History Curriculum at Queen Elizabeth’s (QE).

Philosophy

At QE, we firmly believe that we study the past in order to understand the present. This means we want understand the issues that are currently affecting our ever-changing geo-political world – such as racism, sexism, nationalism, politics and terrorism – by diving in and exploring the past. We want our students to understand that History impacts all of us, and in turn we have the opportunity to impact History ourselves. By exploring this, and key societal issues through the past centuries, we hope our students will learn, understand and respect the positive impact they can each make on History, both their own personal History and the world around them.

By exploring and analysing the stories of the past, we have the ability to learn from them and to grow as a society to ensure issues that have plagued the world are truly eradicated to create a more equal and just society, but also a respectful and positive school environment. Through this process we take the complexities of the past and simplify them to apply analytical rigour through concepts such as cause, consequence, significance and change. We believe this enables our students to foster their own opinions and judgements and, more importantly, they are given the space and opportunity to articulate those opinions and judgements with each other.

Narrative

Year 7:

In year 7 and 8, we focus on an overview of British History. When our students join us, we start by exploring the causes, events and consequences of the 1066 Battle of Hastings. A true turning point in British History, this event allows students to understand Britain around them, from castles to the language we speak. Our lessons in this unit are designed knowing students have had mixed experiences at primary school, and we thus focus on the knowledge needed in one lesson followed by a whole dedicated lesson after this focusing on retrieving that knowledge but also developing fundamental History skills, such as source analysis and making a judgement. Students then in Learning Cycle Two move on to explore life in Medieval England, from society to disease to life for Women. This further develops their Historical skills but also begins to show them how the world around them is a direct consequence from the past, even by making comparison from responses to the 1348 Black Death to the 2020 Coronavirus outbreak. In the summer term, students will explore and chart the Tudor Monarchs, from Henry VII through to Elizabeth I. They will explore Henry VIII’s break from Rome, a pivotal moment in British History that not only hugely affected the society under Henry’s rule but the future Tudor monarchs and the Tudor dynasty legacy. A closer examination of Elizabeth I will close year 7, investigating the challenges and complexities of ruling as a female Queen, drawing parallels to gender complexities today, and providing students with a bed of knowledge they can build upon in Key Stage 4.

Year 8:

To continue looking at British History, students start year 8 by exploring the British Empire. A hugely controversial topic in British History, but an incredibly important one if we are to truly understand and accept Britain’s role in changing the world that we now inhabit. Students will begin the year by thinking about what an Empire is, why countries wanted an Empire and how Britain was able to secure the largest Empire in the world. A closer examination will then take place of Britain’s relationship with India and Benin. There is a large amount of debate in society at present about things like artefacts and Britain’s treatment of the civilians of the Empire and we believe it is incredibly important and right that students can explore these debates and form their own judgements. In Learning Cycle Two, we expand on the British Empire to explore the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade by looking at Britain’s role in this and how that Slave Trade began. We then explore what life was like for enslaved people on Plantations and we study the resilience and bravery that these people demonstrated in the face of unthinkable adversity. We finish by studying how Slavery was ultimately abolished and make comparisons to present day race inequalities. To finish our learning on British History, we then explore the changing status of Women and focus on key influential Women from 1792-1990 and their heroic impacts on various aspects of British society and life. Here, we really unpick what significance means, as this is a fundamental key skill for successful History learners, and we also explore the importance of different classes and backgrounds and how any person can make a difference.

Year 9:

