AN INVESTIGATION INTO HISTORICAL FICTION IN THE PRIMARY CLASSROOM AND ITS IMPACT ON CHILDREN’S HISTORICAL SKILLS AND UNDERSTANDING.

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ABSTRACT

This small scale research study considers how historical fiction is used in the primary classroom and its impact on children’s historical skills and understanding. Questionnaires were used to gain a broad perception of teacher views from 15 primary schools in East Northamptonshire, with teacher interviews and lesson observations in one school being carried out to provide more focussed findings.

The findings show that most teachers have used historical fiction at some point in their careers with Key Stage 2 topics such as Victorians and World War 2 being the most common topics where it is used. Teacher opinions vary as to the benefits of using historical fiction however; interview and observation data suggest that children’s motivation to conduct their own enquiry and ability to empathise is increased as a result of using historical fiction in History lessons. The research suggests that there are many cross curricular opportunities for historical fiction to enrich learning and promote historical skills and understanding. The research also suggests that some children may struggle with discriminating between factual and fictional elements of historical fiction.
## LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table i</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Summary of topics lending themselves to using historical fiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table ii</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Summary of responses to show the benefits of using historical fiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table iii</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Summary of responses to show the limitations of using historical fiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table iv</td>
<td>Appendix 5</td>
<td>Summary of respondents’ contextual questionnaire answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Pie chart to show the type of school teachers are currently teaching in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Graph to show length of teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3</td>
<td>Page 26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ experience of using historical fiction in the History classroom</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 4</th>
<th>Page 27</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ experience of using historical fiction in the English classroom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 5</th>
<th>Page 30</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graph to show how historical fiction can help develop children’s understanding of chronology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 6</th>
<th>Page 32</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graph to show how historical fiction can help develop children’s understanding of causation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 7</th>
<th>Page 32</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graph to show how historical fiction can help develop children’s understanding of interpretation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 8</th>
<th>Page 32</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graph to show how historical fiction can help develop children’s understanding of using sources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 9</th>
<th>Page 33</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 10</td>
<td>Page 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graph to show how historical fiction can help develop children’s communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 11</th>
<th>Page 34</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graph to show how historical fiction can help develop children’s enquiry skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 12</th>
<th>Page 34</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graph to show how historical fiction can help develop children’s understanding of empathy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Page 34</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graph to show how historical fiction can help develop children’s knowledge and understanding of people, events and changes in the past</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## CONTENTS

Acknowledgments

Abstract

List of tables and figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>10-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>20-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>Teacher questionnaire responses to using historical fiction</td>
<td>25-36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>Teacher interview responses to using historical fiction</td>
<td>37-40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>Classroom English and History observations using historical fiction</td>
<td>41-44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>Pages 45-47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>References</th>
<th>Page 48-55</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Appendices
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

As a foundation subject in the National Curriculum (DfEE/QCA,1999), History is not afforded the same amount of curriculum time as the core subjects and is increasingly, in a number of primary schools, being taught through a thematic approach rather than by discrete lessons. Whilst Ofsted (2011) state that history teaching is “good or better in most primary schools” (Ofsted,2011,p1), it could be argued that this affects the quality of History teaching along with pupils’ engagement. Additionally, recent government policy changes have seen a new proposed History curriculum for 2014 (DfEE,2013) whereby the amount of proposed topics (fourteen with some thirty six sub-topics), taught in sequential order, will potentially see topics being taught in a dramatically reduced time frame. There is opposition to the proposed changes (Mansell,2013), but if the reality is that there is going to be more History content to cover, then perhaps teachers should consider other cross curricular opportunities where historical objectives can also be met. One way of doing this will be to consider how the links between History and English can be exploited, and how resources can be employed to maximise learning outcomes. Historical fiction is one such potential resource and is the focus of this research project.

The aim of this research is to ascertain how historical fiction is used in the primary classroom and whether children’s historical skills and understanding are improved as a result of its use. This dissertation will explore teachers’ opinions and experiences of using historical fiction in History and English lessons along with observing how it is used in practice. Firstly, existing research will be considered in the Literature Review then the findings of this research project shall be analysed, drawing links to existing research before drawing conclusions.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Where does the story stop and the History start?

Stories have universal appeal, with there being a long-established link between story and history (Cooper, 2007; Wade, 1984). Television programmes such as *Time Team, Antiques Roadshow, Horrible Histories* and *Who Do You Think You Are?*, have become increasingly popular as people take an apparent interest in the stories of the past (De Groot, 2009); whether it is the story of what happened, story around an object, story about people or just story for entertainment. History is essentially concerned with story; a narrative of past events whose aim is to get to an objective truth, although historians such as Carr (1990) may argue that “the facts of history cannot be purely objective, since they become facts of history only in virtue of the significance attached to them by the historian” (Carr, 1990, p120).

