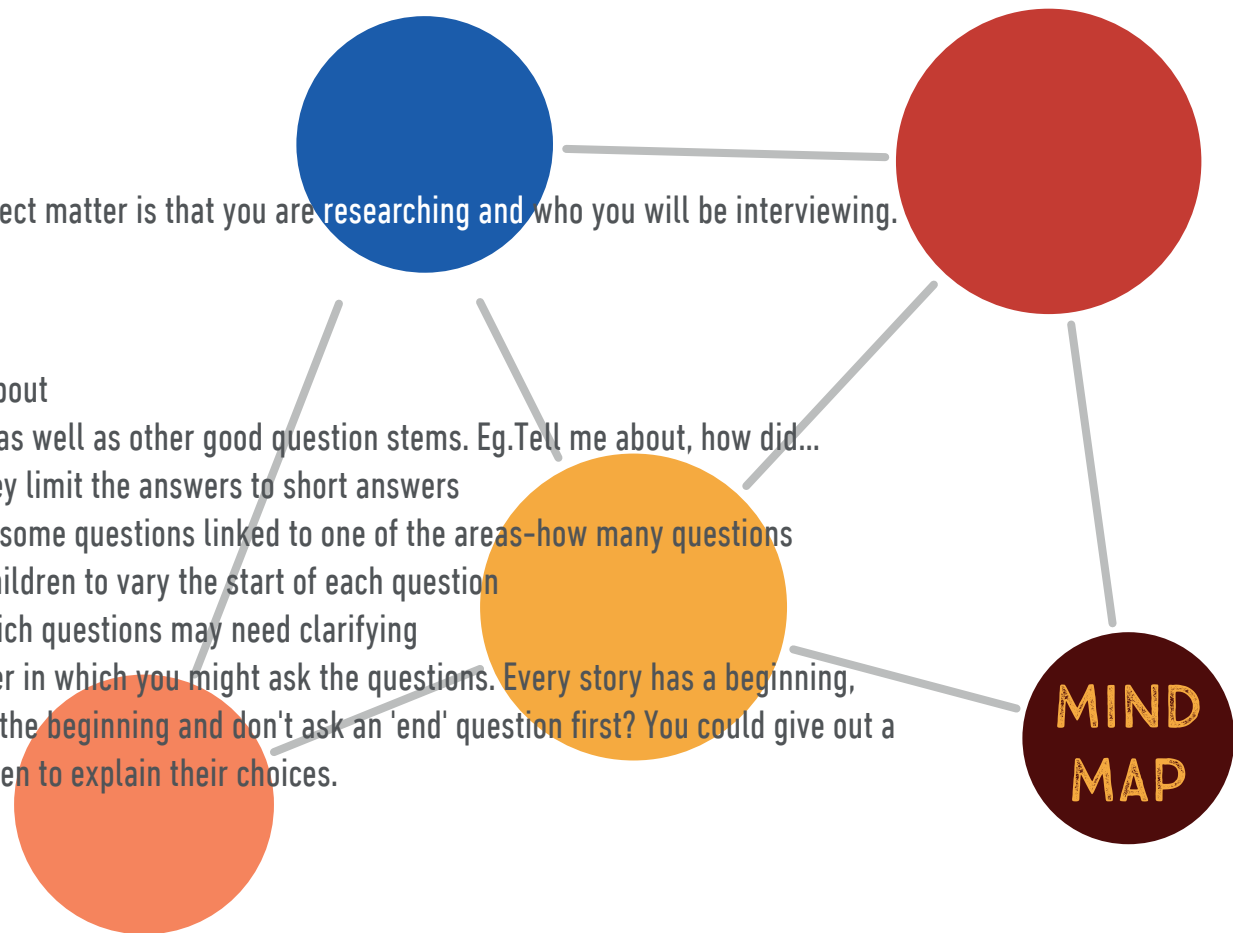
- Give the pupils a sheet of questions and ask them to highlight the open questions in one colour and closed questions in another
- Sort the questions into those which will elicit facts and those which will elicit opinions- have questions ready for the children to sort
- Further challenge pupils by asking them to devise questions related to a topic and which will provide information about how things have changed, how they are similar, what was different and questions related to the cause and effect of significant events

Links

<https://www.educationquizzes.com/ks1/history/asking-questions/>

Tip

Send out a list of questions to those who may be attending - if you are advertising the event on social media, you could post some of the main questions online. This helps visitors to think and reflect before they come and share their memories.





