

Cross-curricular learning and teaching in the humanities

One thing stands out in all the most successful schools . . . they opt for an approach towards education which rests on traditional subject disciplines.

(Michael Gove, Education Secretary, 2009)

Throughout our discussion of curriculum we stress children's learning does not fit into subjects.

(DES 1967a: 203)

Learning objectives

By the end of this chapter you should be able to:

- define the cross-curricular approach and explain its rationale in the humanities;
- critically reflect upon the longstanding debates associated with cross-curricular teaching;
- identify the major considerations when planning cross-curricular activities; and
- describe the contribution of the humanities in promoting pupils' literacy, numeracy, ICT and thinking skills.

Subject teaching versus cross-curricular studies

Cross-curricular work, once popular in primary schools during the 1960s and 1970s, is back in fashion . . . at least among many educationalists (Barnes, 2007; Rowley and Cooper, 2009; Kerry, 2011). This popularity is reflected in numerous curriculum models and publications. For instance, the 'Creative Learning Journey' is replete with

topic wheels linked to 'essential skills and areas of learning' rather than 'disjointed discrete subjects' (www.creativelearningjourney.org.uk) while the Hamilton Trust charity favours a topic-based curriculum to engage pupils in and out of school (www.hamiltonplay.org.uk). However, there are also high-profile critics of the drift away from subject teaching towards cross-curricular studies. Furedi (2007) is among those alarmed by the downgrading of traditional geography, history and other academic subjects. This is an international trend. For instance, former Australian Prime Minister John Howard claimed that traditional subjects such as English, history and geography had been displaced by 'incomprehensible drudge' in the form of 'Studies of Society and the Environment' (Beder, 2009: 131).

In England, Michael Gove's claim that the best schools organise the curriculum along subject lines is dubious. For instance, Ofsted (2009: 17) reports that outstanding schools (in the most socially deprived areas) do not follow a particular mode of planning:

Some organise pupils by ability in the core subjects; others do not. Some cover many of the subjects through themes; others invest a lot of time in the creative curriculum and can demonstrate benefits in writing and other forms of expression.

Nonetheless, Gove's view does illustrate the importance of understanding clearly the rationale behind cross-curricular work and the need to justify its potential to improve pupils' learning in the humanities.

What is meant by a cross-curricular approach?

'Cross-curricular' is a term used to describe knowledge, activities, skills or initiatives that are applied across the curriculum and not confined to one subject (Barnes, 2007; Wallace, 2009). The approach is often used interchangeably with topics and themes, although these are not synonymous terms (see Table 3.1). While topic work is rooted in the notion of applying skills in a range of contexts, Fisher (2002: 53) points out that such links are often engineered by the teacher rather than the class, leaving 'topics as incomprehensible to children as subject divisions are'. She reminds us that topics are the vehicle of learning and not the purpose of it. Good cross-curricular teaching enables pupils to pull together knowledge from different areas and apply this to everyday life.

The Cambridge Primary Review provides an excellent overview of the debates surrounding subjects and the respective role of knowledge and skills in the curriculum. It explores misconceptions about how the curriculum is organised and reminds readers of the historical insults that have been plied against those who support subjects and those who condemn them. The Review points out that a subject can 'mean anything we want it to mean' – the team suggest that what matters is not so much curriculum labels but what is taught and how. They add, 'a subject is not of itself old-fashioned just because subjects have been used as an organising device for over a century. If, as enacted in the classroom, a subject is irrelevant, it is the teacher who makes it so' (Alexander, 2010: 246).

Research makes it clear that the most important factors in successful learning are the quality of teaching and relationships between teachers and students (Hattie, 2009).

Table 3.1 Key terms associated with curriculum organisation

Term	Meaning and content
Themes	Teaching is organised around thematic units such as 'Homes', designed to explore connections between areas of learning.
Topic work	An approach to learning that draws upon 'children's concerns and involves them in the planning, executing and reflecting upon negotiated learning experiences' (Tann, 1988: 4).
Projects	Pieces of work produced by individuals or groups (Waters, 1982).
Areas of learning or experience	Means of organising the curriculum according to broad areas, rather than discrete subjects. For the humanities, DES (1985) suggested 'human and social' and more recently the Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum (DCSF, 2009) recommended 'historical, geographical and social understanding'. The model is particularly popular in Northern Ireland and Scotland.
Subjects, disciplines or domains	Subjects or disciplines are often defined by their methodologies or content, including their distinctive ways of thinking, vocabulary and symbolism. Domains are described as essential knowledge, skill, disposition and enquiry such as 'place and time' and 'faith and beliefs' (Alexander and Flutter, 2009).

International evidence suggests that the most successful schools do not structure the curriculum around subjects (McCulloch, 2011). Good thematic teaching does not lead to a neglect of the 'basics'. The highest-performing school systems, as in Korea, Canada and Singapore, adopt 'a rigorous thematic approach, while continuing to value and develop strong teacher subject knowledge' (McCulloch, 2011: 27).

Rationale

There is a tendency to see subject teaching and cross-curricular activity as polar opposites rather than complementary (DCSF, 2008). Those new to the profession need to be aware of the rationale behind cross-curricular teaching if they wish to become well-informed, reflective practitioners (see Table 3.2).

TASK

- Discuss with experienced colleagues their views of cross-curricular learning and teaching in the humanities. Do they have any evidence that such an approach makes a difference for pupils? What challenges have they faced?

Table 3.2 Arguments for and against cross-curricular learning

For	Against
Learning occurs in 'real' and relevant contexts.	Lacks coherence and depth.
Fits in with notions of 'holistic', 'natural' and 'experiential' learning; in keeping with children's cognitive development and view of the world.	Challenging to ensure progression and assessment of subject skills.
Makes curriculum more manageable.	Can become repetitive and links between subjects may be tenuous.
Opportunities for a more creative curriculum, tailored to the interests and needs of pupils.	Theme-based work is not always properly marked and comments are not subject-specific enough.

Theories of learning and knowledge

The traditional subject-based curriculum largely rests on an objectivist (behaviourist) view of learning where teachers adopt an instructional role in transmitting prescribed, essential knowledge, which exists 'out there' independent of the minds of individuals. In contrast, the cross-curricular approach is based on a socio-cultural theory of learning. This suggests that pupils learn and create their own knowledge by talking, working together, sharing ideas, asking questions and making connections across subject boundaries. Learning is also framed by cultural factors. For instance, East Asian students often comment that they prefer didactic teaching and rote learning to critical thinking, and see teachers as unchallengeable authorities (Jarvis *et al.*, 1998). Chinese educators see the value of memorising techniques to aid the acquisition of knowledge and understanding. What is often missing from such debate is an understanding of what is meant by 'essential subject knowledge', who selects what is considered worthy of sharing, which knowledge is omitted from the curriculum and the kinds of knowledge that learners encounter and need to process. Moreover, there is a tendency to assume that connections between prior knowledge and new experiences are best made through a cross-curricular approach.

