

# Creative teaching ideas for the history classroom

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## Creating an engaging teaching and learning environment Can genuine learning be fun?

When writing lessons or curriculum, I always aim to create positive learning environments through ...

- Engagement
- Inclusivity
- Challenge
- Collegiality
- Out of the ordinary activities
- Active learning
- Cooperation
- Creating trust
- Encouraging inquiry
- Having Fun .....



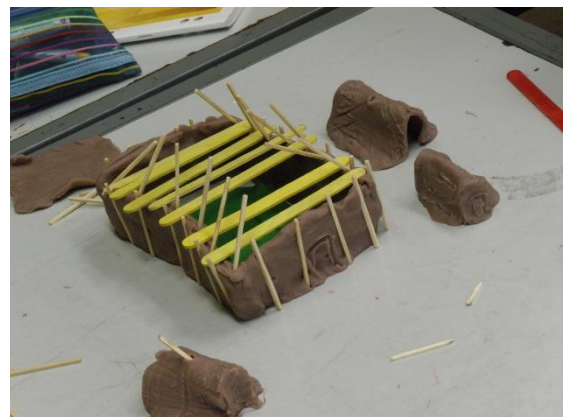
What sort of environment do we create in our classrooms?

- Write down 5 things you do that create an engaging learning environment for your students
  
- Write down 5 things you do in the classroom that
  - do or have the potential to create a flatter learning atmosphere
  - may undermine positive learning environments

## Getting physical – activity that generates engagement and enhanced learning

Using Playdough to examine the Anglo-Saxon social structure

- The King's House
  - Multiple rooms
  - Central meeting room with large fire
  - In centre of village
- The Thane's House
  - Bedroom and meals area
  - Farm land and slave housing
- The Ceorl's House
  - simple single room dwelling
  - Surrounded by farm buildings
- The slave's house
  - Small single room



Reflection .... In what ways does an activity like this create an engaging learning environment?

- Group work created collegiality, cooperation, team work, inclusivity and communication
- There was a sense of success built into the task
  - Building the house
  - Teaching the rest of the group about the house
- There had to be trust between the team members to create the house as required
- There was praise and admiration from the other members of the group as each house was presented.
- The activity was physical, challenging and engaging

What did you get out of doing that activity?

**This presentation offers you a whole raft of lesson ideas that are designed to generate a positive and active learning environment**

- Tribal engagement
- Agricultural Revolution treasure hunt

**Creating tangible learning**

- Greek Olympics Day
- Medieval Day

**Self-directed learning**

- Yr 7 - Let's Go Ping ....
- Yr 8 - Good Guys and Bad Guys ....



**Making history personal**

- WW1 'Show n Tell'



**Making learning fun**

- Duck n cover ...  
musical chairs
- Piñata space race
- Sale of the Century Quiz
- Reading story books in senior classes!
- Fairytale or horror story
  - Taking stories to the next level ... a tool to guide students away from simply 'cutting and pasting' when creating biographies

**Students teach the class**

- Empowering students to lead their learning
- They are far more creative and dynamic teachers than we are!



## Creating books of student work

### Making the theoretical a tangible experience in the classroom

Afghanistan: Pre USSR invasion & Post USSR/USA war..... and still in a mess today

- The impact of Jelli Baff!

News report on ME conflict

- 'Palestinian Morning News' with Sally and Polly ....

Segregation in the Yr 11 History classroom

- White students at Central High School in Little Rock distributed cards with messages expressing their disgust at integration and the open hatred of the black students, inciting violence:
- 'Bearer may kick rumps of each CHS Negro once per day until the expiration date.
- 'Last chance boys. Kick a nigger, but don't use spike shoes.'
- That white trash Matthews named Jess,  
Sure got Central High in a mess,  
The kids – if they're white,  
He deprives of their rights,  
He's a Kansas Nigger Lover, I guess.
- Little Nigger at Central High,  
Has got mighty free with his eye,  
Winks at white girls,  
Grabs their blond curls,  
Little Nigger sure is anxious to die.
- Reflections from students

- Reflection from a 'white student':

*The white students had been brought up to believe that they are superior to the blacks and the teacher encouraged them to act that way – it was their way of life. At first it was really difficult to abuse the other members of this class unless it was in a joking way. It was kind of sickening though seeing how quickly people can change from being friendly to being racist.*

- Reflection from a 'black student':

*At first I thought the whole experience would be really exciting but I was deceived about the emotion I would feel over the project. I thought myself perfectly capable of handling abuse, rejection and ostracized. I underestimated the deepness of racial tension. It took less than 30 seconds before the girls I knew to be up standing citizens turn into fundamentalist racists and had the first words of abuse. I believed that I would only feel the attacks superficially but every time my stomach tightened and my throat choked up. We all laughed but clearly it was to cover our real feelings of pain and shock. It cut deep to say the least. And although as soon we exited the room the tension faded I still felt different, excluded in some way like everybody was in on some joke that I knew they had but they wouldn't tell me. It was the first time that I felt powerless to gain information in a class. Knowing that retaliating to anything would make it terribly worse and not get me anywhere was so undermining. Having to submit to my request that you know could be placed upon you was awful. I can now appreciate that I know I will never fully understand how these people faced each day. Always beaten down they still kept rising. This experience has heightened these people in my mind. I can see how faith became such a key factor for these people. It gave them something to unite them. Relief and retreat from this world of suffering.*



