

TEACHING FOR



IN HISTORY FOR UPPER KS2

UNIT OF WORK EXEMPLAR

Kerry Somers

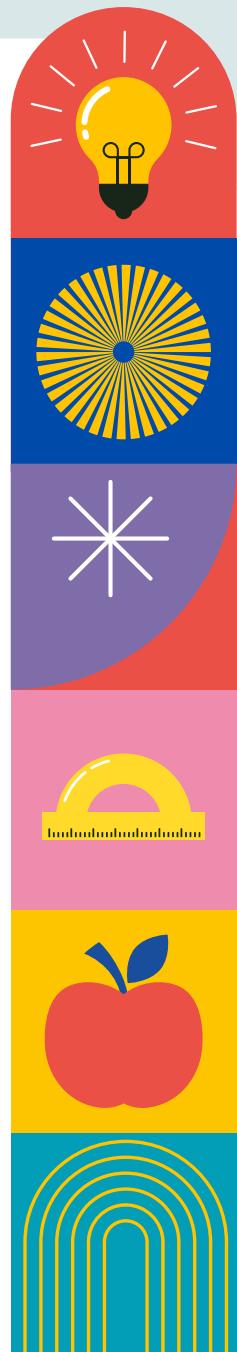
Halterworth Primary School



How to read this document

This document contains three main components

- A description of the Creativity Collaborative programme context and our framework of teaching for creativity
- The key unit information provides an overview next
- Finally, the full unit description gives detailed information



Context: UWinAT Creativity Collaborative

Creativity Collaboratives is an action research programme, funded by Arts Council England and the Freelands Foundation, that aims to build networks of schools to test a range of innovative practices in teaching for creativity, with the explicit intention that learning is shared to facilitate system-wide change. The University of Winchester, the University of Winchester Academy Trust, and a network of Hampshire Infant, Junior and Primary schools became one of the eight national funded collaboratives, coming together with the key ambition of fostering pupils' creativity in subjects drawn from across the curriculum. Overall, our collaborative aims to enrich children's life chances by developing them into confident and creative problem-solvers, engaging them through authentic, meaningful problems, embedded in their schools and lives.

The focus on creativity as a key skill in education is increasing (James et al.,

2019), reflecting its value within wider society. Indeed, according to the 2023 'Future of Jobs Report' (World Economic Forum, 2023) creative thinking is the skill showing the greatest increase in importance for employers (p. 38) and after analytical thinking, is the second most frequently cited skill that is 'core' for the workplace (p. 39). Our collaborative has focused on:

- Understanding and addressing the barriers and enablers of creative thinking
- Developing leadership for creativity in schools
- Developing new approaches to teaching for creativity across the curriculum
- Building children's and teachers' knowledge and understanding of creativity
- Developing children's and teachers' sense of themselves as creative and their ability to be creative in subjects across the school curriculum..



The Creativity Navigator: A Framework of Teaching for Creativity

To support our planning and implementation of teaching for creativity, we use a planning tool called the Creativity Navigator. This was co-developed in our Creativity Collaborative and draws on a wide range of models, theories and frameworks of creativity. The Navigator emphasises that creativity can be a planned for process, that follows a typical sequence of explore – ideate – evaluate, but that this sequence can be varied and cycled around many times whilst working through a creative process. The process starts with the question 'where next?' emphasising the importance of metacognitive planning and monitoring throughout a creative process.

In a classroom context, a creative process can be operationalised through a set of learning behaviours. These behaviours can be grouped under creative 'habits' each of which can be used to support the creative

