

***Primary Humanities: Learning Through Enquiry.* By Pickford, T., Garner, W. and Jackson, E. Pp200 (Pbk) London: SAGE. 2013. ISBN 9780857023407.**

The book sets out to provide a broad and balanced overview of the teaching of primary history and primary geography, published by Sage in March 2013. 'Primary Humanities: Learning Through Enquiry' aims to become essential reading for all primary teacher education students wishing to develop their understanding of teaching humanities subjects. There are other recent texts in this area: *Teaching Primary Humanities* by Grigg and Hughes (Pearson, 2013) and *Humanities in Primary Education: History, Geography and Religious Education in the classroom* by Kimber, Clough, Fforest, Harnett, Menter and Newman (Routledge, 2012). The book attempts to bring together the traditions of historical enquiry and geographical enquiry. At its heart is the belief in children's capacities to be enquiring historians and geographers, enabling them to develop a sound base of historical and geographical knowledge and understanding.

Chapters

1. Why do enquiry-led learning?
2. What is enquiry-led learning in primary history and geography?
3. Enquiry outside the classroom
4. Resources for enquiry
5. Enquiry in practice in History and geography
6. Planning for progression
7. Learning through assessment
8. Cross-curricular approaches and creativity in teaching enquiry-based humanities.

The book explores current debate, encourages enquiry-based learning and provides clear guidance on planning, teaching and assessing the humanities from the Early Years to Key Stage 2. Through a blend of theory and real-life examples, Pickford, Garner and Jackson demonstrate the contribution that history and geography can make bringing a cross-curricular approach enhancing children's thinking, literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. They recognise that primary subjects are increasingly being taught on an interdisciplinary level with the challenges of a new National Curriculum. There are many useful and relevant activities provided as well as some excellent website links; this a strength compared to other similar texts.

Enquiry-based learning is an excellent way of acquiring subject knowledge and building on values and skills at all levels of study, as well as being an effective learning strategy to access the subject. The process of enquiry links in well with research on how children learn. Often experienced primary teachers reflect that

'enquiry is taught, not just caught', so the relevance of this book must be noted at a time of change in both Primary ITE and the Primary National Curriculum.

The book recognises that a key strength of enquiry is that it develops the use of thinking skills, enhancing children's learning as it increases child freedom, enables them to generate ideas more easily and engages them with the topic at a greater level (Chapters 1,2 and 5). Hence the authors recognise that through enquiry children can escape from the rigidity of the core subjects and develop ownership of their learning. Children build on their previous knowledge and understanding, develop enquiring minds and are encouraged to make sense of the world for themselves (Chapter2).

Another strength of the book and the enquiry approach is the enhancing of communication skills between children, a vital skill within geography and history. There are many advantages of this: the approach often encourages children to work in pairs or groups, thus giving children opportunities to talk and discuss to clarify their ideas; children hear each others' ideas and thus may alter their own thinking; children are learning through interacting with each other, rather than the teacher dominating the learning. Therefore, the humanities provide endless language opportunities (Chapter 8).

Using an enquiry-based approach that encourages children to learn through questioning and investigating, the book combines theoretical coverage with practical examples to provide an informed, engaging guide to humanities teaching in the primary classroom. Key issues covered include planning and assessment in history and geography, using resources in teaching, and exploring creative and cross-curricular approaches in humanities, all relevant in the current climate of curriculum change. There could have been some emphasis within this text on Religious Education and enquiry based learning, a missed opportunity perhaps.

Conclusion

I recommend 'Primary Humanities: Learning Through Enquiry'. The book successfully combines theory and practice: it helps the reader to make sense of different perspectives of theories of learning related to these subject areas. It is therefore useful to both classroom practitioners and education studies students alike. Readers will certainly be able to identify elements useful to their needs.

This is key reading for all students studying primary history and geography on primary initial teacher training programmes and education studies courses including undergraduate (BEd, BA with QTS), postgraduate (PGCE, SCITT, Teach First School Direct), and employment-based routes into teaching, and NQTs.

Whether you are a trainee or a practitioner, this book will develop your knowledge of how young children's understanding of place, time and community can be fostered

through an enquiry-based curriculum. It will also benefit, perhaps, teachers of older children looking to encourage more independent learning in their schools.

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