There is no shortage of alarmist stories regarding children and young people's lack of knowledge in the humanities. One in three primary children are reported to think Winston Churchill was the first man on the moon while, even more disturbingly, around one in four adults thought that he was a fictional character who had more to do with a television advert for Churchill insurance (Moult, 2008). There are similar concerns over children's inadequate geographical knowledge (Ofsted, 2008) and the replacement of knowledge with morality connected to global citizenship (Standish, 2007). There are also concerns over a decline in Christian knowledge.

Dr John Sentamu, the Archbishop of York, regretted that 30 per cent of children in one survey thought Easter was to celebrate the birthday of the Easter Bunny (*The Daily Telegraph*, 4 April 2010). Public outcries over children's ignorance of basic factual knowledge in the humanities are not new nor are they confined to Britain. But rarely are the underlying assumptions implied by these concerns seriously questioned. Nonetheless, Michael Gove has announced that under the revised National Curriculum (to be introduced in 2014) pupils in England will be expected to learn about specific countries, cities, continents, rivers and oceans. In history, they will be expected to know key dates, periods and historical figures, including Churchill, Queen Elizabeth, Gladstone, Disraeli, Florence Nightingale and Horatio Nelson (Paton, 2011).

One of the problems here is that subject knowledge is too readily equated with factual content: the dates of historical battles, the location of cities and names of religious festivals. However, in addition to such propositional knowledge, subjects also include other forms of knowing: conditional (knowing when and why), procedural (knowing how), as well as private and public forms – for instance how individual historians and geographers make sense of knowledge in their respective fields. The Expert Panel appointed to review the National Curriculum in England sees socially refined knowledge as: 'concepts, facts, processes, language, narratives and conventions of each subject' (DfE, 2011: 11). Trainee and serving teachers should reflect upon questions associated with the nature and value of knowledge:

- What knowledge is worthy of sharing?
- What do the pupils already know?
- Which pupils know what?
- What do *I/they* know about this subject?
- Where can we find out more?
- What 'facts' are appropriate for this age?
- When transmitting knowledge which bits shall I leave out? Why?
- How shall I present this information?
- How far shall I let the pupils find out for themselves?
- Is this knowledge 'absolute' and fully agreed upon or is it contestable?
- How do I know this is true?
- Where has this knowledge come from?
- Why do pupils need to know this?
- What difference might this knowledge make?
- How can we add to this knowledge?

REFLECTION

- During your next teaching experience, consider the questions posed above.

Different types of knowledge change at different speeds; hence technological knowledge moves more rapidly than religious knowledge. The dawning of the information age (since the 1980s) has undoubtedly shaped the knowledge discourse. Instant access to Google and other systems present learners with more than 11.5 billion web pages, and the challenge for teachers and pupils alike is how to manage such 'information noise' (Holmes and Gardner, 2006). The amount of information is estimated to double approximately every seven years (Hayes, 2006). This is often used to justify a focus on developing transferable thinking skills so that pupils can adapt to change rather than spend too much time on acquiring information that has a short lifespan. However, as the Cambridge Primary Review points out, to tell children at the start of their school lives that 'Google and a mobile phone will do the trick is a travesty of what knowing and understanding ought to be about' (Alexander, 2010: 247). It is 'irresponsible' to limit pupils' horizons to the skills of accessing information without challenging them to engage with the knowledge, pose questions and evaluate what they find.

It would be a misrepresentation of subjects to limit their scope to propositional knowledge. The innovative Schools Council's *Place, Time and Society 8-13: Curriculum Planning in History, Geography and Social Science* (Blyth *et al.*, 1976: 32) viewed subject disciplines as 'resources' meaning the 'accumulative achievements' (e.g. sources, personal experiences, methods and skills) of the subjects rather than 'a body of content that must be absorbed'. The Schools Council wanted to preserve the wide and stimulating range of knowledge, skills and perspectives offered by each discipline so that they were not 'elbowed out . . . if merged into some synthetic and perhaps shapeless whole'. That said, the authors were not against integrated study. Rather, they called upon teachers to know how historians, geographers and social scientists worked. In this regard, the teachers were to act as mediators between the subjects and learners.

For social constructivists, knowledge results from individuals interacting with each other and with the environment they live in (Gredler, 1997). Learning is seen as a social process rather than taking place within an individual. Historians and geographers *create* knowledge by asking questions, interpreting sources, sharing ideas and making comparisons (see Table 3.3). Erricker *et al.* (2011: 76) illustrate a constructivist approach in religious education through a Living Difference project tied to the Hampshire Agreed Syllabus, in which children are 'involved', 'receptive' and 'don't worry about what they say'. Pupils are reported to latch onto ideas better because the focus is no longer on factual content but key concepts: 'They can focus on Hindu ideas about reincarnation, not what happens at a Hindu burial' (Erricker *et al.*, 2011: 77).

Social constructivism has been criticised in recent years by those keen to see the reinstatement of knowledge and a return to academic disciplines (Young, 2007). The argument runs that there is too much emphasis on competencies and skills. Writing in the context of geography education, Young (2007: 181) believes that schools exist to give pupils 'access to the powerful knowledge that most of them will not have the opportunity to acquire at home.' Lambert (2011) suggests that developments such as 'Thinking Skills', 'Learning to Learn' and 'Building Learning Power' adopt a deficit view of the learner to the detriment of their geography education:

This is an attack on young people as 'knowers'. It is also an attack on subjects such as geography. Even when subjects are not dismissed entirely, or replaced by a thematic

Table 3.3 Socio-constructivist approach to the humanities

Subject	Socio-constructivist elements
History	• Discussing prior knowledge and experiences (e.g. 'What do we know about . . .?'). • Selecting and making sense of first-hand sources (e.g. pictures, maps, buildings, people, documents). • Carrying out historical investigations. • Comparing interpretations of the past. • Deciding on means of recording and communicating findings. • Emphasis on links with archaeological discoveries.
Geography	• Seeking out patterns, making links and comparing similarities and differences. • Selecting aspects of place that interest pupils, recalling and discussing previous experiences. • Role-play areas (e.g. setting up a travel agency, post office or passport office). • Opportunities for pupils to explore, play and travel in a variety of places, building on children's or young people's geographies. • Asking geographical questions.
Religious Education	• Focusing on <i>how</i> people believe as well as what they believe. • Seeking to promote an awareness of self and the wider world. • Knowledge is interpretative and transformative rather than pre-determined (e.g. pupils are encouraged to interpret biblical stories in the light of their own experiences).

or skills-led programme, the subjects are distorted by the softer therapeutic aims of the 'emotionally literate school'

(Lambert, 2011: 128)

The constructivist pedagogy has a strong influence in primary humanities (Littledyke and Huxford, 1998; Martin, 2006). However, good teachers need to demonstrate what Shulman (1987) famously called 'Pedagogical Content Knowledge' (PCK). This refers to teachers' ability to translate subject matter for teaching purposes through the use of analogies, examples, explanations and demonstrations. Although there are conceptual difficulties with PCK – for instance in terms of seeing knowledge as static and undervaluing the importance of teachers' beliefs in shaping knowledge – nonetheless PCK is a neat way of bridging subject expertise with teaching practice. More recently, the

Expert Panel reviewing the National Curriculum in England pointed out that schools need to make time for teaching knowledge and the development of skills:

The two elements are not, however, equally significant at every age. In particular, developmental aspects and basic skills are more crucial for young children, while appropriate understanding of more differentiated subject knowledge, concepts and skills becomes more important for older pupils.