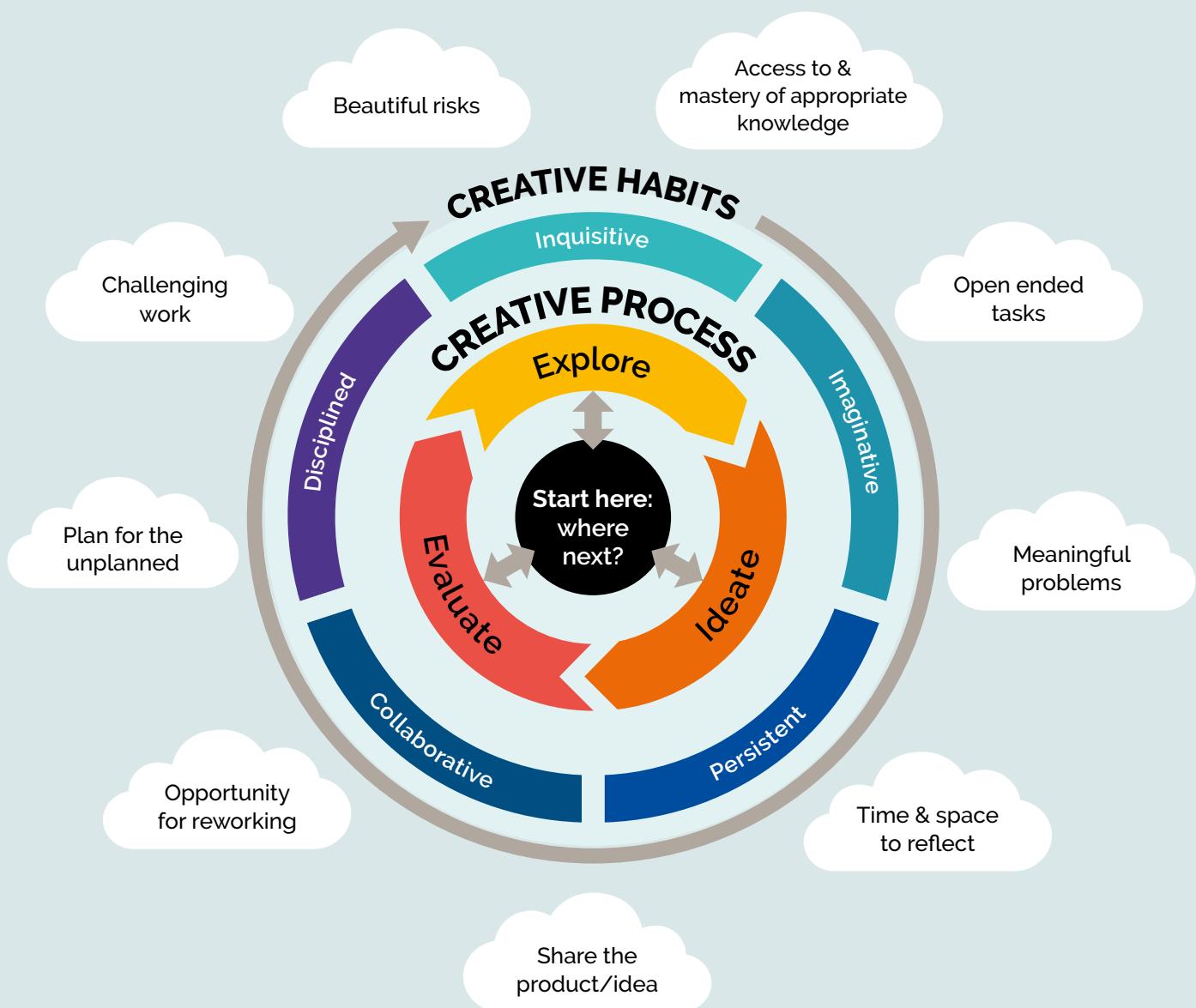
process. For instance, a think-pair-share learning behaviour could support children to collaborate on gathering relevant information as they explore at the beginning of a creative learning task. The same collaborative habit could later be used to support the evaluate stage of the creative process through getting constructive feedback from peers on each other's creative work and how it might be improved further.

The final aspect of our Creativity Navigator focuses on the types of climate and task design that can support creativity to flourish in the classroom. For instance, tasks need to be personally meaningful, challenging, and open-ended, with children having some autonomy over aspect(s) of their learning. The classroom climate needs to provide psychological safety for children to take risks, make mistakes, learn from them and rework.