Gregory (2011) debates how the historian uses speculation to link one known fact with another and compares this to the writer of historical fiction who uses their imagination to create a story using the past. Whilst the historian may use the past to try and get to an objective truth, the writers of historical fiction may use the past for other reasons. Authors of historical fiction may attempt to convey the ‘truth’ of the period but it could be argued that their primary purpose is to entertain, to produce a work of fiction for a given audience. In order to be credible, authors should research the chosen era, taking care to avoid anachronisms that may produce confusion as can be seen in Appendix 1.

Some may argue that stories, in the form of children’s historical fiction, have been popular since the nineteenth century, when more children began to be able to read. Selected writers in this era began to write for
a specific child audience and many books began to be written with a school-based theme, such as Tom Brown’s Schooldays, published originally in 1857 (Hughes, 1999). Authors such as Geoffrey Trease, writing from the 1930s onwards and Rosemary Sutcliff, writing a few decades later, have continued to write historical fiction primarily for a child audience. World War 2 has been a theme taken up by many children’s authors; some describing war itself whilst others have focussed on the effects of war on children (Riordan, 2009). Works such as War Horse (Morpurgo, 2002) have seen mass appeal to children and adults alike through the novel and more recently, stage adaptation and film. However, Gregory (2011) makes the distinction between story and historical fiction, suggesting that story employs the imagination whereas historical fiction, whilst similarly may use imagination, connects facts together – linking them through speculation.

There is much debate concerning the limitations and strengths associated with historical fiction and the significance of historical fiction in primary education, before looking at these, the term ‘historical fiction’ will be briefly discussed. Historical fiction for children is sometimes referred to as if it is one homogenous genre but there are in fact, several distinct categories. There are books which use history merely as a backdrop to the story, there are adventure based books which just happen to be set in the past, fictionalised characters involved in real events and real life characters involved in fictional events (Copson, 2002). It could also be argued that any fiction written in the past could be deemed as historical fiction to future generations. For example, novels by authors such as Lewis Carroll and Robert Louis Stevenson can tell the modern reader much about Victorian language, attitudes and morals alongside the story itself. Copson (2002) questions whether authors should retell history as factually as possible or whether they should romanticise the past, sanitising it for the intended child audience. War has been a popular topic for children’s fiction and approaches have changed over the years. Books featuring war written in the early part of the twentieth century tend to demonstrate a “clear-cut gender division in addressing either boy or
girl readers” (Lathey, 2005, p. 59). This contrasts to books written between the World Wars, where connotations of propaganda could be said to be common. Stories published after World War 2 displayed a patriotic element whereas the post-war era saw a focus on the consequences of war, with authors apparently becoming aware of the humanity of all sides involved in a conflict. Historical fiction however, as a form of story, has had a traditionally controversial relationship with History as an academic discipline.

Academic historians have traditionally been “dismissive of mere story; an un-academic, slightly immature and unreliable mode of analysis” (Husbands, 1996, p. 46). Merry (1994) states how evidence should underpin history, according to a strict methodology, and argues how novels should be treated with caution by historians, urging validation with other sources to ascertain reliability. Elton (1970) suggested that ‘doing history’ of this nature is too difficult for children and they should just enjoy story without engaging in serious historical enquiry. This perspective, which is still held by some today, is supported by Piaget’s (1959) concept of the ‘formal operational stage’, where he identified primary school children as being less able to develop abstract reasoning than older children. Stephens (1992) equally argues how the audience for historical fiction should not include young primary children, citing the need for a less “solipsistic view of the world” to be developed in order to engage with events and characters from the past (Stephens, 1992, p. 202). Cox and Hughes (1998) conclude how the value of historical fiction for older children is more established than for younger children.

The Primary National Curriculum for history in Key Stage 1 mentions how children should “listen and respond to stories” (DfEE/QCA, 1999, p. 104). At Key Stage 2 stories are not explicitly mentioned. However, there is much potential value in the use of story to develop historical knowledge, skills and understanding. In addition, the Primary National Strategy for literacy includes stories with historical settings in Year 4, Narrative Unit 1 (DfEE, 2003).
between English and History can often be exploited to maximise learning potential in primary education, fostering children’s imaginations (Hoodless, 1998). Although Davin (cited in Self, 1991), debates how all stories are contaminated by imagination and cannot be relied upon for factual information.

However, the use of good historical fiction is defended by some researchers, stating that it can promote historical enquiry, helping children to question sources and illustrations used by the author, and encourages consultation of primary sources to compare with the novel (Lindquist, n.d.; Lathey, 2011). Gillespie (2007) suggests how historical fiction could be used alongside traditional textbooks to enhance children’s historical understanding, with Slotkin (2006) similarly highlighting the importance of thorough research and rigorous analysis of evidence, both for the author and the reader. Fines (1994) promotes children engaging in historical enquiry, stressing the benefits of children engaging in ‘doing history’ themselves as opposed to rote-learning which “can serve only the interests of quiz contestants” (Fines, 1994, p125). He equally supports the fact that children, when involved in their own historical enquiry, are participating in active learning; a concept also advocated by Zarnowski (2009).