## Experiential learning in one lesson

### Creating social frustration in the Yr 12 History classroom

- To get across the feelings of alienation, disempowerment and resentment that had festered in pre-revolutionary sentiment on the eve of the French Revolution ...
  - I had the kids draw a coloured tag out of a box to ensure a random selection
  - Then I divided the class into the minority privileged group and the majority commoners group
  - I then ignored the commoners and left them to work out the information for themselves whilst teaching the privileged group ...
  - and giving them Mint Slices!
  - Within the period, the commoners had become resentful, openly hostile and even planned a revolt!
  - They finished their protest off by presenting a formal list of demands for reform
  - The impact was immediate and tangible to all in the class
  - The whole class was brought back together at the end ... and the commoners were given a reward of their own for having endured the suffering!
  - They were also given additional teaching time to fill in any blanks that had occurred in their learning as a result of the activity



### Learning through drama ... yes even in yr 12!

#### An excerpt from a play created about the Flight to Varennes

- Louis: You know dear wife, I feel that I have made enough concessions to this lot ..... it's just 'give, give, give' with them.
- Marie-Antoinette: The people of Paris and those in the countryside love you Louis, as a child loves his father. They know that you're not to blame for the misfortunes of France, instead, they blame your evil ministers. 'silly them'! ... (she gives a devilish chuckle)
- Louis looks to his wife: I'm not so sure anymore darling one. Now that my power has been so seriously weakened with the establishment of that outrageously arrogant National Constituent Assembly, I no longer feel the love of the people ..... in fact, what I do sense is a growing hate ... and hate beyond simple nastiness about diamond necklaces or the making of rude jokes about us.
- Marie-Antoinette: Then if you really feel this way Louis, we must act. We cannot simply sit here and let them take all from us ... who knows, they may even take our lives.
- Louis looks to his wife for a plan
- Marie-Antoinette: After all of these years of having to put up with family 'get togethers' and dealing with all those family dramas, it's time we got some benefit from having family in high places! I will give my brother Leopold II a call .....

#### An excerpt from a play created about the trial and execution of Louis XVI:

- The trial:
  - *President*: On the 18th a great number of the nobles and military came into your apartments in the castle of the Tuileries, to favour that escape; you wanted to quit *Paris* on the 10th of April to go to *St. Cloud*. *what have you to answer?*
  - *Louis*: *The accusation is absurd.*
- The execution of Louis XVI:
  - *Executioner*: Sire (said to Louis with tears), in this new outrage I see only a final resemblance between Your Majesty and the Saviour who is to reward you.
  - *Narrator*: At these words he lifted his eyes to heaven with a sorrowing look that I cannot describe . . . and, turning to the executioners, said:
  - *Louis*: Do what you wish; I will drain the cup to the dregs.

## Let's sing

Playing topic relevant songs in class

- the students are given the opportunity to play songs of their choice ...
- Requires the analysis of the topic being examined in order to make a relevant selection
- The students are learning without even knowing it!



## The ultimate History learning experience

- In 2009, we introduced a Study Tour of Gallipoli and the Western Front to our school

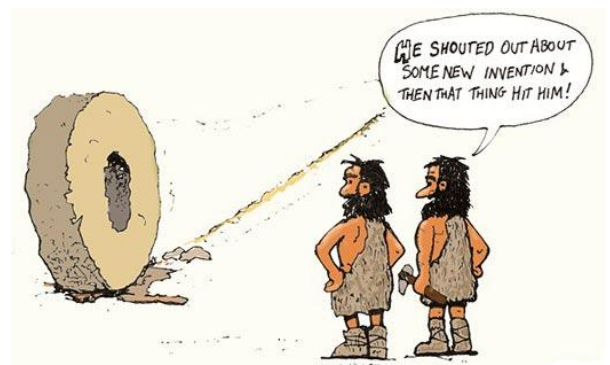


## No time to reinvent the wheel?

No need .....

Remember these 'oldies but goodies'?

- Cold Case Detectives
  - Make up a box of clues relating to a particular topic as a way of introducing it
  - Students have to use the clues to work out what the topic is about
- The Magic Picture Frame
  - Using a large size empty picture frame, students stand with their face looking through it and then take on a leader being studied
  - Have to tell the class who they are, etc
- Snakes and ladders
  - Use historically relevant symbols to replace the snake and ladder
  - Create historically relevant reasons for going up or down
  - Egs:
    - launch Sputnik or land on the moon to move up and get caught by the U2 to move down
    - caught the plague so move down the snake
    - won the Battle of Hastings so move up the ladder
- If you were having a dinner party, name 3 guests you would invite and say why
  - Need to select politically relevant guests
- History Hot Seat
  - Students are quizzed on their knowledge in front of the class
- History Heads (based on Celebrity Head)
- Hot potato
- Graffiti sheets
- Brainstorm bingo
- Question dice
- Cut and paste tasks
- Students set the test
- Giving Incomplete notes for students to complete as revision
- Find someone who ... intro task
- Class debates
- Using scales to weigh up both sides of an argument
- Crossword creation revision task
- Spot quizzes
- Creating board games



## Creating a positive learning environment in the History classroom ...

- Is a team activity ...
    - Between teacher and students
    - Between the students themselves
    - Between us ...
  - It is easier to do if we share our ideas, strategies and activities about teaching in the classroom
- Thank you sincerely for having me ....

## Who am I?

- I have ...
  - An Honours Degree in History
  - A Masters Degree in International Politics
  - Have begun a PhD in Australian Political History
  - I come from a research and Uni lecturing background
  - I started secondary teaching in 2004
  - In 2007, appointed Head of History
  - In 2008, appointed Chair of the newly formed Faculty of Humanities
    - History, International Politics & Geography
- I currently teach .....

- Yr 11
  - C20th History
  - International Politics
- Yr 12
  - History Revs
  - International Studies