TO CITE THE CREATIVITY NAVIGATOR PLEASE USE:

Sowden, P.T., Warren, F., Seymour, M. Martin, C., Kauer, A. Spencer, E., Mansfield, S., Waite, J. (2025). A Creativity Navigator to Guide Teaching for Creativity: Implementation and Teacher Impacts in a Creativity Collaborative of Schools. *Journal of Creative Behavior*, 59(2), e70005. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jocb.70005>

CREATIVITY NAVIGATOR



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KEY UNIT INFORMATION

The Viking and Anglo-Saxon Struggle for England



INTENDED FOR:
Upper KS2



SUBJECT FOCUS:
History



UNIT DURATION & FORMAT:
six-week unit



LEARNING OBJECTIVES/OUTCOMES:

1. Learning objectives/outcomes:

Substantive knowledge:

- a. To understand the history of the Viking and Anglo-Saxon struggle for the Kingdom of England
- b. To develop the substantive concepts of Invasion and Settlement

Disciplinary knowledge:

- a. To understand that different accounts of the past emerge for various reasons
- b. To understand that some interpretations of History are more useful than others in supporting their enquiry
- c. To give explanations and examples of why change happened
- d. To consider pace of change, size of change and understand that changes do not impact everyone in the same way or at the same time

2. Creative outcome:

- a. To apply creative thinking processes to enable them to answer the enquiry question: 'Did the Vikings truly deserve their bloodthirsty reputation'?
- b. To demonstrate their understanding through production of a unique Lego set depicting the Viking era.

Throughout this unit, children strive to gain the knowledge that will enable them to answer the enquiry question, '**Did the Vikings truly deserve their bloodthirsty reputation?**' Working as historians, the children considered differing perspectives, analysed and interpreted a range of sources, and engaged in rich discussion in order to equip them to respond knowledgeably and with confidence. Strategies such as storytelling, role play and human timelines encouraged the children to develop their thinking, draw their own conclusions and justify their responses. This unit has been developed to promote inclusivity. Being a proficient writer does not equate to being a successful historian; therefore, the planned tasks, along with the creative outcome, allowed all children to be engaged in rich learning. Through this unit, all children shared their knowledge in an accessible yet challenging response.



STEPS FOR SUCCESS:

1. Ensure that you are clear as to what substantive and disciplinary knowledge you aim to develop. The Creative process should help deepen and embed knowledge, not replace rich learning.
2. Give the children a real purpose and audience for their learning. The children know when learning outcomes are authentic and it does make a real difference to the impact the learning has.
3. Be aware of where the learning develops prior knowledge and addresses any acquired misconceptions.

FULL UNIT DESCRIPTION

The Viking and Anglo-Saxon Struggle for England

Preparing for the unit

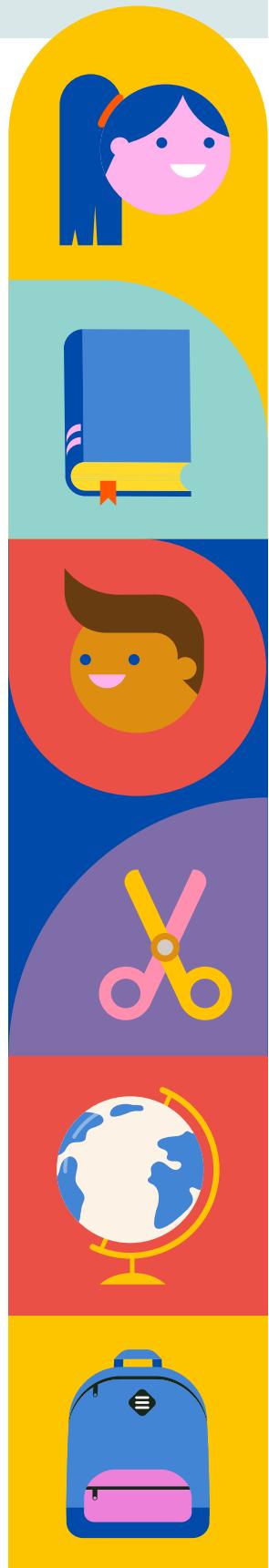
Before beginning the planning of this unit, I thought about where barriers might occur – not just within task design or ensuring that prior learning was secure, although these were, of course, vitally important. To enable the children to really commit to their learning, I felt that I needed to evoke an emotional response. I did not want the history of the Anglo-Saxon and Viking struggle for the Kingdom of England to be so 'abstract' that the children would have difficulty in accessing the history surrounding it. Instead, I wanted children to become so immersed in the unit that they were invested, wanting – no, *needing* – to understand the whole narrative and make sense of it. I wanted to ensure that the children were keen to develop their knowledge of this period of history, not just because they had to learn it but because they wanted to know more.