Year 9 explores European and American History in the 1900s. Students begin by delving into World War One to understand its causes, events, forgotten contributors such as Women and Empire Troops, and its key significant battles such as the 1916 Battle of the Somme. Here students will really focus on their ability to make judgements of the significance of causes and key moments to truly understand and appreciate the importance of the minute silence on the 11th of November. Students then analyse the inter-war years, to determine how the consequences of World War One ultimately lay the foundations for the steps to the outbreak of World War Two. We will investigate how America’s absence from Europe led to the League of Nations being ineffective, how the rise of the three European dictators altered the power balance in Europe and students will be able to argue if Appeasement was, or was not, justified. In Learning Cycle Two, students will then move to studying World War Two. We will commence by looking at the outbreak of the war and a study on who fought in the war, again to truly understand the contributions of all involved. We will then move on to study Dunkirk and the hugely significant and defining events of 1941 before studying how war worked in terms of weaponry, the Enigma Code and life for British people. A close examination of the Holocaust will then occur, which explores what it was, what is happened and how it happened from the first phase of Ghettos to the Final Solution of Gas Chambers. Students will investigate and articulate who they believe killed Barney Greenman; a three-year-old boy from the Netherlands who was murdered at Auschwitz Birkenau. This gives students the opportunity to explore if the perpetrators, collaborators, or bystanders are ultimately responsible. We then move on to explore the closing of World War Two with the bombing of Dresden, Germany’s eventual surrender and the Atomic Bombs on Japan. We finish year 9 by exploring the issue of race within America. This builds on from the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Unit of year 8 and focuses in on a really important issue facing our current society. Students will investigate what life was like after the Abolition of Slavery and will study groups like the Ku Klux Klan. They will then explore how different Civil Rights Organisations bravely protested for equality, for example the NAACP. Students will then analyse in depth the official Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, looking at events such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Brown V. Board of Education decision and the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. The end of the Learning Cycle will explore what life is like today, allowing students to truly be global citizens but also to work towards creating a more just and equal society.

Key Stage 4:

Students at Key Stage Four will follow the Edexcel GCSE History syllabus. We begin by studying Early Elizabethan England, 1558-1588. This unit explored the challenges facing Elizabeth I as a female monarch in a divided nation, something students discovered in Key Stage Three. It further explores the changes in Britain at this time from government, to plots and challenges, to religion to threats from abroad. Students will learn not only the challenges facing Queen Elizabeth I but also the changing challenges for the people and the consequence of these. This unit develops students' ability to articulate their view, develop their cause and consequence skills and written work through examination practice. Students then move to a breadth study, gifting them with chronological understanding and focused analysis on the concepts of change and continuity. Students will study Medicine from 1250-Present Day with an in-depth analysis on Britain in the Western Front of World War One 1914-1918. Not only does this develop our students' skills, it also helps them understand the evolution of medicine; something that affects every single person across the globe. It will enable students to see how far Britain has progressed and developed both in societal thinking and technological advancement and allow them to understand the origin of medical responses and procedures around them. This unit develops source analysis skills, which are not only integral to truly analysing History, but are also cross curricular and will aid students’ understanding in subjects like English Literature also. At the end of year 10 and moving into year 11, students will study into Germany from 1918-1939. This unit explores the consequences of World War One on Germany’s population and government and how it, ultimately, led to the rise of one of the most dangerous men in the 20th Century: Adolf Hitler. We believe this unit is incredibly important to enable our students to understand one reason why and how World War Two broke out but also to shed light onto persecution and terror to ensure we learn from these mistakes. Different to the other GCSE units, students are given the opportunity to analyse Historian Interpretations to further develop their academic skills and give them a flavour of Key Stage Five. Our final unit of GCSE is Superpower Relations and the Cold War from 1941-1991. This unit focuses on the consequence and importance of events and the stories of the escalating tensions between the East and the West in the aftermath of World War Two. Here, students will understand why the Cold War began, the key flashpoints of the Cold War where tensions significantly increased, the work that was done to reduce these tensions to the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union and end of the Cold War.

Key Stage Five:

Students at Key Stage Five will follow the AQA A-Level History Specification, studying the Tudors for component one and International Relations 1890-1941 for component two. For the Tudors, students will delve into the changes and continuities of the Tudor Monarchs from Henry VII to Elizabeth I by exploring their social, political, religious, and economic policies and the impact these had both at home and on the international scale. For the depth study of the International Relations, students will look aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War and how the European Countries began to expand and increase their power and dominance geographically and militarily. We will study the rise of alliances and Empires and how this ultimately led to tensions exploding with the outbreak of World War One. We will then study how the war changed the power balance of Europe and what this looked like for different countries affected by War. An analysis of the 1930s then occurs to understand the political ramifications of World War One and why World War Two broke out in 1939. We finish by studying the changes that occurred from 1939-1941 with the entry of the Soviet Union and United States of America into War. Both units enable students to work on their judgement and academic writing skills. Within the Tudors unit, students will study Historian Interpretations to develop their understanding of how the past can be viewed and articulated but also to prepare them for university study. With International Relations, the value of primary sources is explored to provide the students with different perspectives and different ways to see and investigate the past. Students will also embark on a piece of coursework which enables them to choose a topic from a carefully crafted selection that cover a 100-year period and combine their skills they have developed in both units, judgement, academic writing, Historian interpretation and source analysis.