There is debate over the content of historical fiction (Demos, 2005). It has been argued that stereotyping is not always dealt with effectively in many of the fictional texts used in schools, with many books having been ‘sanitised’ to remove potentially difficult or controversial concepts such as race, class or gender (Jones, 2005). Evans (1997) discusses how a text is always written with a specific audience in mind and “framed according to the writer’s expectations of how the intended readers will take it” (Evans, 1997, p104); whilst conversely, other books may portray people in a negative way that encourages stereotypical judgements to be made. Claire (2001) illustrates this point by identifying how common stereotypes are sometimes perpetuated when teaching about Victorian Britain. Gillespie (2007) further adds that the generalization of all poor Victorian children being unhappy and all rich
Victorian children being happy may be concluded after reading some fictional accounts. Bracey (2003) similarly argues that stories in British textbooks “remain disappointingly Anglo-centric” (Bracey, 2003, p7). He advocates the use of historical fiction such as Safe Harbour (Conlon-McKenna, 1995) which considers an Irish dimension as an alternative to many English focused World War 2 books which are often used in the primary classroom. Peltzman (2010) however, offers an alternative view. She discusses how children’s literature can help children to form non-stereotypical views, using gender as an example, as strong, competent female characters can allow the reader to become accepting of that notion if they are exposed to it.

The difficulty of vocabulary in historical fiction has frequently been cited as a barrier for some children’s understanding (Bage, 1999; Hicks and Martin, 2001; Hoodless, 2004; Husbands, 1996). In the EACH project (English And/Combined with History), it was found that many readers did not finish reading some of Rosemary Sutcliff’s novels because of “difficulty with words, names and society [that is] so culturally different from our own” (Hicks and Martin, 2001, p145). However, Grugeon and Gardner (2000) and Cooper (2007) challenge this viewpoint, instead stating that stories can be a useful method of introducing, and extending, historical knowledge and vocabulary.

A recurring theme in research into historical fiction is that of children being unable to distinguish between fact and fiction contained in the novel. Youngs and Serafini (2011) assert that children should be taught to understand that “not everything within the story is fiction, nor are all the elements historically factual”, emphasising the importance of children’s background knowledge to a topic which should allow them to make connections between events (Youngs and Serafini, 2011, p117). Some critics argue that story blurs the boundary between fact and fiction (Bage, 1999; Husbands, 1996) and that this could confuse children and “contaminate their historical imagination” (Little and John, 1986, p16). Whilst supporting this viewpoint, Gamble and Yates (2008) acknowledge that sometimes the discrepancy
between fact and fiction may be obscured and this may result in
difficulty in ascertaining the accuracy of material. There is the
additional problem of historical novels often stating ‘based on a true
story’ on the publisher’s blurb which, Stephens (1992) claims, can
suggest to readers that the story has the authority of historical
actuality. However, Bracey (2003) maintains that it is essential
children learn to discuss stories critically and not just accept what they
have read at face value.

Through discussions guided by the class teacher, it has been argued
that the teacher has the power to shape meaning of story, through the
selection of extracts or the emphasis placed on particular information
meanings into the past” is an aspect the teacher should be aware of
(Tosh, 1999, p60); whilst Harnett (2010) warns how some teachers
impose their fixed views of the past onto children, which may result in
a lack of opportunity to engage in historical enquiry. Wade (1984)
similarly highlights how books may be interpreted differently by
different readers, with Gamble and Yates (2008) citing how historical
fiction is inclined to be culturally influenced from the society it
originates from. Fines (1994) underlines how the selection of evidence
is a personal choice by the author and can exclude a huge quantity of
alternative information. Gove-Humphries et al. (2008) advocate the
importance of children actively constructing their own “map of the past
rather than for the teacher to impose it on them” (Gove-Humphries et
al., 2008, p33); a view also endorsed by Woolley and McConnell (2006).
Stephens (1992) remarks nevertheless how good historical fiction is
usually accurate as authors want to create authentic settings and
characters for the reader.

De Groot (2009) discusses how it should not be assumed that novels
have been written by an author without any historical training, citing
the likes of Philippa Gregory who is a trained historian as well as a
published writer of historical fiction. Gregory (2005) herself comments
how the process of writing historical fiction is very similar to the
writing of any history book in that it is essentially a personal interpretation of the past. Jenkins (1991), in contrast to Elton (1970), further asserted that children can gain much historical understanding from historical fiction, helping them to appreciate “epistemological fragility...[that influences the] multifarious nature of history” (Jenkins, 1991, p11). Being aware that there is one past and yet many histories (Evans, 2002) is knowledge that is referred to by Vass (2010) as being provisional; knowledge that may have to be revised depending on new information or interpretations coming to light. Zarnowski (2009) underlines the value of children being exposed to many histories in order to avoid the “encyclopedia (sic) epistemology” phenomenon where children think that ‘real’ history is already contained within textbooks and encyclopaedias which therefore makes children’s own historical research pointless (Zarnowski, 2009, pg 254).