On the day that the unit was due to begin,

the children were each presented with a lanyard as they entered the classroom. On these lanyards, it was determined whether each child was 'a Viking' or 'an Anglo-Saxon.' The children were able to look for their fictional name on the class 'working wall'. There, on an enlarged map of Britain and flags representing the Scandinavian countries, the children could see where they 'lived.' Throughout this unit, the names moved accordingly to reflect the historical narrative being developed in class. The lanyards were an immediate 'hit' with the children who proudly wore them all day (and at home, according to parents!). A small group of children even took it upon themselves to create additional lanyards for all the staff to wear; before we knew it, the whole school had been taken over by Anglo-Saxons and Vikings! On a side note, this transpired to be such a positive outcome; teachers across the school continuously approached my class in the corridors

and on the playground to ask 'how they were doing!' thus encouraging the children to further secure the knowledge developed in class by consistently recalling their learning.

Through the unit, the substantive concepts that we were to develop were 'invasion' and 'settlement.' Tim Jenner HMI, recognises the development of concepts, such as these, as 'crucial components of pupils' comprehension of new material.' Sometimes referred to as 'golden threads,' these are two of the concepts that thread through our curriculum. Each time the children meet these concepts, they develop a broadened understanding. Before beginning this unit of work, the children 'thought showered' what they already knew about these concepts. Mostly, the children drew on their knowledge of the Romans, stating reasons why a group of people might choose to invade. Their ideas of 'settlement,' mostly linked back to their understanding of the Earliest Civilisations, where they confidently talked about where settlements might be located and linked their ideas with another substantive concept that links through our curriculum: civilisation.



Throughout this unit, the children were then able to add to our class 'thought-shower,' illustrating the development of their understanding.

As the National Curriculum states, we aim for our children to develop, 'a coherent knowledge and understanding of Britain's past and that of the wider world.' In my current school context, we have organised the history curriculum so that it is taught chronologically. To avoid the children obtaining an 'episodic' view of history, before we embarked on

this new unit, I explicitly revisited the children's learning on Anglo-Saxons. It was essential that the children understood what life was like under Anglo-Saxon rule. They needed to understand that Britain was not one 'united' kingdom, but that it was split into several kingdoms with different rulers for each.

Are the Vikings deserving of their bloodthirsty reputation?

Within this case study, I aim to illustrate some of the ways

that the 'Creativity Navigator' has been employed. The creative process has been used to deepen the children's understanding, strengthen knowledge and supported children in the development of creative habits, throughout the teaching of this unit.

For a more comprehensive description of the unit as a whole, illustrative of the progression in learning, please see the planning.

