

Activity 10

Activity/topic: Primary and secondary sources.

Key Stage: Two/Three

Subject: History

Year: Can be adapted to suit needs the of each year group.

Aims and objectives: To develop an increased awareness of what constitutes a primary and secondary source. To be able to give an account of the relative merits and disadvantages of using primary and secondary sources of evidence.

Links to the National Curriculum for History: This activity can be adapted to facilitate the progression in historical understanding at Key Stage Two and Three. Through this activity, pupils at Key Stage Two will be able to develop their skills of asking and answering more complex questions; making links and connections between different areas of learning; understanding more general and specific historical concepts and becoming independent in learning.

Through this activity, pupils at Key Stage Three will be able to develop their understanding of general and specific historical concepts; understanding of and proficiency in the use of historical skills; ability to apply skills and conceptual understanding across a variety of historical contexts; ability to communicate knowledge and understanding using language appropriately and accurately; become independent in learning across a variety of situations.

Possible cross curricula links: Possible link to science sorting and classifying activities.

General Note: A selection of any of the images, that accompany the educational activities, can be used to resource this activity. All of the original copies of the documents are held at the British Waterways Archive.

Teacher Notes: Historians use many sources of information to answer questions about the past. The sources can fall into two categories - primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources are original records created at the time, or sometimes soon after events in the form of memoirs. Primary sources may include letters, photographs diaries, journals, newspapers, memoirs, and moving images. Secondary sources are accounts of the past created sometime after they happened, such as history textbooks.

Many primary sources are kept in an archive. Archives are places that make sure records of the past are kept in good condition for present and future generations to use. The British Waterways Archive, for example, collects, preserves and makes publicly available records in many forms, including plans, drawings, accounts, photographs and audio-visual recordings of the British Waterways and the early canal companies. The Waterways Archive is, at present, based around the British Waterways Archive in Llanthony Warehouse Gloucester and the David Owen Waterways Archive at The Boat Museum, Ellesmere Port.

Possible Activities: Sort a selection of documents into primary and secondary sources; what are the advantages and disadvantages of using primary sources; What are the advantages and disadvantages of using secondary sources? Are primary sources more reliable than secondary sources? What kind of records will you leave behind for future generations? Do you think preserving documents for the future is important? Why? What problems might the use of computers cause to future generations? Ask your local archive if it is possible to have a visit and/or be included in their outreach activities.

Resources required: Selection of primary and secondary sources.

Differentiation: The primary and secondary sources should be chosen to suit the ability of the pupils.

Assessment: A practical assessment to sort a selection of primary and secondary sources. An assessment for more able pupils could be to identify strengths and weaknesses of chosen primary and secondary evidence. In both cases justifying answers is an important aspect of the assessment.