Demos (2005) states that “narrative is always fiction until we weigh it against fact” and suggests that fiction and history share a “borderland” (Demos, 2005, p330). Gillespie (2007) echoes this view, where she discusses the “History flavour literacy lesson” (Gillespie, 2007, p7). She argues that this is a widespread experience in many Key Stage 2 classrooms where the focus is on using history as a vehicle for developing English skills. Without discrete learning objectives it could be argued that the use of historical fiction whilst benefiting English skills, is limited from a historical perspective (Kay and Samuelson, 2000). Harnett (2010) debates how historical skills related to story should be balanced with pedagogical approaches suitable for children.

On the other hand, there is much support for the benefits of using historical fiction (Bage, 1999; Bracey et al., 2006; Little and John, 1986). Little and John (1986) discuss how historical fiction can bridge the uncertainty between fact and fiction, especially with children themselves being depicted in central character roles which they argue helps the child reader to respond more positively to than an adult character. Bracey et al. (2006) echo this point, stating that “the
central role of children enables pupils to identify with the characters and the issues more readily” (Bracey et al., 2006,p111).

Little and John (1986) underline how historical novels can serve as a reminder that behind the “statistics, ideologies, trends and institutions of academic study, there were humans beings” (Little and John, 1986,p6). Evans (2002) and Wade (1984) stress how history is the story of people, and not just a dry academic discipline, with story giving the “opportunity to flesh out people, figures and events, and to add some of the colour, sights and smells that children love but often miss out on” (Wilkinson, 2006,p17). According to Elton (1967), history encompasses “everything that men have said, thought, done or suffered” (Elton, 1967,p20), with others emphasising how novels are usually concerned with human issues and as such can promote empathy (McIlroy, 2010; Stephens, 1992). Bage (1999) discusses how emotions are important in history and how stories can communicate emotions in “powerful ways” (Bage, 1999,p35). Husbands (1996) stresses the importance in the classroom of engaging children emotionally as well as intellectually, as well as enabling children to become more self-aware and create a sense of identity (Bage, 1999; Cooper, 2007; Merry, 1994; Pluckrose, 1991).

Difficult choices and human contradictions can be explored through engaging with characters (den Heyer and Fidyk, 2007), allowing children to delve into other times and places, empathising with people’s thoughts and feelings (Cooper, 2007; Harnett, 2005). Historical empathy is however, contested by Jenkins (1991) who argues that it simply is not possible. He states how when we study history, we “are not studying the past but what historians have constructed about the past” which therefore renders empathy unfeasible (Jenkins, 1991,p46-47). Elton (1967) similarly discussed how not all the past is recoverable. It could even be argued that past thoughts and feelings that were never documented can never be truly empathised with. Martin and Brooke (2002) highlight the distinction between children’s superficial empathy and empathy that is derived from rigorous
historical research. Research concludes that writing children’s own historical fiction gives purpose to their research, creating settings and characters that are as historically accurate as they can be (Hicks and Martin, 1994; Nuffield Primary History Project, 2012).

On balance however, it could be suggested that whilst historical fiction provides an aid to children’s historical empathy, teacher intervention is required to help distinguish fact from fiction (Stripling, 2011). Through creating empathy, children are able to create a more complete picture of the past as the focus in many novels tends to be on the everyday occurrences and ordinary people rather than the unusual and dramatic events of textbooks (Hedeen, 2010).

Historical fiction may help children to perceive the continuum of past, present, and future more effectively than in textbooks and allow them to make chronological connections (Bage, 1999; Daniel, 2012; Gadd, 2009; Hedeen, 2010). Cox and Hughes (1998) highlight how story can support children to order and recount the past. Graham (2001) considers how time-slip elements of novels whilst having to control a more elaborate narrative, can potentially leave the reader with an “enhanced appreciation of history, memory, time, continuity and change” (Graham, 2001, p62). Time-slip elements have the added bonus of appealing to children’s interest, adding to the enjoyment of reading historical fiction for pleasure (Ireland In Schools, 2005). Fostering children’s enjoyment in history is discussed by Bracey et al. (2006) where historical fiction is described as providing “an excellent hook for developing an interest in and an understanding of the past”. The dialogic aspect of shared story is debated by Daniel (2012) who claims that it is through discussion that enables children to develop the “meta-cognitive skills needed to develop historical awareness” (Daniel, 2012, p81) as well as encouraging growth of their historical imagination (Little and John, 1986). It has been reasoned by Ringrose (2007) that historical fiction is valuable and enjoyable as a genre regardless of historical
content. However, as an English specialist, the historical element may not be as important to this author as it may to a history specialist.

To conclude the literature review, it is evident that historical fiction has been controversial throughout the years and continues to be a topic that is debated today. Opinions continue to differ over where the story stops and the history starts (or indeed, where the history stops and the story starts). However, from this review, there appears to be a lack of recent research into how historical fiction is used in primary schools. Consequently, the focus of this dissertation will be to investigate how historical fiction is used in primary schools and whether children’s historical skills and understanding are enhanced as a result.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the research project is to investigate how historical fiction is used in primary schools and whether children’s historical skills and understanding are enhanced as a result of using it.

