



The Workers' Institute



THE WORKERS' INSTITUTE

The Workers' Institute is set in the 1930s and provides visitors with an insight into the lives of working people during that period, but the story of the Institute began many decades before, with the campaign against sweated labour, the fight for a minimum wage and the Cradley Heath women chainmakers' strike of 1910. It is a fascinating story that offers many opportunities and stimuli to support various aspects of the Curriculum at Key Stages 2, 3 and 4.

KEY STAGE 2 - CURRICULUM LINKS

HISTORY

A study of the Institute can support the development of historical knowledge, skills and understanding. Children are able to:

- Learn about the experiences of people in the past and why they acted as they did;
- Find out how they changed the society in which they lived;
- Carry out historical enquiries using a variety of primary and secondary sources;
- Develop respect for evidence and develop a critical attitude towards it;
- Develop an understanding of right and wrong and the ability to handle moral dilemmas in a responsible way.

The schemes of work are not statutory and schools are able to use as much or as little as they wish. The Museum believes that the Workers' Institute, and the stories it can tell, is a worthwhile study in its own right, but feels that it can also make a contribution to the following units.

Unit 11 What was it like for children living in Victorian Britain?

The Museum site already supports learning for this unit. The Institute adds depth to the subject with the opportunity to learn about the sweated industries, which were a feature of the Victorian age, and, in particular, the experience of children in chain-making families.

Unit 18 What was it like to live here in the past?

The Workers' Institute can provide the focus for the enquiry-based local study, where children need to compare two or three periods of time. It was a remarkable building, unlike anything seen before in the Cradley Heath area, and became the centre of the community for many years. Further significant changes in the area in the 1990s led to it being re-sited at the Museum.

Unit 20

What can we learn about recent history from studying the life of a famous person?

Mary Macarthur was a remarkable woman, the champion of the women chainmakers of Cradley Heath, and the inspiration behind the building of the Institute. She was a national figure, who spent her tragically short life campaigning for better conditions for women everywhere.

CITIZENSHIP

A study of the Workers' Institute can contribute to preparing children to play an active role as citizens. There are opportunities to research, discuss and debate issues, problems and events. It supports work on why and how rules and laws are made and enforced, why different rules are needed in different situations and how to take part in making and changing the rules.

Unit 1 Taking Part, Developing Skills of Communication and Participation

The history of the Institute, particularly the 1910 women chainmakers' strike, and the events leading up to it, provide ample opportunities for:

- Collaborating with others in a group to solve a problem or make a decision;
- Developing some of the skills involved in group work or meetings, such as negotiating, problem solving, chairing and debating.

LITERACY

The history of the Workers' Institute provides stimuli to support the literacy curriculum, particularly in relation to information, explanation and persuasion texts and recounts.

There are opportunities for children to:

- Use a range of different non-narrative texts, identify and summarise evidence;
- Listen to a speaker, ask questions and identify the main points;
- Use drama strategies to explore stories and issues;
- Take part in group discussion and interaction, preparing and presenting arguments;
- Process information and write non-narrative texts of different types.

ART

The Workers' Institute is an Arts and Crafts building, and could be used as a starting point for a study of the Arts and Crafts Movement and the people connected with it. The Institute (and the Museum site as a whole) could also support work in the following units.

Unit 2C (KS1) Can Buildings Speak?

- In this unit children explore shape and pattern in buildings, and question how the features of a building tell us something about its purpose

Unit 9 (gen) Visiting a museum, gallery or site.

Children would have the opportunity to:

- Develop their ideas by selecting and recording from first-hand observations;
- Find out about what is expected of visitors to museums, and to show respect for other people's needs in public places.

KEY STAGE 3 & KEY STAGE 4 - CURRICULUM LINKS

HISTORY KS3

A study of the Workers' Institute can help to support students' understanding of the six key concepts which underpin the study of history:

- Chronological understanding;
- Cultural, ethnic and religious diversity;
- Change and continuity;
- Cause and consequence;
- Significance;
- Interpretation.

KS3 Unit 22: The Role of the Individual for Good or Ill.

The history of the Institute satisfies many of the requirements of Unit 22 of the programmes of study. There were many individuals, Mary Macarthur perhaps being the most famous, who were involved in the events leading to the 1910 women chainmakers' strike and to the building of the Institute. They included national and local figures, whose actions were instrumental in improving the lot of working people in Great Britain.

A study of the personal stories of those involved can address all of the questions posed in this unit:

- Why are certain people 'famous'?
- What motivated the individual?
- What was the impact of the individual's life at the time?
- How has the individual's impact been portrayed through time?
- Was the individual's impact for good or ill?

KS3 Unit 11: Industrial Changes: action and reaction

- Did everyone agree with the industrial changes?

The women chainmakers' strike is an excellent case study of successful protest by ordinary people, which had significance far beyond the local area. This peaceful protest serves as a useful contrast to the Luddite, Swing and Rebecca riots suggested in the unit.

The Black Country Living Museum is one of the sites recommended for a visit in this unit. The Institute is only one of many exhibits that tell the story of Black Country industrial history.

ENGLISH KS3/4

The history of the Institute provides a purposeful, cross-curricular context for reading, writing and speaking and listening. It contributes to both cultural and critical understanding and provides opportunities for:

- Developing research and study skills;
- Group discussion and interaction;
- Developing drama techniques to explore in role a variety of situations;
- Writing to persuade, argue and advise;
- Writing to inform, explain and describe;
- Writing to analyse, review and comment.

ART KS3

The Institute is an Arts and Crafts building, and could serve as a useful starting point for a study of the Arts and Crafts Movement.

In addition it meets many of the requirements of unit 7B and unit 10 (gen) of the programmes of study.

KS3 Unit 7B: What's in a Building?

Students will be able to:

- Explore ideas and collect visual and other information about the building;
- Identify architectural details, examine floor plans, different angles and elevations;
- Record and analyse first-hand observations;
- Consider how design might be linked to function, technological developments, local materials.

KS3 Unit 10: (gen) Visiting a museum, gallery or site

Students will be able to:

- Select from a range of visual and other information to help them develop their ideas for independent work;
- Analyse and evaluate the objects displayed and their significance;
- Express opinions and make reasoned judgements about objects displayed and the way in which information about the building is presented.

CITIZENSHIP KS3/4

A study of the Institute gives an historical context to students' understanding of the importance of citizenship. It contributes to an understanding of how society has

changed, and provides opportunities for active participation in the key processes of critical thinking and enquiry, advocacy and representation. Students will be able to weigh up what is fair and unfair about the situation in which the women chainmakers found themselves. The Institute's story can contribute to the following schemes of work:

KS3 Unit 1: Citizenship – what's it all about?

- What is a democratic community?
The women chainmakers' story helps students to develop an understanding that fairness and social justice are key to democratic communities.

KS3 Unit 9: The significance of the media in society

- How is the media used to promote causes and campaigns?
Mary Macarthur was a 'spin-doctor' of her day and used the media to great effect in promoting the cause of the women chainmakers.

KS4 Unit 5: How the economy functions

- Where does our income go?
Useful comparisons can be made between modern society and the experience of working people at the time of the 1910 strike.

KS4 Unit 10: Rights and responsibilities in the world of work.

- What is work?
An appreciation of the changes and trends in working life and their consequences is enhanced by an understanding of the working conditions in the 19th and early 20th century.
- What are the rights and responsibilities at work?
A study of the key role played by trade unions in improving the working conditions of the women chainmakers, and the many others who worked in sweated industries, adds to students' understanding of the role of trade unions in modern society.