(DfE, 2011: 12)

BOX 3.1 RESEARCH BRIEFING – TO INTEGRATE OR NOT

Research on the cross-curricular approach presents mixed findings. Research in the late 1980s and early 1990s argued that the outcomes of an integrated model were less effective teaching (Alexander *et al.*, 1992) although this has been contested (Campbell and Little, 1989). Kerry (2011) suggests that integration brings deeper learning than separate subject teaching. Greenwood's (2007) survey of geography teaching in Northern Irish primary schools found that only 7 per cent of 1,328 topics were taught in a subject-based, stand-alone way, with 91 per cent of teachers positive about cross-curricular teaching of geography. The Scottish inspectorate reports that thematic and topic work motivates pupils and enables them to take a more active part in their learning, for example by deciding aspects to study (HMIe, 2007). However, these 'soft' gains are very difficult to measure and are often based on informal observations. Knight (1993: 134–5) suggests that more successful outcomes occur when teachers pair subjects together, with one as a main focal point – 'more is not always better'. More recent research suggests that many outstanding English primary schools and international school systems do not structure learning around traditional subject disciplines (McCulloch, 2011).

The historical and ideological context for cross-curricular work

Since schooling began under the auspices of the medieval Church, the curriculum has been organized along subject lines with an emphasis on reading, writing, arithmetic (English and mathematics) and religious instruction. When taught, history and geography reinforced patriotic values, preserved British cultural heritage and amounted to an 'education for fellowship' – working-class pupils schooled to respect their betters (Gordon and Lawton, 1978:79). The utilitarian aim was to produce (cheaply and efficiently) literate, numerate, god-fearing and deferential citizens. For much of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the curriculum model was shaped by an ideology that valued basic skills, academic subjects, knowledge of Great Britain, tradition, Christian values and moral education. The great Victorian advances in science, engineering and geography were driven by the pursuit of knowledge. Schools

crammed pupils with as much information as they could and tested this with drill-and-practice assessments. In such a content-driven curriculum inevitably a hierarchy of subjects developed and this has remained essentially the same since Victorian times (Aldrich, 1996). To use a football analogy, English and mathematics have always been in the Premier League, RE has been gradually relegated to the First Division while history and geography have generally performed in the lower leagues. However, the striking feature of the primary curriculum spanning three centuries is its remarkable continuity in how knowledge has been classified and presented (Table 3.4).

There are longstanding criticisms of a subject-based curriculum in the primary school. For instance, in the 1930s alternative approaches such as the 'project method' were recommended in which children specified what they wanted to know, asked questions and devised ways of finding out. Textbooks suggested projects on 'shops', 'workers' and 'our town' for the primary school, including activities such as model making, local walks and creating picture maps (Hume, 1938). The Hadow Report (Board of Education, 1931) famously declared that 'the curriculum is to be thought of in terms of activity and experience rather than of knowledge to be acquired and facts to be stored' (1931:93).

Similar sentiments were expressed during the heady 1960s. *Primary Education in Scotland* (Scottish Education Department, 1965) pointed out that the acquisition of knowledge was no longer as important as fostering intellectual curiosity and independent learning. It believed that the curriculum was meaningful only if it was integrated and not thought of in terms of discrete subjects (Darling, 2003). In England and Wales, the Plowden and Gittins Reports (DES, 1967a; DES 1967b) provided official endorsement for a curriculum in which knowledge was organised around themes such as autumn, water or transport, to which subject matter could be added as and when necessary to illuminate the theme. The approach was seen as an antidote to the generally formal, dull and didactic teaching of the 1950s. A typical textbook referred to the new emphasis on 'enquiry, activity, discovery and communication' (Howson, 1969: vii), the breaking down of teacher isolation and the re-drawing of the curriculum resulting in the emergence of areas such as social studies.

Progressive education, a phrase first used in 1839, was closely associated with promoting children's individuality, growth, creativity, expression and imagination. Many had the impression that the Plowden Report saw subjects as contrived ways of viewing the world (Riley and Prentice, 1999). However, while it rejected organizing the timetable according to subjects in the education of young children, it saw the value of subject teaching with older juniors and called for the presence of specialist subject coordinators ('consultants') in primary schools. Members of the Plowden Committee were split over the question of RE because of their personal beliefs. A minority held that RE should not feature in the curriculum in a society that was increasingly rejecting the 'sanction of supernatural revelation' (DES, 1967a: 493). They advocated an alternative programme in moral or ethical education. Others wanted RE to influence the entire curriculum. Between these extremes, the majority called for a review of provision drawing upon research into what religious subject matter was relevant to children's interests, experiences and intellectual powers. Research (Goldman, 1965; Loukes, 1965) had suggested that pupils were confused by the transmission of biblical knowledge acquired in lessons. Rather, they needed opportunities to engage with everyday problems perceived to be relevant as a way of approaching religion.

Table 3.4 Overview of primary curriculum change in England, 1905–2010

Board of Education (1905)	DES (1959)	DES (1967)	HMI (1980)	Education Reform Act (1988)	Independent Review (2009)
English	Language Handwriting	English	English	English	English, communication and languages
Arithmetic	Mathematics	Mathematics	Mathematics	Mathematics	Mathematical understanding
Religious Instruction (RI)	Religion	RE	RE	RE*	RE
History	History	History	History and social studies	History	Historical, geographical and social understanding
Geography	Geography	Geography	Geography	Geography	
Nature study	Natural science	Science	Science	Science	Scientific and technological understanding
Physical Training (PT)	Physical Education (PE)	PE	PE including dance and games	PE	Understanding physical development, health and well-being
Art and craft (boys)	Art, craft and needlework	Art and craft	Art and craft	Art	Understanding the arts
Needlework (girls)				Design Technology (included Information Technology)	ICT capability
Music	Music	Music	Music and drama	Music	
		Foreign language	Foreign language	Welsh (for schools in Wales)	

Note: * The Education Reform Act (1988) established a Basic Curriculum of Religious Education and the National Curriculum.