When conducting the literature review keywords were used to search online and library databases / catalogues, with different combinations of keywords used to refine the search. Narrowing down the focus of research resulted in literature relating solely to UK education given prominence, with the provenance of sources being questioned to ensure academic rigour. Use was made of the inter library loan service to obtain copies of journals held at other university libraries.

The research method chosen for data collection was a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Qualitative research can be defined as expressing data and subsequent conclusions in the form of words (Hopkins, 2002), where arguments can be formed about “how things work in particular contexts” and can produce explanations that are generalizable in some way (Mason, 2002, p1). Data may include field notes, photographs and interviews. Whereas the aim of quantitative research is to base conclusions on “statistical findings and other empirical data” (Greetham, 2009, p180). Data may include questionnaires or surveys.

In the first phase of the research, questionnaires were chosen to provide breadth of data coverage as they could be completed at the respondents own pace at a time to suit them.

The East Northamptonshire County Council website was employed to search for thirty schools within a radius of ten miles from the researcher’s home address in order to maximise potentially low response rates, using known contacts within some of the schools.
Questionnaires were chased up one week after initial contact and again after another week. Paper copies and an electronic version were made available to cater for respondents’ personal preference. Out of a possible 30 responses, a total of 18 were received from 15 separate schools, which equates to a 60% response rate—of these, 6 were paper copies and 12 were online responses (Appendix 2). Questionnaires were designed to avoid questions which were leading, and were piloted with the dissertation supervisor prior to distributing. Questions were not lengthy, some included multiple choice or scales to complete in order to make the process as less time consuming for the respondent as possible, as well as providing the opportunity to determine “frequencies, correlations and other forms of quantitative analysis” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 253). In order to increase the likelihood of the questionnaire being completed, thought was given to the layout and instructions, making them as clear as possible to minimise respondents omitting questions.

In the second phase of quantitative research, the aim was to gather qualitative data concentrated in one primary school setting to provide depth of data coverage. Interviews were chosen with teachers in the school because of the face to face interaction where knowledge can be generated between participant and interviewer, with the potential to “draw directly from the participants’ views, feelings and understandings” (O’Hara et al., 2011). It was important to develop a good rapport so that the participant felt relaxed and the responses were not subject to inhibitions. A semi-structured approach was chosen rather than a structured or un-structured approach. This was because it provided a structure that was not too rigid, providing the opportunity to expand or clarify a question (O’Hara et al., 2011). Being able to verify and confirm data can contribute to enriching its reliability. The limitations of interviews are participants being potentially reluctant to disclose relevant information, finding a suitable venue for interview and overcoming barriers to recording the interview. Using a Dictaphone to record the interview was chosen to ensure accuracy and to help promote a culture where the conversation
flowed freely rather than being stilted due to taking notes at the same time, where points may have been missed when writing words down. Interviews were conducted in a venue of the participant’s choosing.

From data revealed in interviews, observations in Year 4 classes were then scheduled for English and History lessons where historical fiction was planned to be used. Observations were chosen because they can give “direct access to social interactions” (Simpson and Tuson, 1995, p16), and so provide permanent information that can be compared to similar data collected in the same way at different times. However, the limitations of observations were noted as being primarily time consuming, difficult to arrange as timetables were changeable due to the nature of other school demands and also the potential of observer bias. To overcome this, it was decided that a trial observation would take place to allow the researcher to estimate a realistic time for carrying out the observations. The observer bias was attempted to be tackled through the explicit acknowledgement of personal assumptions, trying to remain impartial and recording exactly what was witnessed rather than what was inferred, along with conversing with the teacher afterwards to check the interpretation of events with someone else who was present.

Examples of children’s work were chosen because they enrich the observation data, providing evidence of outcomes and can be annotated with the child’s responses on them to provide more detail. However, limitations of using children’s work can include being certain of the extent to which the work is the child’s own, and how much of the work is due to the actual teaching or is merely reflective of prior knowledge. Answers may also reflect what children think they are meant to write rather than reflecting their actual thoughts or beliefs (Taber, 2007).

All three methods of data collection, questionnaires, interviews and observations, result in ‘triangulation’ which can help to ensure validity and accuracy of results. Angrosino (2007) highlights how the use of multiple data collection techniques can help to reinforce conclusions.
Before carrying out the research, there were ethical issues that had to be considered before being granted ethical approval from the university, in accordance with BERA guidelines which were read by the researcher (BERA, 2004). This is important to produce research that is both credible and has integrity (Bryman, 2008). The Literature Review was conducted in an ethical manner as all work done by others has been acknowledged, cited and referenced correctly in accordance with research guidelines (Greetham, 2009). O’Hara et al. (2011) explain how there are important considerations regarding informed consent, right to withdraw and confidentiality before commencing any data collection, as well as for consideration of how data will be stored and used. Permission was sought from the Head teacher to use the school for teacher interviews and lesson observations (Appendix 3), and permission from the teachers themselves was requested prior to commencing data collection. Croll (1986) emphasises the importance of this “moving between levels of a hierarchical system...approach[ing] the lower levels with the support of higher levels” (Croll, 1986, p93).

