

Diversity & Inclusion *in History*

Weaving Jewish History into the KS3 Curriculum: Why it shouldn't start and finish with the Holocaust

Currently many schools are on the journey of auditing their Key Stage 3 curriculums to ensure they offer a more diverse, global and inter-connected representation of the past. A lot of this work focuses on ensuring that previously under-represented groups, such as the LGBTQ+ community, disabled people, black British people, Asian communities, women, Roma and Traveller communities, are at the forefront. The introduction of these histories needs to be incorporated with the appropriate purpose and not solely as a history of suspicion and oppression (as they often are at pinpoints in time). Rather, it should be as a representation of their agency, the voices they had and the role they played within their societies.

One element of my work, in addition to the aforementioned groups, is the incorporation of more Jewish history across our entire KS3 curriculum to fully encompass the long and rich history of the British, European and global Jewish community. The following headings provide a starting point for you to also carry out this planning process.

It didn't start with a yellow star

The trouble with only introducing Jewish history into the curriculum with the Holocaust, or Hitler's rise to power in the 1930s, is it can confine students to only understanding Jewish experiences within Nazism, specifically its virulent antisemitism and attempted genocide of the Jewish people.

Research shows some students question why Jewish people were targeted, despite having been taught high quality, Holocaust-focused, units of work. This is because without providing further context or teaching students about Jewish experiences during other time periods, students are unable to gain a broader understanding of Jewish history. Understanding this history will, in turn, enable understanding of the impact of the Holocaust.

The Holocaust is not the Jewish community's only or final pinpoint in time and so reducing students' exposure of Jewish history to a single event, diminishes any understanding of the significant impact the Holocaust had and still has. Jewish history is more than just their trauma;

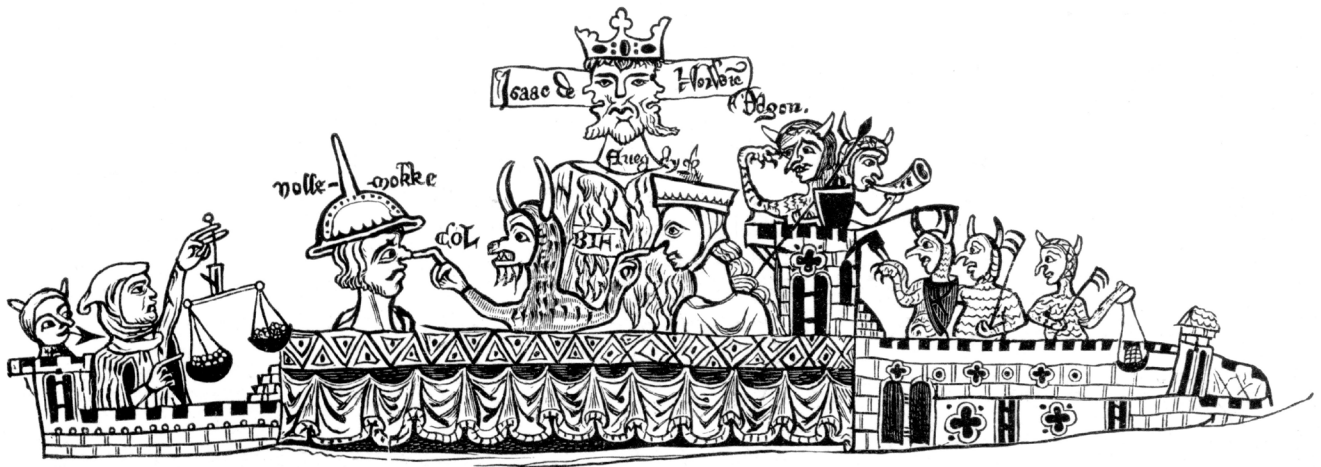
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it is a long, rich history of global interactions and events, just as with any other group within society, and requires depth when teaching. It is our responsibility as teachers to uncover this for students.

I follow the teaching of the Normans in Year 7 with a discrete enquiry of three lessons focusing on 'what can we uncover about Jewish life in Medieval England?'.