Sources: Schools Council (1983), Schools Council Working Paper 75, Primary practice, London: Methuen; for Education Reform Act (1988) see <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/>; DCSF (2009), Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum: Final Report, Nottingham: DCSF

Critics of Plowden were concerned over the development of a 'magpie curriculum' that lacked coherence, structure and rigour (Bantock, 1971). Fears were expressed that a 'hit-and-miss' approach provided children with too much choice, avoiding areas of learning that they found challenging, thereby failing to develop perseverance and fundamental subject-specific skills. The 'demonisation' of education in the 1960s, as Tomlinson (2005: 22) puts it, has carried through to the twenty-first century. In 2004, David Bell, Chief Inspector of Schools, described much of the teaching in the 1960s as 'plain crackers' with 'too many incoherent or non-existing curriculums' and too many 'soft-centred beliefs that children would learn if you left them to it' (cited by Tomlinson, 2005: 22). While projects were often well planned and evaluated, it was less clear how they built on prior learning (Mallett, 2002). Even supporters of topic work, such as Tann (1988), acknowledged that there was a need for a clear rationale, close monitoring of children's achievements and good classroom management.

The National Curriculum was introduced in England and Wales in 1988 to establish an entitlement for all pupils, although its subject-based nature was never fully explained. Alternative curriculum models, such as 'areas of experience' advocated by Her Majesty's Inspectors during the 1980s, were ignored (Lawton and Chitty, 1988). Gaps between the subjects were supposed to be covered through a combination of cross-curricular themes, dimensions and skills. Among these was environmental education, education for citizenship and education for life in a multicultural society. Commentators were quick to flag up other themes such as media education (Webb, 1996), personal and social education, the European dimension and gender issues (Verma, 1994). The reality facing many primary schools was that they had little time to develop such themes, despite recognising their value, once they had given attention to the core and foundation subjects. As Ashcroft and Palacio (1995: 7) point out, these cross-curricular themes and dimensions were not well covered in the planning stage and consequently became peripheral when the curriculum was implemented.

Various ideological influences have shaped the development of the primary curriculum. The 'elementary' tradition was based on communicating essential knowledge while 'progressives' championed pupils' self-expression and curriculum innovation. A 'developmental' ideology focused on meeting the needs of children at different stages of growth. Alexander (1995) points out that these ideologies do not come in single file, one after another, but compete and interact. They remain powerful forces in the twenty-first-century curriculum discourse. Politically, a subject-based curriculum is often associated with a conservative outlook that advocates 'academic' standards, regular testing and an emphasis on memory, practice and rote. It frowns upon liberal relativism ('truth is what you make it'), pupil participation in the curriculum, group work and discovery approaches.

REFLECTION

- Which of the ideologies in Table 3.5 prevails most in the classroom/school environment that you are familiar with? Have you experienced differences between individual teachers and schools? Which of the ideologies are you comfortable with? How and when is it possible to combine aspects of these views during a school day?

Table 3.5 Elementary and progressive ideologies

Area	Elementary	Progressive/post-modern
Values	Control, discipline, measured performance	Pupil autonomy, creative and critical thinking
Outcomes	Academic standards	Pupils' well-being
Curriculum	Organised around subjects	Themes, projects, children's interests and ideas
Role of teacher	Teacher as instructor	Teacher as facilitator
Role of the learner	Passive recipient of received wisdom	Active, constructing their own knowledge
Methodology	Transmission of culture (didactic, formal, whole class)	Child centred (individual, discovery, exploration, enquiry)
Assessment	Assessment of learning (examinations, grades, setting)	Assessment for learning (self and peer review, focus on how to improve)
Learning environment	Structured, set resources provided	Open, negotiable, interactive
Learning emphasis	Knowledge, cognitive development	Skills, social and emotional development

The content of the curriculum in England has recently been reviewed, borne out of concern that it is too overcrowded. Many schools have struggled to meet the National Curriculum's aim to provide a broad and balanced curriculum in the context of a results-driven, attainment-obsessed agenda. According to the Cambridge Primary Review (Alexander and Flutter, 2009: 22): 'The most conspicuous casualties are the arts, the humanities and the kinds of learning in all subjects which require time for talking, problem-solving and the extended exploration of ideas.' The Review suggests an alternative model based on a more locally determined curriculum (30 per cent), in which the humanities feature in several 'domains' such as 'place and time' and 'faith and belief', similar to previous approaches in the 1970s (Blyth *et al.*, 1976). The Cambridge Primary Review's eight suggested domains (Figure 3.1) are described as starting points for curriculum planning. They are not seen as named slots on a timetable or 'an invitation for low-grade topic work in which thematic serendipity counts for more than knowledge and skills' (Alexander, 2010: 266). These domains operate beyond the traditional subject boundaries of primary history and geography to include the social sciences, such as archaeology.

Another curriculum review, chaired by Sir Jim Rose (DCSF, 2008), advocated six areas of learning and essential skills for life. Again this has echoes of a model recommended by Her Majesty's Inspectors during the 1980s (Lawton and Chitty, 1988). Rose argues for a national curriculum to be based on a combination of areas of