Prior to recording the teacher interviews, their permission was sought to record the conversation with a Dictaphone and assurances were made to keep the data anonymous unless they wanted to be named in the research findings. They also had the option to withdraw at any time. Questionnaire respondents similarly gave their informed consent to participate, had the right to withdraw and had guarantees of confidentiality and anonymity (Cohen et al., 2000). All participants had the additional opportunity to receive a copy of the research findings if they expressed a desire to do so.

Data collected from research was subsequently analysed through the use of coding whereby ‘meaning’ was attempted to be extracted and interpreted (Davies, 2007). Data was transferred to a table where links could be established using a coding frame. The links could then enable conclusions to be drawn in relation to the focus of the research; how historical fiction is used within primary classroom and whether
children’s historical skills and understanding are enhanced as a result of using it.
CHAPTER 4

TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES TO USING HISTORICAL FICTION

Do Teachers View Historical Fiction As A Useful Classroom Resource For History And English Topics And For Developing Historical Skills?

Questionnaires were completed by 18 respondents from 15 different schools; an example of a completed questionnaire can be seen in Appendix 4. Respondents were asked contextual questions relating to their teaching experience, their subject specialism (if any) and the number of years they have been teaching. Results for questions 1-5 can be found in Appendix 5.

From this overview, it is possible to see that the majority of respondents are currently teaching in an urban school (89%), with the number of years of teaching experience ranging from being in Initial Teacher Training, up to 30-40 years teaching experience (figures 1 and 2).

Pie chart to show type of school currently teaching in

(Figure 1)
This contextual information was used in conjunction with responses to the other questions to see whether there were any general trends in relation to length of teaching experience.

**Teachers’ experience of using historical fiction in the History classroom**

Most respondents have used historical fiction during history lessons for some topics (7 out of the 18 respondents which equates to 39%), followed by 5 who have never used it, 4 who have used it for one history topic, with 1 respondent using it often for history topics. 1
respondent said they *always* use it for history topics. Of these responses, of the 5 who claimed to have *never* used it for history topics, they were all teachers with 10 years or less teaching experience.

There did not appear to be any correlation between teachers’ subject specialism during their training and usage of historical fiction. The teachers who used it more often were teachers who had a greater number of years teaching experience. Perhaps this could be because they have a greater degree of experience on which to draw relating to literature titles, or conversely, it might be because they are more likely to employ a greater range of teaching strategies and resources than more inexperienced teachers. The issue of selecting titles of historical fiction shall be raised through teacher interviews in the next chapter.

Teachers’ experience of using historical fiction in the English classroom

(Figure 4)

Results were largely similar for usage in English lessons with 44% (8 respondents) citing they use historical fiction for *some* English topics,
followed by 7 who had never used it in English lessons, 2 who had used it for one English topic and 1 respondent who had used it often for English topics. No one stated that they always use it for English topics. It was interesting to note the two sets of data of usage in History and English lessons to be generally comparable; perhaps this could be because History is often taught in a thematic approach in many schools or, as Gillespie (2007) suggests, History is often used a vehicle for developing English skills. The relationship between History and English will be explored further when interviewing teachers in the next chapter.

Topics in English or History lending themselves to using historical fiction

Table i: Summary of topics lending themselves to using historical fiction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic suggested</th>
<th>Number of responses (more than one response possible from each participant)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World War 2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recounts</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victorians</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tudors</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horrible Histories</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romans</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any topic with a suitable text</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toys</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World War 1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunpowder Plot</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern history</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robin Hood</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stories with a historical setting</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most frequent responses were History topics of World War 2, closely followed by Victorians, Tudors and the English topic of Recounts. These are all topics that are taught regularly across Key Stage 2 so perhaps teachers feel more confident in teaching these topics the most and would be more likely to incorporate a variety of teaching strategies and resources. Consequently, more schools are likely to have a wider range of resources for the topics taught the most.

The topic of Toys was mentioned by one Key Stage 1 teacher, who suggested books such as *Pinocchio* might be useful in developing children’s understanding of chronology in relation to toys. Another Key Stage 1 teacher mentioned how short extracts may be more suitable for her children’s age range rather than whole texts, which might then make the material more accessible to the needs of a younger class. Both of these responses suggest that historical fiction can be accessible to younger children given suitable pedagogical approaches.
Teachers’ rating of how important historical fiction is in developing children’s understanding of the following historical skills – chronology, causation, interpretation, enquiry, using sources, empathy, communication and knowledge, understanding of people, events and changes in the past.

Opinions regarding the relationship between historical fiction and historical skills were canvassed using a Likert Scale, results for chronology and causation can be seen below (figures 5 and 6).

(Figure 5)
These results show that overall chronology and causation were rated as being occasionally enhanced through historical fiction, with a significant amount also rating it as being an important means of developing it.

