

Unit 22 The role of the individual: for good or ill?

About the unit

This unit gives pupils the opportunity to analyse the role of the individual in history and to assess how far they can change the course of history. Pupils learn:

- to develop understanding of the various factors that can influence the actions of an individual
- to undertake work in historical interpretation.

This unit is expected to take 3–6 hours.

Where the unit fits in

This unit contains a framework that can be applied to any historical context. It could be:

- taught as a self-standing study
- ‘nested’ within other areas of study
- used to add substance to a narrative/overview within an in-depth study
- used to act as a springboard into the study of how individuals affect history

It will build on the discussion of individuals in unit 1 ‘Introductory unit’. There are possible links with the science scheme of work where it relates to key individuals.

Expectations

These apply to year 9 pupils. If this unit is used with younger pupils, these statements will need to be adjusted.

At the end of this unit

most pupils will: demonstrate knowledge about why the individual is seen as important, and the context in which they lived; identify some of the motives and causes of the individual’s actions and how these had an impact on the lives of others; demonstrate awareness of the long- and short-term impact of the individual’s actions; describe how the individual’s life has been interpreted through time

some pupils will not have made so much progress and will: demonstrate a basic knowledge of the individual’s life and achievements; suggest some reasons why the individual acted as they did; describe in simple terms the impact that the individual had on other people at the time; describe how the individual’s life has been interpreted

some pupils will have progressed further and will: demonstrate a detailed level of knowledge about the life of the individual and the wider context in which they lived; analyse the motives that underpin the individual’s actions; evaluate the impact of the individual’s actions in the short and long term; explain how and why different interpretations of the individual have been produced

Prior learning

It is helpful if pupils have:

- studied some individuals in depth
- gained sufficient background knowledge and understanding of the context in which the individual lived, thought and acted
- used a variety of ways to transmit their ideas, especially through oral work, diagrams and charts
- considered questions of causation and interpretation

Language for learning

Through the activities in this unit pupils will be able to understand, use and spell correctly words relating to:

- individuals and their actions, *eg intention, motive, commemoration*
- change and causation, *eg factor, impact, effect, outcome*
- thinking about learning, *eg idea, match, apply, problem, strategy, solution, theory*

Speaking and listening – through the activities pupils could:

- follow an argument, demonstration, etc, making notes which are then used in another task

Writing – through the activities pupils could:

- organise content into complete text with the relationship between points/paragraphs clearly signalled

Resources

Resources include:

- appropriate range of sources, including the local area, to investigate an individual
- secondary sources about the individual, *eg local/national stories, myths and legends, websites, CD-ROMs*
- obituary from a modern newspaper
- picture sets

Out-of-school learning

Pupils could investigate evidence of an individual by:

- visiting statues and monuments
- finding out about buildings and streets named after the individual

Future learning

This unit provides opportunities to develop the pupils' knowledge and understanding of significant individuals.

Why are certain people 'famous'?

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that history is partly about the study of famous people • how to classify the activity for which a certain person is famous • that there are characteristics that important individuals in the past share • how to apply previously learnt criteria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brainstorm pupils' knowledge of a famous historical individual (gained through study of another unit or at key stage 2, or through experiences outside school). Ask the pupils to use cards to sort and classify the individuals according to their main known activity and what they did, <i>eg leader, explorer, inventor</i>. • Introduce the idea of why certain individuals have been 'famous', and, therefore, 'remembered'. Give pupils 'sentence stem slips' to complete, <i>eg Because they ... were powerfull/made things better/helped win a war</i>. Ask the pupils to reclassify the historical individuals under the different sentence starters. • Draw out pupils' best ideas about why only certain people become famous, <i>eg because they played some part in changing events</i>. Ask pupils to identify similar features in all the people's lives, ie define criteria. Ask pupils to apply the criteria to check if they are valid and appropriate. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recall and use previous knowledge of famous individuals in history • select and classify individuals according to roles • identify and analyse common characteristics • demonstrate understanding by placing new information in the context of existing knowledge • reinforce conceptual understanding with reasons for why certain individuals become famous | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepared picture sets of various individuals could provide access to this activity for some pupils. • Examples of famous individuals from local history could be used, <i>eg links to the name of the school, famous former pupils, notable individuals from the immediate locality</i>. • Extension: pupils could carry out structured research into a local individual of historical importance. • The main criteria of significance are that an individual's life: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – affected a great number of people – had a profound impact on other people's lives at the time – has had a long-lasting impact |
|--|--|---|---|

Who is the person?