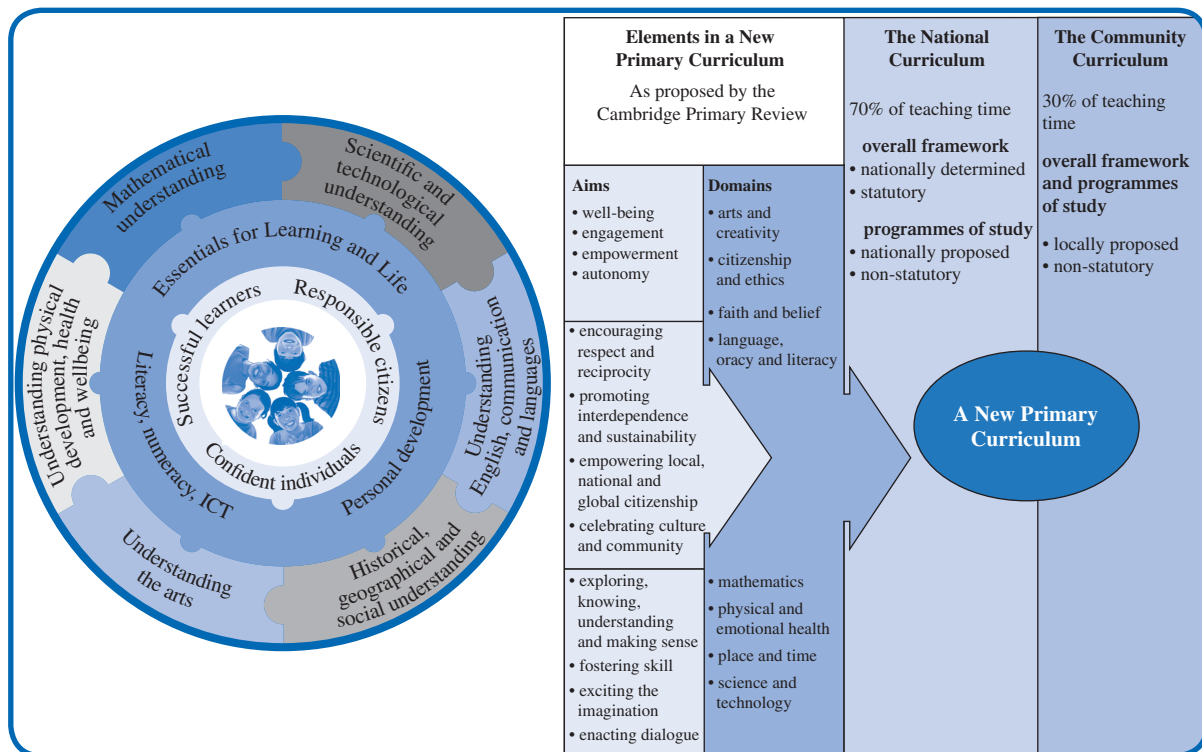


Figure 3.1 Primary curriculum models advocated by the Independent Primary Review and the Cambridge Primary Review. Sources: DCSF, 2009: 46; Alexander, 2010:274.

learning with traditional subjects. This has had its critics in the humanities field. The Humanities Association (HUMS) points to the potential for: 'fragmentation and further decline', dismissing the 'historical, geographical and social understanding' areas of learning as a pruned version of National Curriculum history and geography.

In the light of such concerns, the coalition government declared its plans to return the National Curriculum to its original purpose. The report by the Expert Panel appointed to review the National Curriculum recommends the retention of subjects and a clear focus on essential knowledge (DfE, 2011). It suggests that while subjects should remain statutory, schools should have a greater say in determining the specific content along the lines of the Cambridge Primary Review's local curriculum model.

Westminster's current subject-centred policy is not mirrored elsewhere in the UK (see table 3.6). In Scotland, one of the aspirations of Curriculum for Excellence is the promotion of interdisciplinary learning 'taking learning out of 'silos' to establish better connectivity in learning' (Smuga, 2008:11). The social studies experiences and outcomes have been structured under the three main headings:

- people, past events and societies;
- people, place and environment; and
- people in society, economy and business.

(Scottish Executive, 2006)

Table 3.6 Humanities across the primary curricula of the United Kingdom

England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
Understanding of the world (0–5)	Knowledge and understanding of the world (3–7)	Social studies (3–18)	The World Around Us (4–16)
History, Geography (5–11)	History, Geography (7–11)		
RE	RE (3–11)	Religious and moral education	RE (4–16)

Sources: Tickell Review (2011), DfEE (2000), DCELLS (2008), Scottish Executive (2006), CCEA (2007). See also respective government websites.

Teachers are expected to use this framework to highlight connections across and between subject boundaries covering historical, geographical, social, political, economic and business contexts. In Wales, 'there are no constraints relating to time allocations or the organization of subjects' (DCELLS, 2008: 7). Schools are free to organise the curriculum as they see appropriate. The emphasis in Welsh schools is on a skills-based National Curriculum at Key Stage 2 that builds upon the play-based and integrated Foundation Phase (3 to 7).

To teach history, geography and religious education well, teachers need to understand the nature of these subjects *before* planning any cross-curricular links. Ofsted (2008) reports the following example where geography was used as a context but which resulted in little geographical learning:

As part of a themed week, pupils had attended an inter-school Olympics where they competed as and represented an allocated country, Pakistan. During the rest of the week they were involved in activities and lessons linked to Pakistan. The pupils thoroughly enjoyed the opportunities offered: they designed Asian-style clothes, made carpets using traditional designs and learnt about Muslim weddings, mosaics and mendhi patterns. However, pupils rarely explicitly studied the geography of Pakistan. Only in the Year 3 class was the opportunity taken to integrate the work into their geography topic of 'weather around the world'. Overall, despite studying a country in depth over the week, most pupils learnt very little about its geography.

(Ofsted, 2008: 17–18)

Planning

Cross-curricular planning can take various forms, including:

- pairing subjects or aspects such as history and geography or local study;
- connecting subjects through generic skills such as communication, thinking or numeracy;

- using a common theme as a basis for integration, such as 'food';
- building on shared concepts, such as interdependence, place, movement and energy, and change over time, as per the Northern Ireland model;
- an investigative approach based on a key question, such as 'What is it like to live in our community?' and
- planned teaching around a shared resource, for example following a visit, story or visiting speaker.

Good cross-curricular teaching requires secure knowledge and understanding of each subject, just as a good cook needs knowledge of the nutritional and aesthetic value of the different foodstuffs when preparing a meal. The philosophy behind cross-curricular work is to draw upon pupils' interests and avoid overly prescriptive plans. Outstanding schools are confident enough to 'customise' the statutory curriculum (Ofsted, 2002; Ofsted, 2009). Thompson suggests that topics should be thought of as a thread through which subjects are held together, like beads on a necklace (www.keystagehistory.co.uk). Some of the beads (i.e. subject contributions) will be bigger than others. But what matters is how they are threaded to ensure that there is a logical sequence for pupils. Hence a topic such as 'Going to the Seaside' could focus mainly on geography, then move to history and other areas such as drama.

One of the dangers of the cross-curricular approach is planning by word association. Laurie (2011) cites the example of how a theme such as 'water' could lead to choosing stories such as Charles Kingsley's *Water Babies* and *Noah's Ark*, geography work on the water cycle and a study of Victorian laundry work – the mere fact that they have links to water misses the true meaning of cross-curricular learning. In order to ensure breadth and balance, long-term plans should map out clearly how pupils will have opportunities to access their curriculum entitlement over the school year. In addition to the general planning considerations highlighted in Chapter 2, there are particular pointers for cross-curricular planning.

Principles for planning cross-curricular work include the following:

- Audit pupils' existing experience and knowledge against the curriculum requirements;
- Frame the study with key questions;
- Draw upon pupils' ideas, questions and interests;
- Choose a topic or theme that covers two or three main subject contributions but with one lead subject to provide focus;
- Map out the intended learning outcomes in terms of the essential knowledge, skills and concepts to be addressed;
- Avoid being overly ambitious – never force links between subjects; and
- Always include opportunities to develop communication, thinking, numeracy and ICT skills.

There are a number of questions to consider when choosing a theme, for instance:

- What are the anticipated learning outcomes?
- How well does this topic lend itself to a cross-curricular approach?
- Is this theme likely to stimulate and sustain pupils' interests?

- How relevant and significant is this theme to children's lives?
- How does the proposed content align with the curriculum requirements and
- How is progression in knowledge and skills assured?

Certain themes have strong potential for the humanities such as *Myself, Homes, Family, Places and Time*. But some themes naturally lend themselves to one humanities subject and not another. Transport, for instance, has clear geographical and historical potential in exploring its impact on the environment (e.g. the building of roads, trade routes, exports and imports) and developments through the ages (e.g. the impact of the railways in the 1840s, the bicycle craze of the 1890s or the motor car in the twentieth century). But the religious dimension should not be forced or contrived, for instance by telling the story of Jesus riding on a donkey.