Interpretation, using sources and communication were rated as being usually enhanced, whilst enquiry was rated as being equally occasionally/usually enhanced (figures 7, 8, 9 and 10).
Graph to show how historical fiction can help develop children's understanding of interpretation

(Figure 7)

Graph to show how historical fiction can help develop children's understanding of using sources

(Figure 8)
Empathy scored higher, with an equal number of respondents judging it as being *usually* enhanced with historical fiction being an important means of developing it (Figure 11).
Historical fiction was rated as being an important means of developing knowledge and understanding of people, events and changes in the past (figure 12).
Teachers’ considerations of the benefits of using historical fiction in the classroom

Results (Table ii) show that promoting empathy was listed as the most significant benefit of using historical fiction, which is supported by Husbands (1996) who emphasises the importance of empathy along with engaging children emotionally. This could be closely related to how children relate to the characters in a novel, which four people stated, although it could be argued that children may incline towards sympathy rather than empathy (Martin and Brooke,2002) as they may hold an egocentric view of the world (Stephens,1992). Foster and Yeager (1998) echo this view, discerning between empathy and imagination.

Table ii: Summary of responses to show the benefits of using historical fiction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promotes empathy</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging stimulus</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children are able to relate to characters</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aids interpretation</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aids chronological understanding</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivates enquiry</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides a different way of presenting information</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Teachers’ considerations of the limitations in using historical fiction in the classroom

Table iii: Summary of responses to show the limitations of using historical fiction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confuse fact and fiction</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited range of titles</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited viewpoint</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard to relate to own lives</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enjoyable</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not cross curricular</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading ability may be a barrier</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A third of respondents (6 out of 18) mentioned that there is a limited range of suitable titles to use with children and the time consuming nature of searching for an appropriate title to use; one teacher suggested that short extracts would be more suitable for her classes’ age range rather than whole texts. Slightly more respondents (7 out of 18) cited the possibility of children becoming confused between fact and fiction as the main limitation of historical fiction. The remaining perceptions were that the genre may only provide children with a limited viewpoint (3 respondents), with 1 respondent each respectively citing “hard to relate to own lives”, “children may simply not enjoy”, “historical fiction isn’t cross curricular – what about maths?” and “reading ability may be a barrier to learning”.

So to conclude, it would appear from these questionnaire responses that teachers generally view historical fiction as a useful classroom resource for History and English topics, and for developing historical skills.
CHAPTER 5

TEACHER INTERVIEW RESPONSES TO USING HISTORICAL FICTION

What are teachers’ opinions regarding the link between History and English and what do they consider the main benefits and limitations of using historical fiction to be?

Four interviews were conducted with teachers who had completed a questionnaire, as discussed in Chapter 4. Of these teachers, two are currently teaching in Year 4 in the same urban junior school, one is teaching in Year 1 in an urban infant school and one is a Year 3 teacher in an urban primary school. They were selected to be interviewed on the basis that they may be able to offer insight into the key trends that arose from analysing the questionnaire data. Interviews were semi-structured; Appendix 6 shows the structured questions asked. An example of one verbatim transcribed interview can be seen in Appendix 7.

The interviews utilised open questions which have subsequently been analysed to identify general themes along with inconsistencies. The data has been grouped and presented according to the research questions.

Teachers’ attitudes to choosing and using historical fiction to use with children

Teachers’ attitudes towards the choice and availability of historical fiction titles differed. Interviewee 2 mentioned that there were few appropriate titles for Year 3 studying ancient history topics such as the Ancient Egyptians, whereas Interviewee 4 mentioned the Ancient Egyptians as being a topic she had often used historical fiction in. Interviewee 2 had been teaching for between 10-20 years and said she tended to use the titles for topics previously used by other teachers in the school, whereas Interviewee 4 had been teaching for less than 5 years but appeared to be more pro-active in seeking new material to use with her class as she admitted to reading a lot of children’s
literature in her own time to find things that would appeal to the children in her class. Interestingly, Interviewee 2 did mention that for Guided Reading she uses a book entitled Raiders, which is based on Anglo-Saxons and the migration of Vikings, but did not appear to make explicit links that this title could be considered as historical fiction, as argued by Copson (2002). Similarly, another Interviewee 3 uses World War 2 based books for her Guided Reading sessions although (Appendix 8). The other two teachers both agreed that it can be time consuming to search for appropriate titles to use.

**Teacher’s experience of when historical fiction is most effectively utilised in a topic**

It was generally agreed between all interviewees that historical fiction is more effective used in the middle of a topic rather than at the beginning or the end. It was generally agreed that an element of background knowledge was beneficial to appreciation of the text and to enable a deeper understanding of what elements of the story may be based on real events or people. Youngs and Serafini (2011) discuss how using historical fiction with some prior knowledge can enable children to make connections.

**Teacher’s attitudes to diversity presented through historical fiction**

Interviewee 1 stated how some historical fiction can be used to contrast between rich and poor, and consider the representation of women (Appendix 7, lines 37-50). Interviewee 2 discussed how a range of social classes could be researched when doing topic work based on the Victorians. She mentioned how children might otherwise “generate stereotypes of poor Victorian children wearing rags and eating gruel.” This is an area that was explored further in a lesson observation in Chapter 6.
Teachers’ experience of children writing their own historical fiction

Hicks and Martin’s (2001) research suggests that it can be beneficial for children to write their own historical fiction. Opinions from teacher interviews were divided over children’s experience of writing their own historical fiction. Interviewees 1 and 4 stated their classes did not write their own. Interviewee 2 mentioned that her class wrote a new chapter based on an English author study of “classic” authors such as Charles Dickens, and so drew links between historical skills such as enquiry and English skills. Interviewee 3 mentioned that children used historical settings in some of their narrative work in English, such as evacuee stories set in World War 2. This area was observed in data collected for Chapter 6.