Explore Stage

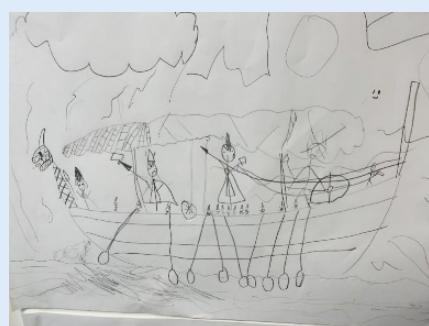
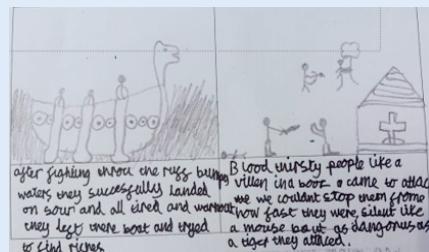
To introduce who the Vikings were and why they may have arrived on our shores, we began with a game of 'Reconstruction Relay.' Role-playing that we were all Anglo-Saxons farming the fields, I confided that I had seen a strange boat arriving in Southampton waters that morning. I told the children that I did not know who these people were or whether they were friendly: we needed to find out! In groups of 4, the children were numbered and called out one by one to go outside the classroom to see this boat – which was a hidden picture of Vikings arriving on a longboat. After a few seconds, the children were called back to the classroom (before they could be spotted by these unidentified strangers!) and started to draw what they had seen. As children in each group added to their image, there was lots of discussion where the children were raising questions, drawing inferences, and noticing details that they might not have recognised had they just been given the source. Interestingly, many children drew the stereotypical Viking helmet with two horns for the passengers, despite this not being part of the picture. This was really helpful – not just in identifying current misconceptions – but also, later,

emphasising with the children how deeply these misconceptions have been embedded through the media.

Once the children had placed the Vikings on their timeline, identifying the overlap with other periods studied and the duration, the children looked at representations of the Vikings in various media. They examined images within stories and textbooks, films and cartoons as well as where Vikings were used within company logos to evoke a particular response. Our young historians noted different adjectives and descriptions illustrative of how Vikings have been presented: strong, aggressive, violent, merciless.

The children explored the early Viking invasion on Lindisfarne, through the medium of storytelling. After being told the story of this attack, the children split into a Viking or Anglo-Saxon group, according to their lanyards. Within their groups, the children created their own story maps, retelling the story from that perspective. The Vikings told of bravely navigating unpredictable seas and seeking fortune to benefit their families; Anglo-Saxons shared their horror at witnessing these brutal, unforgiving beasts ravaging the land and stealing their wealth. When the children practiced retelling their

versions of the story to their peers, they began to recognise why different interpretations of the same event can occur. They began to appreciate that this is not a case of questioning 'reliability' – every source is reliable in illustrating a specific intention – but understanding it is the perspective that is different.

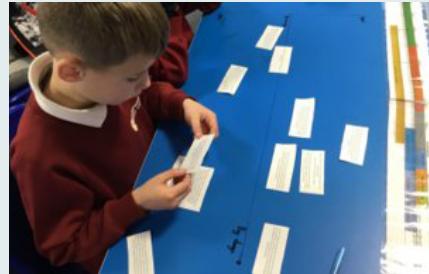


Explore Stage

The children examined many historical sources – written and pictorial, identifying the audience, purpose and usefulness of these. This enabled the children to identify the changes in perspectives shown: the Vikings were in England for a long time after the initial raids and opinions altered over time. Many Vikings settled, and are recognised as good farmers, traders, and craftsmen.

To explore the narrative of the Viking and Anglo-Saxon struggle for England, the children engaged in a 'graphing' activity. As each

chronology card was revealed, the children, as Vikings and Anglo-Saxons, role-played the events shared. We then paused as each child discussed the events in their group, before using the summarised statement on their graph to evaluate how successful the Vikings could be considered to be at this point. The discussion and visual representation of each event then supported the children with identifying some 'turning points' in the success of the Vikings. They were confidently able to talk about where they felt the Vikings were most and least successful in the struggle for the kingdom of England, justifying their decisions.



The children examined sources relating to excavations and historical finds concerning the Vikings. They considered which evidence was most compelling in presenting a more balanced view and – faced with the problem that they could only choose three of the sources – evaluated to decide which sources should be selected and why.

Ideate Stage

Now our young historians were armed with the information needed to knowledgeably answer the enquiry question: Do the Vikings deserve their bloodthirsty reputation? I wanted to enable them to share their learning in a way that was accessible for all. I wanted the outcome to be engaging yet provide a challenging context without limitations.