In some cases teachers demonstrate considerable creativity in making subject links. For example, in a class topic on 'bridges' one teacher explored the idea of bridges and barriers in human relationships while in another class topic on 'time', pupils were asked to identify on personal timelines events that occurred only once (e.g. starting school) and events that were repeated (e.g. birthdays). This enabled the teacher to explore notions of linear and cyclical time and how it relates to Buddhism (Bastide, 1992: 60). Effective cross-curricular learning often arises from combining less obvious areas, such as science and history. For example, history can illuminate the ethical challenges faced by great scientists in their respective ages.

The humanities and skills across the curriculum

The skills of literacy, numeracy, information and communications technology and thinking have a high profile throughout the United Kingdom. These are among the essential skills for 'learning, work and life', as expressed in Scotland's *Curriculum for Excellence*. When the humanities are well taught, they make a significant contribution to developing these skills. They offer stimulating contexts for story-making, calculating, measuring, drawing, debating, exchanging information, listening, presenting ideas and interpreting visual cues.

Literacies

The humanities provide motivating opportunities for pupils to develop a wider range of 'literacies' beyond reading and writing:

Physical literacy – for example: reading aspects of the physical environment during fieldwork; developing self-confidence and physical competence through activities such as orienteering, Forest schools, trails and local history walks.

Visual literacy (or graphicacy) – for instance through visits to galleries, parks and museums, pupils can develop skills in interpreting paintings, religious artefacts, maps and films.

Religious literacy – for example, by challenging prejudice and gaining the skills and knowledge 'to engage in an informed and confident way with faith communities'.

(DCLG, 2008: 33)

Emotional literacy – developing empathy and managing personal feelings through listening to others; working in groups; sharing ideas; reflecting, and persevering at tasks.

E-literacy – searching, selecting, planning, evaluating and publishing activities.

Reading and writing skills can be developed as pupils interact with sources (see Table 3.7). These include:

- people (curators, librarians, local historians, politicians, ministers, wardens);
- places (archives, galleries, museums, Citizen's Advice Bureau, town halls), and media (magazines, CD-ROMs, websites, encyclopedias, databases).

Table 3.7 Examples of promoting reading and writing through the humanities

Skill	Possible activities
Writing	• Identifying key points using highlighter pens or post-it notes. • Deleting irrelevant parts of texts. • Compiling lists. • Producing tables, diagrams, flow charts and mind maps. • Writing summaries (e.g. 'Five things everyone should know about Islam'). • Writing historical, geographical or religious stories, reports, diaries, reflective journals, posters, postcards from around the UK/world, newspapers, museum signs, artefact labels, instructions, travel guides and brochures. • Producing displays (e.g. for a market stall). • Writing thank you letters/emails following visits.
Reading for information	• Chronological texts – organised around a sequence of time (e.g. biographies, autobiographies, newspaper reports, eyewitness accounts). • Non-chronological texts – read from different starting points (e.g. websites, leaflets, maps, atlases, posters).
Undertaking research	• Exploring previous knowledge (e.g. through mind maps). • Asking questions about photographs, artefacts, stories. • Devising questionnaires for interviewing elderly ones. • Finding, sorting and deducing information from a variety of sources (e.g. Internet, email, documents). • Comparing and evaluating sources (e.g. detecting bias, sorting facts and opinions by using different coloured pens). • Comparing ways of researching (e.g. Internet and library reference books). • Reaching informed conclusions. • Presenting findings in a variety of ways, such as: • visual – posters, web pages, leaflets, board games; • aural – radio/TV programmes, drama, role play; • written – diary extracts, fact files, information books for younger children.

Stories

Stories are essential to humanities teaching. They stimulate thought and satisfy the full range of human emotions. Stories of different kinds (such as myths and legends, parables, biographies, fiction and eyewitness accounts) can form an excellent springboard for cross-curricular work in history, geography and RE (Boyes, 1997; Nicholson, 1996; Shaw, 1999). Teachers can draw upon local folklore, as well as stories from around the world and from different cultures, to extend pupils' awareness of diverse lifestyles.

Popular follow-up activities to story-telling include:

- writing captions for different pictures in a story;
- arranging pictures in the correct sequence;
- writing a story from the viewpoint of a character;
- discussing the feelings and motives of characters;
- writing letters or cards from one character to another;
- story circles – one pupil begins a tale and stops after a few sentences. The next pupil picks up the story thread and continues it, then stops . . . and so on; and
- telling different versions of the same story; reconstructing a story using sentences from different parts.

Before telling a story, Turner-Bisset (2005) suggests asking children to fold a piece of A4 paper into eight by folding it in half lengthways and then crossways. They then unfold it and, as the story is told, they draw a picture of a scene from the story in each of the eight squares. This aids any subsequent written work.

In history, there are stories for every period to engage young minds in a range of social, moral and spiritual issues. The Second World War is particularly well covered through the likes of Michael Foreman's *War Boy* (Pavilion, 2006), Michael Morpurgo's *Friend or Foe* (Egmont, 2007) and Nina Bawden's classic *Carrie's War* (Puffin, 1973). In RE, children's own life stories are an important starting point in highlighting shared experiences, 'special' events and concepts of belonging and community. Stories can be drawn from the six major faiths to help pupils gain greater understanding and insight into how different people make sense of their worlds. For instance, stories of a great flood can be found in many cultures. Pupils can compare and contrast the popular story of Noah with other stories such as the Hindu story of Manu and the Babylonian *Epic of Gilgamesh*. In geography, children are quick to talk about places they know, their homes, streets, schools, where they have been on holiday, all of which are stories about places. Classic stories such as *The Jolly Postman* (Ahlberg and Ahlberg, 1986) are an ideal introduction to geographical terms, locations and maps. Stories also lead to discussions about faraway places experiencing conditions very different from most children's lives, such as earthquakes, volcanoes and tropical storms. Care should be taken with stories that convey simplistic, unbalanced and distorted images from parts of the world; for example, depictions of Africa as no more than a land of mud-huts, starving children and extreme poverty.

Reading, writing, speaking and listening are the main language skills, but the humanities offer contexts for other forms of communication through interpreting films and images, symbols, numbers and body language. In particular, drama is an

excellent means of exploring historical, geographical and religious issues. For instance, the story of *Oliver Twist* lends itself to the following ideas:

Mime – children identify with a character and portray the body language in a scene such as when Oliver first meets Fagin;

Freeze frame – groups are assigned a particular scene to enact and then freeze for others to comment upon such as Oliver asking for more;

Speaking thoughts – individuals ‘voice over’ the thoughts of characters performing before them;

Conscience alley: two large groups are formed and asked to adopt one ‘side’ of a particular argument or viewpoint, for instance should the Artful Dodger steal an apple? A character from the story then walks between the two groups, stopping to seek advice from individuals acting as a conscience;

Hot-seating – an individual character is cross-examined by others;

Alternative view – ask individual pupils to narrate a scene from different perspectives, for example Fagin, Nancy, Bill Sykes; and

Judge and jury – set up a ‘court room’ to cross-examine witnesses and allocate roles such as prosecutor, defence lawyer, eyewitness, reporter, jury, judge, audience.

