



Teaching about historical change and continuity

This guidance is based on **Christine Counsell's** workshop at the 2008 SHP Conference: Making meaning out of change, continuity and diversity. The workshop focussed on three main questions in relation to change and continuity:

1. What makes for a meaningful and motivating enquiry into change and continuity?
2. How can we balance abstract analysis of speed and pace of change with an exploration of with an exploration of how change and continuity were experienced at the time?
3. What kinds of analysis and reflection do we want pupils to engage in as they wrestle with an enquiry question about change and continuity?

The associated resources provide a range of practical strategies to address these issues:

- Resource 1: Twenty strategies for helping pupils to get better at discussing and analysing change and continuity
- Resource 2: Devising change and continuity enquiry questions

1.1. **Resource 1: Twenty strategies for helping pupils to get better at discussing and analysing change and continuity**

1. **Choose enquiry questions where the analytic demand clearly lies in judging or characterising the extent, nature or type of change/continuity.** Keep that question to the fore during the whole sequence – in discussion, in mini-activities, in formative feedback.
2. **Introduce pupils to real debates about change or continuity as often as possible.** For example, Year 8 can look at Eamon Duffy's views on continuity in religious practice. How does he characterise that continuity? What language does he use?
3. **Devise and repeat departmental techniques across the Key Stage** e.g. types of time line, types of speaking-frame, types of writing frame, banks of vocabulary, types of card sort, ways of tackling a text with change and continuity in mind, giving them a 'listening agenda' to help them concentrate on change/continuity while listening to a story.



4. **Constantly help the ‘chronologically lost’.** Use dates regularly and engagingly. Whether in classroom discussion, visual work, story-telling, constantly blend in reference to both absolute and relative chronology, and expect pupils to do likewise.
5. **Give them different ways of analysing or characterising change.** ‘I want you to focus on type of change, not speed of change’. ‘I want you to focus on extent of change’. ‘Make me a chart or diagram which distinguishes type, speed and extent of change during the Soviet period / during the early expansion of Islam / during the Neolithic Revolution / during July 1789’.
6. **Model the thinking involved in reflecting on change and continuity.** Think out loud to pupils as you do your own reflecting on whether change did or didn’t occur, how much changed and for whom. Find the right language to characterise the change as precisely as possible, showing them by example that you mean change in ‘states of affairs’ and that you are not treating ‘event’ as a proxy for ‘change’.
7. **Teach them to qualify and modify statements for thinking, talking and writing about change.** ‘Was the change steady, gradual, gentle?’ ‘Was it swift, sudden, seismic?’ ‘Was it uneven, bumpy, jumpy?’
8. **Get them to classify the language of change.** ‘Find me three adverbs you could use for...’. ‘What adverbs does Eamon Duffy use for talking about continuity in religious practices?’ ‘What heading would you put them under?’ ‘Do you want ‘stayed’, ‘rested’, ‘ossified’ or ‘hardened’?’ ‘Do you want ‘evolved’, ‘emerged’ or ‘developed’?’ ‘WHY?’
9. **Show them how to personify change.** ‘Was the change reluctant? eager? energetic? weary? aimless? breathless?’ You can have huge fun with this – consider all the activities that could emerge from it, from Year 7 pupils with literacy/conceptual difficulties through to Year 12 who you are actively pushing to read more widely and critically.
10. **Teach them to play with and justify the language that shows subtlety in change and continuity and interplay of change-continuity.** ‘Did the Renaissance restore, refine, revive, re-shape, re-ignite, renew, recreate, recycle or repeat Classical ideas? Which word will you choose?’ ‘Why ‘renew’ and not ‘recycle’?’ ‘Why did you choose that word?’ ‘Did it ‘evolve’ or was it ‘transformed’?’
11. **Get them to think about whether the language of change or continuity can ever be neutral or value-free.** ‘Why do you think Eamon Duffy doesn’t describe the persistence of religious practices as ‘stubbornly persistent’?’