Lesson 1: What was the status of Jews in medieval society?

- The Jews of Rouen, Normandy, were invited to England by William the Conqueror from 1066, and settled across England in towns such as London, Norwich, Lincoln and York.



Black and White Illustration; Satire on the Jews of Norwich; from the Jews Roll 17 Hen III.

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- Servant rather than subject of the Crown in reference to the feudal system meant Jews could not own property, even following the default of loans (links to lesson 2).
- Charter of Liberties in 1100 gave Jews certain freedoms in comparison to the rest of society in exchange for working for the Crown.

Lesson 2: What was the role of Jewish women?

- Usury was illegal for Christians and not Jewish people leading to the establishment of the Exchequer of the Jews by King Richard I.
- Women were equal to men in the money-lending industry and could run businesses independently.
- Emergence of coin clipping accusations in 1278 led to a change in treatment in some locations.

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The expulsion of Jews from France in 1182 (A miniature from *Grandes Chroniques de France*), 1320s.

Lesson 3: How did persecution towards the Jewish community change over time?

- Blood Libel in 1144 – accusations spread to the continent with uprisings against Jewish communities.
- York Massacre in 1190 – can make links back to lesson 1 as Jewish communities settled near castles for their work, but now sought York Tower for protection.
- Antisemitic graffiti on 1233 Exchequer Roll from Norwich – there is a great [BBC Teach video](#) explaining this to students.
- Edict by King Edward I in 1290 expelling the entire Jewish population from England (first European country to do so but France, Spain, Portugal and other European countries followed, leading to 80% of the world's Jewish population living in Poland by the 16th Century – future link for Hitler's Jewish policies when teaching the Holocaust).

Make it purposeful

An additional motivator behind the auditing of curriculums was the launch of the new Ofsted Inspection Framework, which shifted the emphasis of inspections onto the quality of education via the curriculum. At the individual subject level, this pushed for a renewal in the 'why' and 'how' of content selection (also commonly referred to as the '3 I's' – intent, implication and impact). Therefore, it is important that you and your department are clear in your purpose and motive for including Jewish history across KS3, and to ensure the histories of the Jewish community are fully represented.

As stated, the inclusion of Jewish history needs to be more than purely providing students with a snippet of 'Jewish life pre-1933' to support your Holocaust unit.

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Ofsted emphasised micro-choices in their review, which links with content selection and rationale for the KS3 curriculum design. Some of the micro-choices I make with my classes include:

- Jews were seen as servants, rather than subjects, to the Crown as they were unable to own land or bear arms – links to the Medieval Feudal System.
- Clause 10 and 11 of the Magna Carta directly refers to Jews within the financial industry - links to the power of the Crown during King John's reign.
- Well poisoning libel during the Black Death – links back to the blood libel and growth of antisemitism.
- Catalan Atlas was produced by Jewish Cartographer Abraham Cresques – links to teaching Medieval Kingdom of Mali.
- Henry VIII referenced Jewish law and was supported by Italian Jews in making his case for a divorce – links to the teaching of the English Reformation.
- Doctor Hector Nunes, a Portuguese converso living in England since 1547, petitioned Queen Elizabeth I to force a refund or to allow the service of the Africans he had purchased from Francis Drake when slavery was illegal in England – links to teaching black Tudors.
- Jews were readmitted to England after Rabbi Menasseh petitioned Oliver Cromwell in 1655, were officially protected by Charles II in 1664, and legally allowed to practice Judaism following the 1698 Act for Suppressing Blasphemy – links to the Commonwealth and Restoration.
- Migration patterns including the invitation from William the Conqueror in 1066 from Rouen, Normandy, the 1492 Spanish edict to the Ottoman Empire, the Russian Pogroms in 1881 and migration to Britain and America – links to migration patterns across time periods.

Reduce the abstract

Consider the following:

- How likely is it that your students will have met a Jewish person before?
- Do they know that Jews still exist?
- How historically receptive have they been to other curriculum units? Will they see Jewish history as some distant concept of the past, irrelevant to them?
- Does student vocabulary allow them to access lessons with an understanding of the differences between Jew, Jewish or Judaism?

