



**JENNY LAWLESS** takes us through the History K-6 syllabus which becomes mandatory this year ...

Teaching History K-6 is mandatory in 2016. Many schools introduced and trialed it in 2015 yet there is still some confusion about how the HSIE program will operate. For 2016, History will replace the *Change and Continuity* strand and the other three strands will continue to be taught. When the Geography syllabus K-6 becomes mandatory in 2017, these two subjects will replace the HSIE syllabus. The Key Learning Area will still be known as Human Society and its Environment (HSIE).

This prospect of yet more change may seem daunting but there are many similarities between History and the current HSIE syllabus.

### What is Similar?

- Personal, family and community History;
- An Inquiry approach;
- Australia's Indigenous and colonial History and how Australia became a nation;
- There will still be opportunities to integrate other HSIE strands.

### What is Different?

- History replaces the Strand *Change and Continuity*;
- There is a change in emphasis from What do we know? to **How do we know?**;
- There is more emphasis on the development of historical **concepts** : continuity and change, cause and effect, perspectives, empathetic understanding, significance and contestability;
- There is more emphasis on the development of historical **skills**: chronology, analysis and use of sources, perspectives and interpretations, empathetic understanding, research, explanation and communication;
- Both concepts and skills are now placed in a K-10 continuum for the first time.

Some current support material and relevant programs developed in schools will continue to be useful.



## Correlation with Current Support Material

New NSW Syllabus Topics	Current HSIE Support Units of Work
<b>Early Stage 1</b> Personal and Family Histories	Who's in the Classroom? This is Me Places We Know Stage 1: What Stories are told in Families?
<b>Stage 1</b> Present and Past Family Life The Past in the Present	Families Past & Present: Stories & Histories The Way We Were
<b>Stage 2</b> Community and Remembrance First Contacts	Stage 1: Celebrations Australia: You're Standing in It British Colonisation of Australia Places: Then, Now & Tomorrow
<b>Stage 3</b> The Australian Colonies Australia as a Nation	Gold State & Federal Government Australian Democracy

There is also new Scope and Sequences and Programs on the [BOSTES website](#).

<b>Early Stage 1 :</b>	Personal and Family Life
<b>Stage 1:</b>	Past and Present Family Life
<b>Stage 2:</b>	Community and Remembrance
<b>Stage 3:</b>	The Australian Colonies Australia as a Nation

So, ideally, what do we want our History students to be able to do and know?

- to be curious, pose interesting and engaging questions about the past – and to be aware that there will always be gaps in the evidence;
- to be aware of the History around them and to ask 'how do we know?';
- realise that there is more to History than a list of dates and 'facts' (despite what some politicians may think!);
- to be aware that there are many stories to be told – not just the official versions – and that everyone has a story to tell;
- to understand the basics of historical concepts;
- to develop historical skills that question and analyse sources, draw conclusions based on evidence and create a historical narrative.

All of the above is a tall order. One of the most basic needs is for students to have some understanding of how historians go about investigating the past.

At its most basic, history is everything that happened in the past. It is also an inquiry or investigation into what happened in the past, requiring historians to ask questions of the remaining sources of that particular period, development or personality under investigation. It is an historian's interpretation of what happened, based on their investigation and research. History is a selection by historians of what is to be included from the past – it can never cover everything that ever happened. Histories are shaped



by the kind of questions asked about the past and by the sources located and interrogated. New research and perspectives ensure that history is never static and dull.

Each historian writes about the past from a particular point of view, even though it may be subconsciously. They may be influenced by their gender, age, family background, education, religion, values and political beliefs, their life experiences and the era in which they lived. Australia's involvement at Gallipoli in World War I has traditionally focused on our 'baptism by fire', our emergence as a nation and various heroic themes such as the story of Simpson and his donkey. Histories about Gallipoli are generally written from a nationalistic Australian perspective. We tend to downplay the roles of New Zealanders, British and French forces. Very little has been written on the Turkish perspective, the role of nurses and the experiences of the young men who were captured as prisoners of war. The campaign is rarely described as an invasion of a foreign land and a campaign that ultimately failed. More recently, there has been a greater focus on the terrible battles of the Western Front.

An investigation of a period of History may also involve both the work of the historian and the archaeologist. Students need to be introduced to a range of historical sources, including the physical remains of the past. By including both traditional written sources of the historian with physical remains of the past of the archaeologist, a broader understanding of the human past may be gained. Artefacts often provide evidence of everyday life that are rarely recorded in written records. Archaeology is critical for gathering evidence of people who did not leave behind written records, such as ancient Aboriginal peoples or many convicts who could not read or write. By drawing on sources used by both historians and archaeologists, a broader understanding of a particular period of time may be achieved.

## How historians and archaeologists may work together: Convict Life

### *Historians*

Official documents  
Shipping lists  
Gravestone inscriptions  
Diaries  
Paintings from the time  
Personal letters

### *Archaeologists*

Excavated artefacts from the Rocks, Sydney  
A convict shoe  
Convict-made brick or pottery  
Leg irons  
Convict tools  
Burials/skeletons

By raising a series of questions for students to contemplate, we are encouraging them to think about History in a more exciting way than a simple narrative, accepted without question.

## Questions to Consider during an Historical Investigation:

- What do we already know?
- What don't we know?
- What can we never know?
- What sources are left from that period?



- What questions do we need to ask?
- What do the sources tell us?
- How do we test reliability of sources?
- Is there more than one perspective to examine?
- Why did particular events happen?
- Why did individuals act as they did?
- What were the consequences?

There are many more such questions to encourage your students to begin their journey as active historians. By 'doing' history, students will gain skills in literacy, research, interrogating sources, asking questions of the past and engaging in active inquiry. We cannot ask much more of our future citizens.

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