
Case-study 1

Learning with artefacts 1: A gramophone

While on school placement, a student teacher was asked to do a short humanities (history) session with a group of **Reception** children on technology in the past. She decided to focus the activity on an old wind-up gramophone belonging to a relative. Before she revealed the gramophone to the class, she showed them the old, rather battered leather case it came in. Various suggestions were made by the children as to what they suspected to be inside. 'A suitcase' was the most popular suggestion, as the case had a handle and a silver clasp to open and lock it shut. When the lid slowly opened, the children gasped in anticipation. 'What is it?' some asked. Others looked clueless. 'It's a CD player,' one said, and this was agreed with by some others. The student teacher told the children the object is called a gramophone and it plays records. Questions and responses were asked such as 'How old is it?', 'Where is the plug?', 'Can we put CDs on it?' The children were told that it was about a hundred years old and was wound up to make it work, not plugged into an electric socket. The student teacher showed the children a record which came from a section in the lid of the case. The children all called it a 'big CD'. As the student teacher lifted the playing arm up and placed the needle onto the edge of the record, the children were fascinated to see what would happen next. 'What do you think will happen once I would have wound up the lever?' she asked. Most of the children said music would play out of it. The student teacher explained to the children that she had to be extremely careful with all the parts of the gramophone because it was very old and she held their suspense by informing them that the gramophone might not work. She wound the lever around ten times, with the children joining in with the counting, then moved the brake lever to the side and the record began to slowly spin around. The student teacher placed the needle onto the record and a strange scratchy sound came out. The children loved when it didn't work. 'Is that someone singing?', one child asked. 'Yes', the student teacher replied, 'but it should sound nicer than that!' The children looked at the gramophone intently, trying to discover what the student teacher had done wrong. It was very exciting. She tried once more, but let the record gather speed before placing the needle onto it. 'Wow!' was the reaction around the group. The beautiful voice of a female singer came from the small speaker on the gramophone. The children were amazed. Some children started dancing to the music and everyone listened intently. This was an encounter with an object that these children would remember for a long time.



Case-study 2

Learning with artefacts 2: Running shoes

The teacher began the unit with a **Year3** class by passing a pair of 1920s running shoes around the circle. These shoes, belonging to a relative, were clearly old and had sharp spikes on the sole. The children discussed what they might be and what their possible purpose was. They had to justify their answers with reasons. Then the teacher gave the children a sticky label each. They had to think of a word to describe the shoes, which they then stuck around them. This was a very effective opening. It grabbed the children's attention and imagination. Many of the children straight away related the shoes to sport. Due to the shape and the spikes, the children thought they may have been used for rock climbing, football or hiking. The adjectives children used were interesting. One child described the shoes as looking tight. All the children believed that they were old but were unable to date them. Answers ranged from two thousand years to five years old!

To help the children try and date the shoes, the teacher made a timeline. The timeline ranged from 1900 to 2000 with 1950 in the middle. The children were put into groups of three. Each group was given an event from the twentieth century, which they had to plot on the timeline which had been put up on a wall outside. The teacher then went through the timeline and discussed whether events were in the correct place. This was an important task to try and develop children's chronological awareness. The teacher returned to the timeline throughout the unit.

In the next activity the children were shown a race from the film *Chariots of Fire*. The scene depicted Eric Liddell running the 1924 Olympics. They were then shown the men's 100 metre final from the 2012 Olympics. The children identified the differences and similarities between the two races. The teacher asked the children if they could spot in either clip similar shoes to those that they had handled. They then discussed their observations and possible reasons for the changes over time.

The children made interesting observations. In particular that there were no black people running the *Chariots of Fire* clip. This was a good introduction to the next session in which they looked at the achievements of Jesse Owens.

After comparing the clips, the children had a go at dating the shoes. They had identified that shoes worn in the 1924 clip were more similar to the shoes that they had been looking at than the ones in the 2012 Olympics clip. Previously the children's estimates had ranged over 2000 years. A combination of using the timeline and the comparison activity had clearly had an effect.

The teacher opened the next lesson by attaching a label to the shoes with the words 'Property of Jesse Owens, 1936' written on it. The children then speculated about who Jesse Owens was and what the significance of 1936 was. From this the children produced questions. The children then used the internet to find answers. They discussed what they had found out about Jesse Owens and the 1936 Berlin Olympics.

The teacher then made links to PSE (Health & Wellbeing AoLE?) explaining how Jesse Owens had proved Hitler wrong by showing that white people are not better than black people. One child said that he had read that Hitler left the stadium when Jesse Owens won one of the medals. The teacher explained that this was untrue. Jesse Owens led the way for more black athletes to compete in the Olympics. The point was emphasised by the teacher when he showed a video of Usain Bolt breaking the world record.

Throughout the sequence of lessons, the teacher continued to return to and add to the timeline. Each time, the children would order the events. This improved children's chronological awareness and it was an activity that they enjoyed.