Hosting a **MEMORY SHARING EVENT**

This can be a vibrant whole-school event which brings together the community to share memories. The format can be very informal, with tables set out in a café style. Children can be paired up to interview visitors and you will need to consider safeguarding to ensure adequate supervision. It would not be practical to record interviews during an event such as this as with so many people in one space, the sound quality would not be the best. However, it's a great opportunity to identify potential interviewees who would be willing to come back and be interviewed at a later date.

Top tips:

Advertise the event in plenty of time so that people can make arrangements to attend.

Put out a list of questions beforehand to give people the chance to reflect back on their experiences.

Ask people to bring along documents which can be scanned on the day to add to your archive.

Get all of the necessary consent forms ready and nominate someone to be in charge of gathering these together.

Make the space inviting so that it is a nice welcome for visitors- a cup of tea and a piece of cake always goes down well!



The Interview - PRACTICAL TIPS

It's a good idea to interview in groups so that pupils can support one another and also to ensure that pupils are not in a one to one situation with their interviewee. It is also recommended that interviewing is well supervised by adults from the school and that safe working practices with regards to safeguarding are considered carefully.

Recording equipment - A reasonable quality recording can be made on a tablet device but a professional recording device is well worth the investment and ensures that all recordings are made on school owned devices. This also ensures that the data is all in one place and can be managed more effectively.

Show pupils where to place the recording device in relation to their interviewee - discuss personal space. The recorder will need to be pointed in the direction of the person being interviewed.

Interviews should be conducted in a quiet room, free from background noise - not easy to find in a busy school! However, this will ensure a good quality recording. Pupils will also need to recognise that they should keep as quiet as possible - show that they are listening but keep their talking to a minimum.



The Interview

Interviewer states their name, the date and the title of the school project; introduces the names of the other interviewers.

Ask the interviewee to state their name and where they were born- you could ask them to state any other information which is pertinent to the project. Eg. When they attended the school (for a school heritage project).

Ask questions- consider the order of questions beforehand to ensure a chronology is followed.

At the end of the interview thank the interviewee.

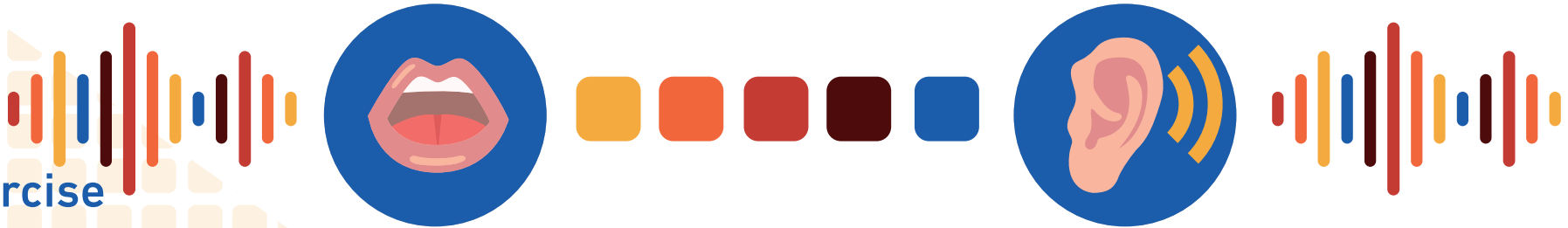
Make sure all relevant consent forms are signed.

Interviewing- WARM UP ACTIVITIES

Before the pupils interview a member of the public, give them a go at interviewing each other, or adults that they are familiar with.

Activities

Listening exercise



Model an interview with your teaching assistant; whoever is playing the interviewer is to model listening carefully for 30 seconds, half listening for 30 seconds and then not listening at all.

Model again and this time the interviewer should talk over the interviewee.

The pupils discuss what they have observed and suggest what would improve the process.

Co-create success criteria for interviewing; include good eye contact, listening messages such as nodding head and facing the interviewee.

