Welcome

This term’s edition commemorates the 950th anniversary of the Battle of Hastings. Our cover story explores Norman military tactics, linking to the new GCSE specifications. Don’t miss our competition on the back page which will test your knowledge of 1066 – make sure you enter!

It can be easy to feel removed from historical happenings in the classroom, but by incorporating object-based learning we can allow students to discover history for themselves by offering a direct link to the past, whilst simultaneously honing a range of skills. David Sheldon from the British Museum explores this approach in our centre pages.

Is there a topic you’d like to see us cover in upcoming newsletters? We’d love to hear from you. Get in touch by emailing me at rebecca.jackson@oup.com.

Best wishes

Rebecca

History team

950th anniversary of the Battle of Hastings

Students studying the Norman option for the new GCSEs will need to build on their knowledge of the Norman Conquest in a more sophisticated way. Many students will enjoy a foray into military history, and Hastings gives them the opportunity to think like military commanders! To do this effectively it would be useful to understand something about Norman military tactics and the layout of the battlefields.

What is the historical debate surrounding Norman tactics?

Some historians think that William’s victory was down to his brilliant military leadership; others think it was down to luck and the fact that King Harold made a number of mistakes. In order to be able to assess which view is the most accurate, it is essential to study the environment of the battleground. There has been much debate over the most radical of William’s strategies: the feigned retreat. This was when a section of the Norman army ran away and the enemy followed them; when the Normans were out of sight they turned and massacred all of the attacking enemy troops. This tactic was repeated to wear down the opponent and was made more effective as the Anglo-Saxons were slowed by the marshland at the bottom of the hill. Anglo-Saxon writers describe it as being an unplanned move that William turned to his advantage. However, Norman writers state that this tactic had been successfully used before by William in campaigns in Sicily. Whilst the debate rages on, the question remains: why did William choose to assemble his troops at the bottom of Senlac Hill and give the advantage of height to his enemy?

Do you know of any great Battle of Hastings resources? Share your photos and ideas with us on Twitter using #historyresource.

GCSE links

AQA: Norman England c1066–c1100
OCR B: The Norman Conquest 1066–1087
Edexcel: Anglo-Saxon and Norman England c1060–88

Further reading

The Norman Conquest by Marc Morris (Windmill Books, 2013). This is a knowledgeable and very readable account.

1066: The Battle for Middle Earth narrated by Ian Holm (Hardy Pictures, 2009). This TV mini-series provides an insight into the battles between the claimants to the English throne.

www.battlefieldstrust.com/resource-centre This is a really useful site for resources on English battlefields.

What’s inside?

The power of object-based teaching and learning 2–3
Competition time! 4
Free KS3 history posters! 4
The power of object-based teaching and learning

David Sheldon is the Head of Learning Programmes at the British Museum

My colleague Tom is a curator of Modern Money at the British Museum. We sit in his office and he hands me a small, dull, silver disc.

I instantly notice its weight: it feels heavier than it should, altogether more coin-like than any coin I have held before. ‘What is it?’ I ask, but Tom is not ready to reveal all. ‘It’s a solid silver Spanish Dollar minted in 1796.’ A quick glance reveals that it was minted under the reign of Charles IV of Spain. I should point out that I’m not a historian, at least not a fully-fledged one, so with this Spanish Dollar in my hand my mind already starts wondering about all the things related to it that I desperately want to be true – treasure chests, armadas, a battle, empire, even a curse! I now begin to pore over it – object-based learning is in full swing and my relationship with this object will last a lifetime.

I go for a ‘long look’ – an observation technique to really look, not just a quick Instagram-esque ‘oh yes that’s nice’, but three solid minutes turning it over and over, even smelling it, formulating questions, and, to coin a phrase (and blatantly cash in a few puns), the more I looked the more I saw. Try it now with the picture below just for one minute. It’ll be worth it, I promise...

When you consider that every aspect of this object – every unintended and intended mark, the very metal itself – makes up its fascinating history, my first question seems too simple, especially with a living coin encyclopaedia sitting opposite me. ‘So what’s with Charles’ clothes?’ I think I know the winner of a Roman emperor lookalike competition when I see one. Charles IV ruled over the first truly global empire, and who best to model oneself on than the all-powerful Roman emperors who had ruled Europe and beyond over a thousand years before him? He looks exactly like the emperors on the many Roman...
coins in the Museum, right down to the laurel wreath on his head. This is about the projection of power: a mass produced, mass-distributed, tidy little piece of propaganda. Nice one, Charles, and well done me!

The next one is difficult. On the back there’s an M with a little o above it – is it a statement of value? The type of silver? Tom to the rescue. It turns out that the symbol tells you it was minted in the Mexico City mint – not in Spain, but a perilous voyage away in the New World, which for the Spanish contained whole mountains full of their greatest prize: pure silver. The silver was mined in horrific conditions by nameless thousands of the declining indigenous population and the increasing African slave population. The coin feels heavier. From the mountains to the mint, then out to oil the cogs of empire: this 8 Reale coin reveals incredible success and unimaginable depravity.