Numeracy skills

Numeracy is confidence and competence in handling numbers and measures in a range of contexts beyond mathematics lessons (see Table 3.8). For example, there

Table 3.8 Numeracy and Primary humanities

Subject	Numeracy skills
History	- timelines, family trees and date charts; - analyse statistics such as population figures; - measuring, estimating and calculating during visits to historical sites; and - interpreting historical sources such as railway timetables, household inventories and accounts.
Geography	- exploring direction, distances and scale; - measuring, gathering, recording and analysing data in fieldwork; - presenting findings through bar charts, graphs, tables, pie diagrams; and - determining locations when using plans, maps and globes.
Religious Education	- exploring traditional units of measurement in holy books (e.g. cubits); - researching the religious significance of numbers (e.g. 40 nights, 7 days, trinity); - exploring shapes, patterns, symmetry and construction techniques within places of worship; and - problem-solving in real-life contexts (e.g. arranging a religious service).

are many activities involving classifying and sequencing natural objects in the school grounds that draw upon mathematical thinking. River studies, shopping surveys and the use of historical sources, such as census returns, require the focus and precision provided by the application of numeracy skills. Pupils' understanding of how historical and religious buildings function can be enhanced through estimating and measuring the size of rooms, and reflecting upon their relative size, shape and dimensions. Real-life contexts should be used to promote pupils' application of number skills. In geography, pupils can be provided with a supply of travel brochures to plan a family holiday with an allocated budget. A lesson on poverty in a developing country might include allocating pupils a sum of money (a monthly wage) to spend, along with a list of things to pay for, such as water, food, transport and clothes. Through such activities, pupils begin to recognise the challenges faced by many families to eke out a living.

ICT

One aspect of ICT that has grown at an astonishing rate is e-learning, defined as 'online access to learning resources, anywhere and anytime' (Holmes and Gardner, 2006: 14). Pupils have immediate access to online libraries, galleries, archives, museums, satellite images and maps. The use of multimedia, including the use of text, images, tables, sounds and animations, can also enhance knowledge and understanding in the humanities. Pupils' chronological awareness, for instance, can be promoted through online timelines (Leask and Meadows, 2000). Webquests provide opportunities for pupils to find, synthesise and analyse information. For instance, a webquest on Judaism might include:

Introduction – invites pupils to become a chief editor of a newspaper.

Task – to prepare a supplement to inform readers about the culture, religion and current affairs in Israel.

Process – pupils work as small groups of journalists to produce a report on an aspect of Israel.

Resources – such as websites, for example www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/judaism.

Evaluation – before submitting report, each group submits 'Important things I have learned'.

Conclusion – organise an event to launch the newspaper.

Source: www.webquestuk.org.uk.

Increasingly, pupils and teachers can access geographical information systems. For instance, through *Infomapper* pupils learn about the relief and geography of localities by studying aerial photographs (case studies can be viewed at www.segfl.org.uk). Software applications enable pupils to store, retrieve and process information quickly. Paintings, artefacts and photographs can be explored on the interactive whiteboard and 'de-constructed' through class discussions using a graphic pen. Here, websites such as the National Portrait Gallery, the British Film Institute and the National Archives' Learning Curve provide a rich seam of source material. Pupils can also embark on a number of 'virtual tours' of historic and religious buildings; for example,

they can explore places of national religious significance such as Westminster Abbey, Canterbury Cathedral and St David's Cathedral (www.request.org.uk).

It is also important for pupils to develop critical e-reading habits and 'digital fluency' in locating and evaluating accurate information online (Bartlett and Miller, 2011). Child-friendly search engines, which develop questioning skills, include:

www.askkids.com.

<http://kids.yahoo.com>.

www.topmarks.co.uk.

<http://dibdabdoo.com>.

<http://primaryschoolict.com>.

Pupils need to evaluate whether ICT improves the speed and quality of their work, engages their interest and how their understanding has deepened. ICT certainly presents challenges: the cut-and-paste, uncritical mentality of a generation that has moved away from pen and paper towards editing tools and the 'new' language of text messaging. Moreover, young people are increasingly active in the world of social media – one survey suggests that one in four children aged between eight and eleven has set up their own social media profile (Guldberg, 2009: 122). With over 400 million users, Facebook would represent the third most populated country in the world. Its 'inhabitants' use technologies in three main ways:

Communication – for example social networking (Facebook, LinkedIn, My Space), blogging (Twitter);

Collaboration – for example wikis, conferencing (e.g. Skype) and social documents (e.g. Google Docs); and

Multimedia – for example photographs (e.g. Flickr), video (e.g. YouTube), and virtual worlds (e.g. World of Warcraft).

Richardson (2006) shows how web-based digital photography such as Flickr can be used creatively by young children to capture field visits, visiting speakers and special projects.

There are many case studies of good practice in the use of ICT within primary humanities. For instance, Wegerif (2010) refers to the development of inter-faith dialogues by email designed to counter religious and racial tensions. Primary schools in Leicester were twinned with schools in Sussex and each child was paired with an email friend of a contrasting religious and/or cultural background from the partner school. The exchange included residential visits and weekly emails.

REFLECTION

- The Rose Review's recommendation for primary schools to teach social media, including the use of Twitter, blogs, webcams and podcasts, has been controversial (Paton, 2009). How might social media enhance pupils' understanding in the humanities?

Thinking skills

Over recent years the growth in thinking skills literature is a response to concern that schools are not doing enough to promote creativity and independent thought (Leat, 2001; Dean, 2002; Wallace, 2003; Lewis, 2009). The focus is on 'knowing *how* to learn', as well as knowing what to learn as teachers seek to 'uncover' learning rather than cover content (Jackson, 2002). The importance of developing a whole-school 'thinking culture' and a clear framework for thinking skills has been established (McGuinness, 1999; Higgins and Baumfield, 2001). Progression in thinking skills is characterised when pupils move from tangible to abstract thoughts, from personal views to more general comments (seeing the big picture) and by working from familiar to new contexts (see Figure 3.2).