Mock interview

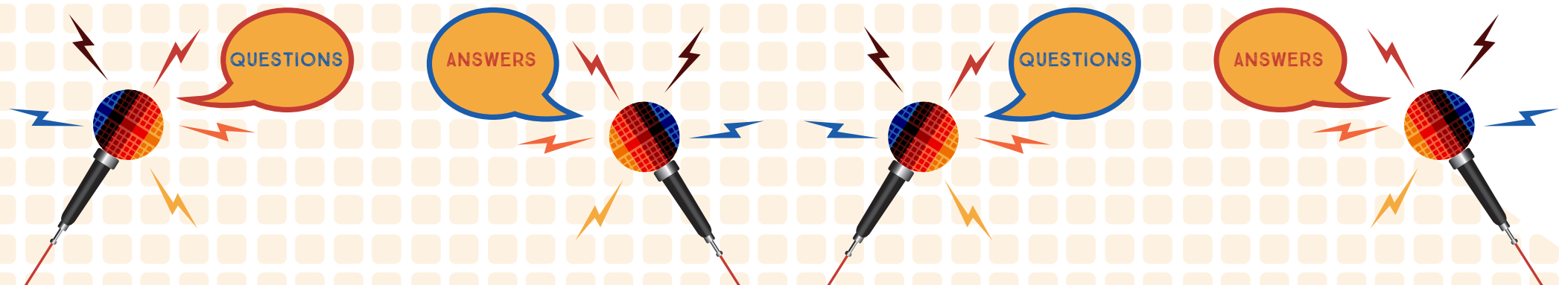
Give the pupils some pre-prepared questions about a person's early memories of school- have a variety of questions for the pupils to pick from.

The pupils can highlight the questions they will ask- link to the card 'devising questions' and remind the pupils what makes a good question.

Pupils work in 3's and one pupil is to observe as the other two pupils take part in a mock interview about their early memories of school.

Feedback as a three about what went well in the interview and what they should do better next time.

Swap roles and repeat.



After the interview- PROCESSING THE INFORMATION

If you plan to archive the materials, you will need to think about how best to do this. Getting a local museum or professional archivist may be an option if you have secured some funding for your project but in most cases you will be working on a small scale class topic and may want some simpler ideas for how to use and interpret the information you have gathered.

Here are some ideas: 

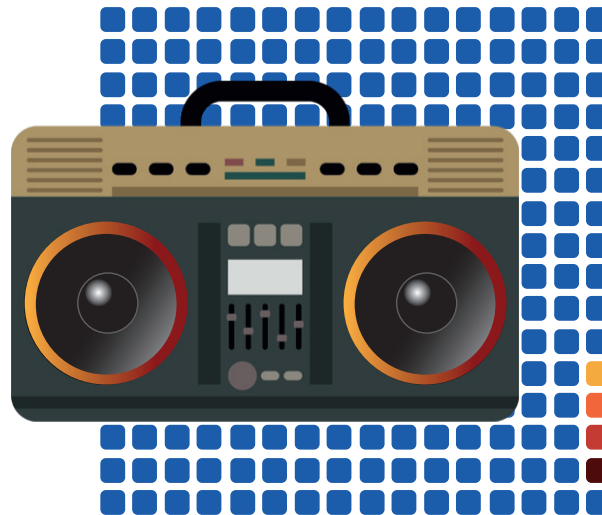
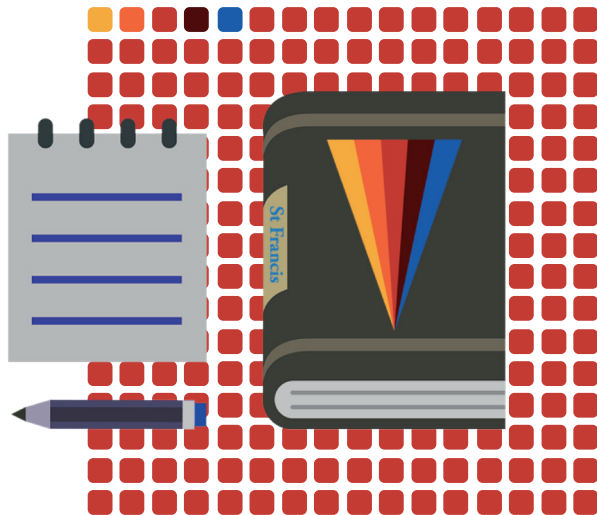
Transcribe the interviews and collate in a class book for display in your classroom or school library.

Create a class display using key extracts from the transcribed interviews.

