

# Why we remember Brunel

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Adapting history unit 4 'Why do we remember Florence Nightingale?'

## What the original unit covers

In the original unit, children explore the life of Florence Nightingale, why she went to the Crimea and what happened as a result of her work.

## Why was the unit adapted?

The year 2 teachers wanted to adapt this unit so that children could learn about a person who was famous in their own area.

The school serves a community where families live mainly in post-war housing and the teachers thought that they needed to make children aware of the richness of the historic environment around them.

They also wanted the children to collect information themselves and investigate aspects of the project at home, thereby involving the children's families.

## How was the unit adapted?

In adapting this unit, the teacher:

- changed the **starting point** to focus on Isambard Kingdom Brunel and life in the first half of the nineteenth century.
- adjusted the **resources** to include pictures, videos, books and leaflets about Brunel, his inventions and achievements, and sites associated with him in the locality; the different ways that people lived in the first part of the nineteenth century.
- adjusted the **activities** to give the children opportunities to:
  - learn about Brunel and his achievements, the problems he faced and how he solved them
  - learn about the impact of Brunel's achievements on people's everyday lives
  - learn about the views of those who supported the railways and those who opposed them
  - learn about past and present modes of transport, different sorts of journeys and reasons for travelling
  - interview Brunel (a local history expert in costume)
  - visit local sites such as the Clifton Suspension Bridge, SS Great Britain and Temple Meads Station
  - discuss the work of engineers
- changed the **outcome** by asking the children to create a travel brochure for visitors to Bristol so that they could present what they had learnt to others
- extended the **time** available for the unit from half a term to a full term.

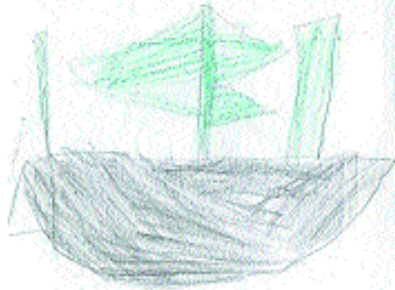
Although the activities were changed in places, the teachers ensured that all original learning objectives and outcomes were still covered.

## The adapted unit

The following changes were made to specific sections of the unit.

Learning objectives	Teaching activities
<p><b>What can we learn about Isambard Kingdom Brunel?</b></p>	<p>Children explore a picture of Brunel. <i>What can they find out about him? How are his clothes different from clothes today? How do we know he lived a long time ago? What sort of a person is he, do you think? What questions would you like to ask him?</i></p> <p>Children explore pictures of life in the first half of the nineteenth century. <i>What is the same? What is different?</i></p> <p>Place Brunel on a timeline.</p>
<p><b>What can we learn about past and present transport?</b></p>	<p><i>What can we learn about the Great Western railway? Find the London to Bristol railway on a map. Show children a video of a steam train.</i></p> <p>Discuss building a railway. <i>What problems might Brunel have had crossing rivers, marshy ground, hills? What solutions? How did building railways affect people's lives? Who built the railways? What was train travel like? What was carried on the railway, eg Royal Mail? What might people have thought about the railway? For example, dangerous, spoils the view, can travel further and faster.</i></p> <p><i>What can we learn about the SS Great Britain? Discuss ships from different times. Sequence these on a timeline. Look at a picture of the SS Great Britain and compare it with earlier ships.</i></p> <p>Locate the Atlantic Ocean on a map and the route from Bristol to New York. Read a story of the voyage on the SS Great Britain. Ask children to make a log of the voyage.</p> <p>Visit Temple Meads Station and the SS Great Britain at Bristol Docks.</p>
<p><b>What can we learn about the impact of his work on people's lives?</b></p>	<p><i>What can we learn by interviewing Brunel? Discuss questions to ask Brunel to reveal his life and achievements. Why does he think what he did was important and how did it affect people's lives? Why is Brunel famous? How did he change people's lives?</i></p> <p>Children interview Brunel.</p>
<p><b>Why do we remember Brunel?</b></p>	<p>Give children a simple story about the life of Brunel and ask them to sequence the events. Develop the outline to make an interesting travel brochure. Give each section a title including a section on 'Why we remember Brunel'.</p>

I hope you will like to go to the SS Great Britain some time and as you look at this map you will see how to get to the SS Great Britain at Great Western dock.



This is where to find the SS Great Britain

Brunei's Bow



The SS Great Britain was the first ship to be made of iron and the biggest ship made. The SS Great Britain went across the ocean 32 times and came back with loads of gold and never sunk.



This is a model children will love to come here and look, made the propeller work and it had got so help it work. It's about 10 times heavier than this copy of it.



## How did the changes improve children's learning?

### *Changing the starting point*

The children really enjoyed the study of Brunel and the fact that he was a famous person locally and nationally. Many continued their investigation at home, using the internet, going to the local library and asking their families for information. Some older members of the children's families came into school to talk about their memories of the return of the SS Great Britain to Bristol.

### *Adjusting the activities*

The children were able to visit sites linked with Brunel. It was important to show the children a video of a steam train as many had no idea of what this would be like.

There were many opportunities for children to develop language skills. One of these proved extremely popular: the visit of Isambard Kingdom Brunel (alias a local history expert and school governor). The children were excited and had prepared a good range of questions to ask him. The visit gave a sense of purpose to their investigation and consolidated a lot of their learning.

### *Changing the outcome*

The children enjoyed using ICT to make a travel brochure and had to be creative in representing what they had learnt for imaginary visitors.

### *Extending the time*

While the children were able to sustain their interest in the project, there were too many activities in the new unit, despite the extra time allowed. The teachers agreed that they needed to reduce these and it would be better to concentrate on one type of transport, for example the railway.