Next is the big round stamp in the middle and the curious Chinese-looking marks around it. The stamp is at least partly readable. ‘So has this coin been used in a mill in England?’ ‘Scotland actually.’ says Tom. ‘The coins were of a uniform size, weight and quality of silver so they became a standard. Industries could assign a value, in this case four shillings and six pence, and pay their workers with them.’ So this Spanish coin had been minted in Mexico City and had ended up in 1820 in the grip of Britain’s industrial revolution. Later, I discovered (on Wikipedia, sorry purists) that the coin was minted in the very year that Spain allied with France to declare war on Great Britain; peace had only been reached 12 years before its stamping in Scotland. This coin had seen war between three global empires. This coin could have been in a pocket at the battle of Trafalgar!

Back to Tom’s office and the Chinese-style symbols. They are chop marks made on the coin’s surface to test the metal because the Chinese standard was based directly on quality as the value. ‘Hang on! So it’s been to China?’ I can’t help my grin. ‘Yes, the Reale was the first truly global currency – whole countries and economies adopted it.’ My head is spinning. So much learning, so many avenues still to explore, so much detail drawn from its three surfaces, the brain of an expert, some textbooks and the internet, and still my mind wanders to the beautiful unknowable. The hundreds of slight scratches on this coin, how had they got there? In the hands and pockets of merchants, sailors, soldiers, tradesmen, women or mill workers? A single coin sitting in a drawer in the British Museum, one of a few jingling in a leather pouch, one of a thousand in a wooden chest in a Chinese merchant’s abode, or one of hundreds of thousands on a Spanish galleon being pursued across the Gulf of Mexico by ruthless pirates... because if you know your Robert Louis Stevenson, you may have twiggled that this coin is in fact a legendary piece of eight. It turns out that everything I wanted to be true about this coin just might be!

The simple truth is that you can use any object. I chose the piece of eight because I could, but I could have just as easily used the Leamington Spa Brick Company house brick I found in my garden, something from each of your students’ homes, or any of the millions of objects on display at local museums.

The benefits of selecting and producing an object, or (sorry again purists) an image of an object, or even a 3D print of an object are huge. Objects help students examine evidence and promote the need for further research. They trigger discussion and argument, and so often wonderment. Interrogating an object appeals to all kinds of learners, whatever the pedagogical zeitgeist of the day. They draw out and then cement knowledge, and they hone a whole range of learning and historical skills. Objects can link us directly to past people and places, take us to times unimaginable and then allow us to plot a route right back to the now; they make our world’s histories tangible, interesting and relevant. Also, importantly, they can facilitate incredibly creative and joyful, productive teaching and relationships with students through (and I love this phrase) ‘imaginative unknowing’, adding another taut string to your teaching bow.

If you’ve never tried object-based teaching, want to give it another go or are already a seasoned practitioner, then there’s help out there. www.teachinghistory100.org is a website where the British Museum, supported by the DfE and in partnership with museums across the British Isles, has brought together one hundred objects with resources and teaching ideas to inspire you.

I hope if nothing else I’ve whet your appetite for object-based teaching and learning. Whet, whetstone, now that’d be an interesting object...
Competition time!

This term we have a Battle of Hastings clock and travel mug, and a copy of our new GCSE History book up for grabs!

For your chance to win the prizes above, simply email me at rebecca.jackson@oup.com with your answer to the following question by 15th December 2016.

Q. Who supported William as the next rightful King of England?
   a) The Witan
   b) Harald Hardrada
   c) Pope Alexander II

For terms and conditions please visit www.oxfordsecondary.co.uk/termsandconditions

*By giving us your email address you are agreeing to us sending you emails about Oxford University Press products. This includes the History email newsletter which includes the latest news, information, discounts and offers. Your email will not be passed onto third parties outside Oxford University Press.

Congratulations...

...to Victoria Kneen, Head of Humanities at Blessed Thomas Holford CC in Altrincham. She is the winner of a traditional letter writing set, and a copy of the Oxford Illustrated Shakespeare Dictionary, by David and Ben Crystal, having answered our last competition question: ‘Where could the most expensive seats in the Globe Theatre be found?’ correctly with ‘The Lords’ Room’.

We hope you enjoy them!

Free KS3 history posters!

We’re giving away all of our four timeline posters, one to accompany each book in our KS3 History by Aaron Wilkes series. Designed to fit together for your classroom wall, these posters will help your KS3 students understand chronology. Simply email me at rebecca.jackson@oup.com to request your set while stocks last!

Find us on Twitter

@OxfordEdHistory

Oxford University Press

tel +44 1536 452620
email schools.enquiries.uk@oup.com
web www.oxfordsecondary.co.uk/history