12. **Make them read or listen to a story with a change or continuity question in mind.**
‘What were the turning points for the rebel leader Itote in this story? Find three turning points, mark them in the text and compare them with your neighbour. Where do you agree/disagree? Whose turning points are they? Do the turning points suggest a change? What kind of change and for whom?’
13. **Teach them to spot change, development, progress and regress** by showing them how to convert a narrative into a ‘shape’
14. **Get them to question beginnings and endings and to challenge the labels that beginnings and endings enshrine.** ‘Is this the end of the story of Muslim Spain? Or was the end in 1235? Or did it end earlier? Or did it really end in 1495? Or did it really end then at all? What is the ‘end’? For whom was it an end? Was it an ‘end’ for some and not for others? When did the French Revolution end? What shall we call “Middle Ages”? (It deserves a name other than ‘middle’!) What shall we call the Victorian period? i.e. what else defined this period, apart from Victoria?’
15. **Make them design time lines to show particular kinds of change or continuity.** ‘My time line is going to show continuity in religious practices in the 16th century’; ‘My timeline is going to show speed of change in religious policy’ etc.
16. **Teach them to challenge others’ event choices in their time lines.** ‘Why did you begin your timeline there? What story does your timeline show? Why did you choose that event? Why haven’t you included...? Don’t you think this time line really shows...? When I see your time line I see... But that bunching up at that bit suggests speed! But the clustering up suggests things happened more quickly!! Should you really end the time-line there?’ A timeline should never boring, when used to solve a change/continuity problem, it should be a REVELATION.
17. **Get them to compare parallel time lines.** ‘Did the change take longer in agriculture or in industry?’ ‘Was religious change in England slower or faster than in Scotland/Germany?’ ‘How does / how well does your time line show this?’
18. **Get them to work out for themselves when change is not the same as progress; to see where there is scope for argument about the concept of ‘progress’; to consider ‘progress for whom?’**



19. **Fascinate them with continuity as well as change.** How life stays the same is as fascinating as how life changes. Share your amazement and your intellectual curiosity; cultivate sensibility and surprise.
20. **Get them to put themselves in the position of people at the time and to consider if change/continuity had meaning for them, in that situation.** An effective way of doing this is to use the hopes, sorrows, fears activity in chapter 3 of Counsell, C. (2004) *History and Literacy in Year 7: Building the Lesson Around the Text*, Hodder Murray.

1.2. Resource 2: Devising change and continuity enquiry questions

Make sure you use enquiry questions that keep the focus firmly upon change and don't let the question slip into causation! The two are very closely linked and sometimes you might create an enquiry question that DOES link them; but if you want pupils to become more practised at characterising change and you want them to become interested in this, then it's a good idea, sometimes, to isolate change as a focus. The important thing is to devise enquiry questions where the analytic demand clearly lies in judging or characterising the extent, nature or type of change/continuity. It's crucial to keep that question to the fore during the whole sequence – in discussion, in mini-activities, in formative feedback.

Here are some change and continuity enquiry questions that range from a short enquiry for two/three lessons to a longish one of six or seven lessons. Remember that pupils must always be enabled to answer the question, at the end of the enquiry.

- When was the Reformation?
- How long was the Reformation?
- When were the 1960s?
- When did the 1960s really end?
- Who noticed the 1960s end?
- What changed and what stayed the same in fifteenth century England?
- What kind of turning point was 1832?
- Did elementary schools change the lives of the poor?
- Did Sir Christopher Trickay change?
- Did the people of Morebath change?



- What changed in Morebath?
- How far was Morebath the same place in 1574 as in 1520?
- When did the French Revolution end?
- What did the mice in the mosque see? (a focus on the mosque of Cordoba from 750s to 1600s)
- What stories might the people of Cordoba have told their children? (an emphasis on the time orientation within which people lived. In other words, what lay within collective memory and what stories from before their own birth did they choose to keep alive? It's a question about how communities preserve collective memory and meaning, how they find themselves lamenting or preserving change and continuity with their own past.)
- When did Christian Spain begin?
- When was the first factory?
- What changed and what stayed the same in Russia between c1850 and c1950?
- What sort of change was the enclosure movement?
- What kind of change was evacuation? (This last question worked successfully in a Cambridge trainee's lesson observed in 2003. It was getting at what kind of change was experienced by the evacuees. It was, quite deliberately, a different sort of question from the more clinical and more usual cause/consequence question: 'What were the consequences of evacuation?' Used with mixed-ability Year 8, it was the closest I've come to seeing genuine empathy work well. The focus was on: What did it feel like to experience this particular rupture? but grounded carefully in some focused evidential work and a strong sense of context in life in 1930s for city children before they were evacuated, it avoided the flights of fancy and the lack of historical context that so often happens in the name of 'empathy'. Pupils were asked to think about the strangeness of the past, the distance of the past from themselves, rather than just plonking their 21st century selves in the past. The explicit focus on characterising the change disciplined the children's thinking and discussion, and the enquiry question was constantly brought into view, in every lesson.)