Children's geographical thinking is based on how they locate themselves, and then see others, in space. It is also about their sense of belonging and their view of their immediate family and locality. They move from seeing the world in egocentric terms, to locating significant landmarks in their immediate environment and beginning to handle abstract concepts. By the age of four, many children can negotiate their way around a basic map, identifying simple symbols. Historical thinking begins when babies distinguish between past and present – when they recognise a familiar face they are drawing upon previous memories. Two-year-olds are able to reproduce a sequence of three events, indicating that they are sequencing first, next and last. By five, children are able to order a series of photographs of themselves. They also have an understanding of 'oldness' as being different from the present. Seven-year-olds speculate over the length of an event as they begin to come to terms with duration, which is more challenging than the order of when things occurred. Understanding 'historical time' is tied up with some understanding of personal, clock and calendar time (Robson, 2006).

Reasoning is the basis of all intelligent conversation. Rational thinkers recognise the importance of developing and presenting *balanced* arguments or lines of thought (the word reason derives from the Latin *ratio*, meaning balance). They know that in order to convince someone they need to have a good grasp of up-to-date, relevant evidence. This requires a willingness to probe beyond the surface, to 'read between the lines' and to avoid jumping too readily to conclusions. One of the major aims in teaching the humanities is to develop this sense of logical, balanced and critical thinking. For instance, Catling (2002) shows how in geography lessons pupils can develop reasoning skills through:

- drawing sketch maps to show key features of the locality or the distribution of specific features such as houses;
- drawing diagrams to show the sequence and relationship in river and coastal processes;
- drawing a series of pictures to show changes in an area over time; and
- using a set of photographs of different scenes and sorting them by particular features.

Critical thinking involves asking questions about historical events, religious practices and different lands. Pupils might generate questions relating to a news headline,



Thinking, Problem Solving and Decision Making

Show deeper geographical understanding of issues within The World Around Us by thinking critically and flexibly, solving problems and making informed decisions.	FROM By the end of Year 4 pupils can:	TO By the end of Year 7 pupils can:
Memory and Understanding	Sort and classify photos of and information about features/activities in their locality, for example, buildings, modes of transport or jobs. Identify similarities and differences between features of their own locality and those of other places, for example, clothes, homes and weather. Recognise patterns made by physical/human features in the environment, for example, seasonal change in school grounds or features of the town/countryside. Sequence pictures/information to demonstrate understanding of some geographical processes, for example, the journey of a letter or change in the local area. Use basic terms to describe geographical features, patterns, processes and changes, for example, river, stream, hill, slope.	Sort and classify photos of information about a range of places, for example, landscape features, buildings, etc. Identify similarities and differences between a range of features and places, offering explanations, for example, weather, house type, building materials. Begin to relate cause and effect in relation to spatial patterns of physical and human features, for example, high rainfall in upland areas of NI or settlement along the banks of the Nile. Order and sequence information to explain geographical processes, for example, the making of a product, changes in the course of a river. Use more precise geographical vocabulary to describe geographical features, patterns, processes and changes, for example, valley, source, mouth or erosion.
Developing a line of reasoning	Make simple predictions, for example, what would it be like to live in a hotter/colder country? Using maps: • Draw familiar objects/features in the classroom from a bird's-eye view. • Follow/give directions for a route on a large scale map, using left/right directions, for example, a journey through the school grounds. • Draw simple story/picture maps to locate significant features in relation to a story, for example, Little Red Riding Hood's journey through the forest, or a personal journey, for example, going to school. • Interpret information from a range of maps, for example, use of colour, relative size of places on globe/world map etc.	Investigate a geographical issue from different viewpoints, for example, the siting of a new bypass/shopping centre. Identify the pros and cons of each, make and justify a decision. Using maps: • Use a plan of the school grounds for orienteering and fieldwork activities; • Use appropriate maps for different purposes, for example, local maps, country maps; • Follow/give directions for routes on maps using 8 compass directions, for example, orienteering in a local forest; • Draw and use maps at a variety of scales, using 4-figure grid references to identify and locate features; • Interpret information from a range of maps, including OS maps, using, for example, standard symbols, use of colour etc.
Making Decisions and Solving Problems	Explore possible solutions to a local problem, for example, litter around the school. Examine evidence and opinions from a range of sources, for example, results of shopping survey, questionnaires.	Examine evidence and opinions from a range of sources, distinguish between fact and opinion, for example, researching information about life in another country. Make predictions about geographical change, for example, how might the local area look in 20 years time?

Figure 3.2 Progression in thinking skills within the geographical component of the World Around Us, Northern Ireland Curriculum. Source: www.nicurriculum.org.uk/key_stages_1_and_2/areas_of_learning/the_world_around_us.

poem, story, picture or museum artefact. They should learn to ask different kinds of questions (who? what? where? why? how? when?) and choose the most appropriate questions for their investigations. Critical thinking requires sifting facts from opinions, testing the accuracy of what is said, taking apart ideas (analysis), putting points together (synthesis) and judging whether something is plausible, preferable or worthy (evaluation). Critical thinkers weigh up the value of evidence, for instance the reliability of what people say, and reflect upon what has been learned in one context to develop more abstract understanding.

Creative thinking in the humanities involves considering alternative ways of seeing the world. Counterfactual approaches are popular in which the question 'What if . . . ?' is frequently asked. In history, for example, one leading historian asks: 'What if there had been no American War of Independence? What if Hitler had invaded Britain? What if Kennedy had lived?' (Ferguson, 2000). Not all historians are keen to embrace this 'virtual' approach, dismissing it in no uncertain terms as 'unhistorical shit' and little more than 'a parlour game' (see discussion by Black, 2008: 5, a supporter of counterfactualism). In geography, the 'What if' (we do nothing) scenario has been applied to such issues as global warming, waste disposal and rainforest destruction (Morris, 2007; Dorion, 2007; Mcleish, 2007). The theme has been extended to religious education with titles such as *What if Nobody Forgave?* (McDonald, 2003), offering considerable scope for discussion.

SUMMARY

- The most important factor in successful primary humanities is the quality of teaching rather than whether the curriculum is organised around subjects or themes.
- Supporters of the cross-curricular approach say that it is the most appropriate way to organise the curriculum for young children. Critics are concerned about the dilution of subject knowledge. These views draw upon different learning theories and the relative value attributed to knowledge acquisition.
- The place of the humanities in the primary curriculum has been shaped by competing ideologies.
- Good cross-curricular planning requires secure knowledge and understanding of the distinctive contribution of history, geography and religious education.
- By their very nature, the humanities are subjects that call for creative and critical thinking. They also offer considerable scope for teachers to promote literacy, numeracy and ICT skills.

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Useful Websites

- RE Online is a portal site, providing information for all those working and interested in Religious Education in England: www.reonline.org.uk.
- Nuffield Primary History website provides advice on cross-curricular work: <http://www.history.org.uk/resources/primary.html>.
- Staffordshire local authority website includes many RE materials and guidance: <http://education.staffordshire.gov.uk/Curriculum/Subjectareas/ReligiousEducation/>.
- Education Scotland has a Learning across the curriculum section which includes literacy and numeracy: <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/learningteachingandassessment/curriculumareas/index.asp>.