

COLLINS KS3 KNOWING HISTORY

CONTACT: [COLLINS.CO.UK/KNOWINGHISTORY](http://collins.co.uk/KNOWINGHISTORY) REVIEWED BY: JOHN DABELL

They say that history doesn't repeat itself, but historians do... and school history books as well. Yes history resources have to be accessible, exciting and fresh. Yes they have to engage and make the past relevant and interesting, but they also need to be intellectually rigorous and knowledge-based, meaty and not fatty. History teaching cannot be frivolous and be reduced to re-enactments, dressing up, doing CSI style investigations and hot-seating.

Knowledge-driven history teaching that doesn't include making a castle out of cornflakes boxes can still be inspiring. Passionate teachers who tell stories, explain ideas and bring the past alive can do this without using a box of magic tricks. What they can use are resources that focus on a detailed historical narrative and provide a foundation of contextual understanding.

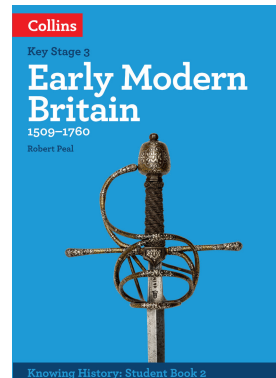
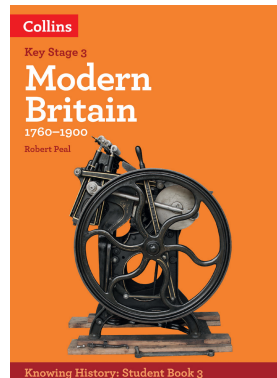
Quality content

If you want to encourage a hunger for knowledge and develop a rich and rewarding understanding of the past then you would be hard pressed to find something as quality-driven and content-rich as Knowing History, a knowledge-based history scheme for KS3, authored by a talented teacher in the know, Robert Peal. These aren't fast food bite-sized materials full of laughs but carefully written and engaging resources full of context and explanation that engender critical thinking about the past.

There are three student books available covering Medieval Britain 410-1509, Early Modern Britain 1509-1760 and Modern Britain 1760-1900, written in a clever and sophisticated style that commands authority but doesn't feel dry or threatening. It is highly engaging, clear and purposeful and focuses on securing content knowledge, which it does masterfully. The Teacher Guide helps to break down the core narrative into important vocabulary, dates and people to help support students in focusing on the knowledge they need.

Alongside the narratives you will find snippets of interest that aim to keep students engaged. There are also sections devoted to checking student understanding to ensure that the key elements of the narrative have been grasped. At the end of each unit the key content is collected into a 'knowledge organiser' which allows students to test themselves on key dates, vocabulary and significant people and allows teachers to plan quick recall tests. The student books are lucid, astute and extremely user-friendly. The text is supported by engaging photographs and you will find excellent timelines that map out key dates and events.

The Teacher Guide is a lifesaver when



you feel out of your depth; it's a chaperone to accompany you through lessons and it's a pantry where you will find plenty of teaching provisions. So in the Guide you will find teaching ideas and suggested sources, assessment, answers, essay titles and extended writing examples. Remarkably, this is available for free online.

Structural support

The lessons in the Teacher Guide follow a clear learning structure with a review of previous learning, a 'pre-teach' of challenging new material and a focus on the chapter to be read. The lessons also encourage reproducing new material into a new format such as annotating a map or an image, producing an illustrated storyboard, or answering comprehension questions. This approach enables pupils to really engage with the material to help it 'stick'. These resources aren't about repeat, repeat, repeat and practise, practise, practise, but gaining an understanding through condensing into a new format. The lesson structure then moves onto applying new knowledge through complex tasks such as source analysis, further reading and extended writing and these are pursued as the outcomes of having learnt content and are not intended, as in many textbooks, as a means for doing so. Quiz

VERDICT:

QUALITY NARRATIVE

Knowing History has been designed to build historical thinking from the bottom-up and it does this with supreme confidence, taking the number one spot on my winners' podium of history resources with ease. It does this because it works on the belief that it is difficult to take a first step in thinking about history without knowledge of the content and gives students the mental architecture to acquire new knowledge and to think historically. They will also help to avoid the sort of response found in one classroom where a pupil was once asked "What ended in 1461?" and the reply came '1460'.

questions help to review the material learnt and act as diagnostic checks and there are also end of unit essays and ideas for activities and deeper questions, making this a comprehensive, reliable and inspiring resource.

JOURNEYS OF DISCOVERY



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