Digitise the transcriptions and upload to your school website/class blog.

Film some interviews to upload and share on your school website/facebook page.

Send short extracts of the interview to local radio.



This is one example of how a digital archive has been created, linked to a school website. A range of documents, photos, videos and sound-clips and transcriptions have been included.

https://st-francis.leics.sch.uk/St_Francis_Heritage

A question of ethics- **RESPECTING THE PAST**

When taking part in inter-generational and community projects it's obvious that children will be subject to a wide range of views, opinions and recollections. This presents an ideal opportunity to discuss ethics and brings in British Values of mutual respect, tolerance and individual liberty.

Activity

To demonstrate how memories can create a very powerful emotional response ask all children and one adult supporting (who is in on the activity) to write down a memory. Then walk around the classroom and put some memories in a special memory jar, some in your pocket and leave some on the tables. Take the staff member's and screw it up after reading it. Lead a discussion about how the children felt when you took their memory and placed it in the jar vs your pocket vs not taking it at all. How do you think someone would feel if you screwed up their memory?

In groups children can create a list of rules for respecting memories.

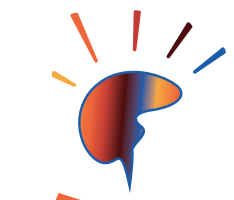
Variations

We need to get permission to use people's memories after recording/capturing them- with older children you can introduce the word, 'consent, and what that means in this context.

The Legal Bit - Guidance

GDPR came into force in May 2018 which means it is imperative that you gain informed consent for any data which you collect. The nature of memories and recollections is that they are personal and therefore not anonymous- the key is to make sure that informed consent is freely given and that there is a way for people to withdraw consent. Specifically each person must know what the project is about and why they have been asked to take part; what will happen to the full interview in the short and long term; how their interview will be used and what will happen to any personal data.

For more information see www.ohs.org.uk/advice/ethical-and-legal/



SOUND CLIPS and SOUND EFFECTS for the whole curriculum

Whether you take on a full scale oral history project, or simply use sound clips from the past to enrich the curriculum, there is plenty of scope for using Oral History in the classroom. Below are some examples of sound clips which can link to the whole curriculum.

Audio sound clips

British Library Sounds- <https://sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history/>

Spoken word recordings which can support many areas of the curriculum.

BBC School Radio- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/learning/schoolradio>

Audio resources for primary schools- including a range of oral history sound clips.

The Oral History Society have published some sound extracts which are themed and are the perfect length for classroom use - highly recommended! <http://www.ohs.org.uk/advice/how-to-do-oral-history/8/>

Use audio sound clips in a range of subjects. Here are some examples for some different subjects:

In RE- listen to speeches from religious leaders

In Geography listen to children from different parts of the world talking about their lives, enriched with background sounds.

In English listen to authors talk about books that they have written

In Music listen to playground songs from the past and of course, songs from across the ages.

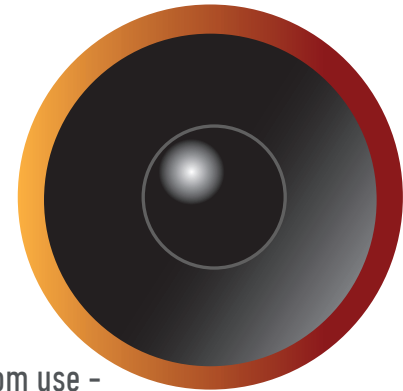
In History listen to different points of view about the same event and discuss

Sound effects from the past

Sound effects are a great way to immerse your pupils in a topic- play them as a hook to get the learning started or use them at different points during your lesson to help the children to engage with any written materials.

BBC Library of sound effects <http://bbcsfx.acropolis.org.uk/>

Sound effects from the past- 16,000 sound effects in WAV format which may be used for educational purposes. Some incredible clips, including fighters and bombers from WW1 and WW2, sounds from a 1966 courtroom and sounds from an English market in 1967.



Credits

These resources have been written and compiled by Gosia Brown from St Francis Catholic Primary School, using funding from the National Lottery, Heritage Lottery Grants. They are free to use and adapt in any way for use in education and through this we hope to promote the use of oral history to engage, inspire and enrich experiences for learners.

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Craig Charlton Kemm - thegumballfactory.co.uk



St Francis
Catholic Primary School