The children were presented with images of the current Lego sets depicting the Viking era. Initially, the children explored these to evaluate how effective they were at reflecting the Vikings. They determined what should be omitted completely from the sets, what should be improved, and thought about what was missing in enabling the sets to present a balanced view.

The children then designed a new Viking set for Lego. Children added longhouses, farmers, balancing scales showing Vikings trading for silks and spices. They took the stereotypical horned helmets from the figures and put them to work as craftsmen, making

metal brooches and carving wood. A church was included, with a vicious Viking plundering and stealing but – ultimately – the children demonstrated a more balanced view of who the Vikings were. Without erasing their 'wrongdoings,' they also acknowledged the positive impacts they had on England.

Extending their learning, children created labels for their designs with some even writing letters to Lego, advising that they change their sets!

Where there are topics that can appear very 'knowledge-heavy,' I think that the creativity process is supportive in ensuring that we are facilitating rich learning opportunities.

The National Curriculum solely states that, the children must learn about, 'the Viking and Anglo-Saxon struggle for the Kingdom of England to the time of Edward the Confessor,' alongside a list of non-statutory guidance. Attempting to teach a broad area of history, like this, in a six-week half-term, could easily lead to teachers frantically attempting to relay a huge amount of information for children to remember and recall, leading to

cognitive overload for teacher and pupils and resulting in very little information actually being retained over any period of time.

Following the Creativity Navigator helps break down the process of effective learning and encourages the teacher to think about how to plan lessons which encourage opportunities for wondering and questioning, to challenge assumptions and to reflect critically – all essential skills for any aspiring historian to acquire. As the EEF report for 'Metacognition and Self-Regulated Learning' states, 'Challenge is crucial to allow pupils to develop and progress their knowledge of tasks, strategies and of themselves as learners.' Throughout this unit, the children are challenged to apply their learning to an array of contexts, allowing them to make connections, play with possibilities and – ultimately – support their development as learners.



Impact on learning

The positive and lasting impact of this creative unit has been clearly illustrated in a number of ways:

- Parents have commented on the children's enjoyment of the unit and have reported that the children have shared their learning at home. This has been evidenced by the 'Learning postcards' sent home. These were not only an opportunity to involve parents in their children's learning but also provided additional opportunity for the children to consolidate their understanding through recall
- Children have demonstrated greater enthusiasm for history and the profile of the subject has been raised through children talking positively about their learning
- All children were able to share their understanding of the Vikings through creative outcomes throughout the unit. Writing was not a barrier, and every child was able to articulate their understanding with confidence

Supporting evidence of impact

"The children loved creating their own Lego designs at the end of this unit. They were really keen to show their knowledge in this way. It took a lot less time than a written outcome would and needed a lot less scaffolding from me!" Year 5 Teacher

"Learning about the Vikings has been my favourite history topic to do. I learned lots of facts about the Vikings and have a more balanced view about what they were like." Year 5 child

"I liked being independent. I could do my own design for Lego that showed what the Vikings were like. Did you know they traded with places far away?" Year 5 child

"It is fun being creative and using my imagination to create a new Lego set." Year 5 child

"[Year 5 child] has talked a lot about this topic at home. He was very excited to tell me that the Vikings didn't have horns on their helmets! Thank you for bringing history alive!" Year 5 parent



FINAL REFLECTIONS:

I found this unit exciting to plan! Armed with a clear understanding of what it was that I wanted the children to learn, I was able to design my planning effectively using the 'Creativity Navigator.' The Navigator provided me with a scaffold which was effective in prompting me to consider rich opportunities that focused on the learning of the topic rather

than the teaching. As a result, there was ample opportunity for my learners to be creative, disciplined and inquisitive in their quest to learn about the Viking and Anglo-Saxon Struggle for the kingdom of England.

Passionate about the importance of all children being able to access the learning, I did not want

'writing' to provide a barrier to learning, subsequently, I found that the variation of tasks ensured all children engaged well and were confidently able to articulate their understanding.

I thoroughly enjoyed working with my little historians and was thrilled to see their enthusiasm for learning throughout the unit.

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