By weaving Jewish history throughout your KS3 curriculum it will help to reduce these abstract concepts for your students over time. However, they are also worth considering to ensure your lesson content is appropriate for your students' starting points.

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Useful online resources

Emphasising the continued relevance of Jewish history, there are multiple opportunities to embed local Jewish history into your units by utilising online resource starting points such as:

National Anglo-Jewish Heritage Trails – www.jtrails.org.uk

The Jewish Museum London – www.jewishmuseum.org.uk

Manchester Jewish Museum – <https://www.manchesterjewishmuseum.com/>

England's Immigrant Database – www.englandsimmigrants.com

National Archives – www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

For example, I have been able to include a whole lesson on the role of money-lenders in medieval Bedford for our Year 7s to emphasise the significance of Jewish people within the community. Students are introduced to Belia of Bedford, widow of Pictavin, an independent female money-lender who conducted business in the town. In a future lesson looking at the increased persecution it was possible to research the streets where Bedford Jews lived at the point of their expulsion in 1290.

Collaborate

While the opportunity to weave Jewish history into the KS3 curriculum will directly benefit the progression of student historical understanding, it does not need to be a lone mission. Connect and collaborate with the following departments to ensure that where possible curriculum work across the school can support the embedding of this process:

- Religious Studies – with Judaism being one of the world's major religions, and with increasing incidences of antisemitism in the world, it would seem imperative to teach KS3 Judaism, and would also benefit KS3 History lessons taking place over the three-year curriculum.
- English
 - The Merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare – while the portrayal of Shylock as a money-lender could be accurate for the context, it seems that Shakespeare utilised folklore to build the characteristics as greedy and bloodthirsty. This is seen through Shylock's contract with Antonio for a pound of flesh if the loan is defaulted on. Hopefully English teachers are challenging students to see this character portrayal as an antisemitic, racial stereotype which is unacceptable and should not be taken as fact.

For further support, the Globe Theatre is running CPD webinars focusing on anti-racist teaching approaches to Shakespeare's plays.

- The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas by John Boyne – in an ideal world schools would not utilise this novel as an educational tool due to many of the historical inaccuracies and stereotypical flaws it encapsulates. Instead of the story following Shmuel and the Holocaust, the reader sympathises with Bruno, the son of a Nazi Concentration Camp commander. In addition to the inaccuracies this leads students to detach from the historical event of the Holocaust and to reduce their understanding of the significant impact this had on 6 million Jews.

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English departments have a responsibility to ensure that books are historically accurate, and not a glorified fabrication of events which could create inaccurate stereotypes which may become accepted as historical facts by students.

For ideas on alternative age appropriate books, please see the <https://www.jewishbookcouncil.org/>.

- PSHE – just as challenging racism and Islamophobia are tackled within PSHE curriculums, so should antisemitism be tackled as a form of racism.
- Pastoral leads – as with all protected characteristics and unacceptable behaviour, antisemitism should be accepted by the whole school as racism and clearly defined within the behaviour policy to ensure that appropriate sanctions are followed if incidences occur.

Recommended Reading, Research and Listening

The Historical Atlas of the Jewish People: from the time of the Patriarchs to the Present
edited by Eli Barnavi

Historical Association Podcasts including: Medieval British Jewish History, Jewish-Christian Relations between 1100-1600 and Early Modern British Jewish History

Brown, R.B., and McCartney, S., 'The business activities of Jewish women entrepreneurs in medieval England', *Management Decision*, 39/9 [2001], pp. 699-701

Jewish Lives Project - <https://www.jewishlivesproject.com/>

Jewish Virtual Library - <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/>

Video resource Exploring the Roots of Antisemitism - <https://www.iwm.org.uk/learning/resources/the-way-we-lived-exploring-jewish-life-and-culture>

Jewish Women's Archive - <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia>

Jewish Encyclopaedia - <https://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/>

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