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the life of a key individual • to select, organise and deploy relevant information to produce structured work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the idea of a 'mystery character' to be investigated by pupils in groups. • Pupils to sort and classify a series of statements about the individual to establish: <i>Who? When? Where? What?</i> context categories. • Pupils to write a brief chronological profile of the 'mystery character' which highlights some of the key events in the person's life. • Ask pupils to speculate on the identity of the individual before revealing the person's name. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • select, organise and deploy relevant information to produce structured work that demonstrates knowledge and understanding of an individual's life | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers may wish to include some visual sources to provide further clues to the 'mystery character'. • Pupils could be encouraged to use their contextual knowledge to help them write their profiles. |
|--|--|---|--|

What motivated the individual?

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the role played by the individual in a key historical event • to analyse the role played by the individual and their reasons for becoming involved in a key historical event | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils should analyse the individual's involvement in a significant event. Tell them a story of the event. Ask the pupils to present their recollection of the story as an eight-frame storyboard. Ask them to make sure their frames show the role played by the individual in the event. • Extend the exercise by asking pupils to work in groups to produce a two-minute news report which considers the following two questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>How and why did the individual become involved?</i> – <i>What difference did they make to the outcome of the event?</i> • Give the pupils additional sources to help them with their news reports. For the first question it may help to ask the pupils to consider whether the individual: <i>became involved by chance or design; had a ready-made plan to put into operation; was in the right place at the right time; simply 'seized the moment'</i>. For the second question it may help to get the pupils to start by speculating what would have happened if the individual had not been involved. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe the role played by the individual in a key historical event • produce a news report which analyses the role played by an individual in an event and their reasons for becoming involved | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As an alternative, pupils could be numbered '1' or '2'. First the teacher tells the story to the '1s', who then immediately retell it to the '2s'. Both '1s' and '2s' then complete the storyboard. • More able pupils could be encouraged to try to make links between the motivation of the individual and their actions. • Language for learning: follow an argument, demonstration, etc, making notes which are then used in another task. |
|---|--|---|--|

What was the impact of the individual's life at the time?

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how an individual's life can be represented and interpreted in an obituary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce information on the recent death of a famous, contemporary person and the idea of 'obituary' to summarise achievements. • Ask the pupils to write an obituary of the individual they have been studying, stating the person's contribution to life at the time. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge of the individual's contribution to life of the time | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The chosen famous, contemporary individual should be familiar to the pupils. • The individual's obituary may need to be customised to make it suitable for the pupils. • ICT: pupils could use word-processing software to create a structured narrative. • Teachers might wish to discuss the question <i>Was the individual lucky?</i> • Key skills: these activities will provide evidence for pupils to demonstrate communication (writing). |
|--|---|--|--|

How has the individual's impact been portrayed through time?

- | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how and why the individual's actions have been interpreted differently • to evaluate different interpretations of the individual • to use prior knowledge and additional information to build up understanding | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce sources that give a view of the individual that is different from some of the contemporary views. Ask the pupils to use their knowledge of the individual, context and contribution to assess this new view of their individual, <i>eg I thought that ... was kind/cruel, but the (source) said that ... was ...</i> Use the diverging views as the basis of a whole-class discussion. As well as pupils' views, feed in prompts, <i>eg Are there any different views about how the individual changed events? What are some of these differences? Why have they arisen?</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compare the value of different sources in answering historical questions • identify differences/similarities in interpretations given by a range of sources • demonstrate through discussion an understanding of how differences in interpretation arise | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Past and recent views cards' could be prepared in advance. • ICT: pupils might compare websites that have different attitudes towards/interpretations of an individual, <i>eg British and US websites, or British and Irish websites.</i> |
|--|--|--|---|

Was the individual's impact for good or ill?

- | | | | |
|---|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to consolidate and extend previous learning • that events in the past were not inevitable • to assess the degree of control over events that an individual may possess • to reach a supported conclusion about the impact an individual has on society | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the class to build up two 'spidergrams' – one with 'good' at the centre and one with 'ill' based on their recent work on the individual and that person's impact. • Develop pupils' thinking by posing the question: <i>How can we decide what is 'good' and what is 'ill'?</i> Introduce the idea of value judgements and whether or not some values are absolute or will change over time. • Ask the pupils to write a balanced account of whether the individual's impact was for good or ill. • Conclude with whole-class questioning to cover issues, <i>eg How much control over events does an individual have? Do changes in history always result in progress? Was it only certain individuals in society who could attempt to influence events?</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify and present orally and in writing, their analysis of the individual's impact for good or ill • judge through debate the amount of influence individuals have over events | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This final session aims to return to the key question and consolidate, reinforce and offer diagnostic evidence of pupils' understanding. • It may be possible to make appropriate links to other topics, subjects and individuals encountered by the pupils and discuss key similarities. • Language for learning: organise content into complete text with the relationship between points/paragraphs clearly signalled; structure paragraphs to develop points, by using evidence and additional facts. |
|---|--|--|---|