Teachers’ attitudes towards the benefits and limitations of historical fiction

Interviewee 1 stated some benefits of using historical fiction are that it can involve cross curricular approaches and deepen children’s understanding by approaching a topic from a different angle. Whilst Interviewees 3 and 4 both mentioned children may find using historical fiction enjoyable, Interviewee 2 did point out that whilst there may be a good range to choose from for topics such as Victorians or World War 2, other topics may not have such a big range and so it can be time consuming for the teacher to search for new material. Interviewees agreed that historical fiction can enrich children’s historical empathy, apparently in agreement with the research of Cooper (2007) and Harnett (2005), although it was generally agreed that younger children may struggle with this concept.

Teachers’ attitudes towards the link between history and English

When asked if English could enhance children’s historical skills and understanding, three of the teachers stated that during an English lesson, the focus should be solely on the English learning outcome.
This response appears to contradict Interviewee 1’s earlier response about how closely English and History are linked and the cross curricular benefits of combining the two subjects. However, her position as English coordinator could perhaps have influenced her response, indicating potential bias in her favouritism towards literacy. Drama was also mentioned in a previous response by Interviewee 2 as enriching History lessons, which likewise similarly contradicts her response to this question. These responses suggest that those interviewed may associate English primarily with reading and writing, and not fully consider that drama and group interaction may also enrich historical learning.

Results are therefore not wholly conclusive for links between English and History due to conflicting data. However, to conclude, teachers do acknowledge the two subjects are closely linked. Opinions vary regarding the main benefits and limitations of using historical fiction.

It was decided to observe English and History lessons as a result of these interviews in order to explore how historical fiction is used in History and English lessons and what the main benefits and limitations are observed to be in using historical fiction in the primary classroom.
CHAPTER 6
CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS USING HISTORICAL FICTION

How is historical fiction used in History and English lessons and what are the main benefits and limitations of using historical fiction in the primary classroom?

Two classroom observations were conducted to see how two of the teachers who were interviewed actually used historical fiction within the classroom. The classes were both Year 4 parallel classes in an urban junior school in East Northamptonshire. The data was gathered to support information revealed at interview and to answer the research question of how historical fiction is used in English and History lessons, and its main benefits and limitations.

The scheduled lessons where the teachers had planned to use historical fiction were a History lesson and an English lesson (Appendix 9).

English lesson

*Carrie’s War* (Bawden, 2003) was used to remind the children of the main characters and how the reader knows from the clues in the text that these characters are based in World War 2. The teacher used the novel in conjunction with photographic sources (Appendix 10) to relate the fictional characters to real children from the time, and encouraged the children to observe closely to notice period dress, apparently encouraging their own enquiry. Perhaps the photographs could have included children from a contrasting social/ethnic background to the characters to further enhance children’s perception of diversity within World War 2. Or perhaps, as Bracey (2003) advocates, using *another* novel to contrast and compare experiences of children in other countries.

A group of children were observed discussing what they had planned for their own characters, with one child seemingly using an anachronism (Appendix 9, line 68). The teacher asked him if the
character would have played with Angry Birds in World War 2 and he seemed somewhat pensive. It appeared that this child was attempting to empathise with his character, giving him qualities and actions similar to his own but had difficulty in comparing between then and now; understanding how children had different playthings in World War 2 to today. The majority of the class used the teacher’s initial modelling of “excited” and “scared”, appearing to add little additional detail to their work (Appendix 11). The questionnaire data suggested that promoting empathy was a benefit of using historical fiction with children, however interviewees mentioned that children can sometimes struggle with empathy. This observation appeared to back up the interview data as it was witnessed that some children struggled with the concept of empathy. However, not all children verbalised their thoughts during the lesson as the focus was on writing and so it would not be prudent to make generalisations based on the evidence of a few children alone. Perhaps some children may have found writing challenging and may have produced more effective work with an alternative outcome, such as drama. This was an issue that arose from the interviews and was also considered in the next lesson observation.

History lesson

Carrie’s War was used as an opportunity to explore diversity whereby the children were asked to consider if these experiences may have been typical of all children at the time. An excerpt from the novel was used to introduce the terms ‘billeting officer’ and ‘host family’, which is supported by Grugeon and Gardner (2000) and Cooper (2007) who advocate the use of novels to enrich children’s use of historical vocabulary and knowledge.

Through looking at archived pictures and experiences of the Blitz (Appendix 9, line 93) about accessing BBC website), Carrie’s War appeared to enable a ‘way in’, an initial stimulus to provide the children with motivation and curiosity to research for themselves, and promote their own enquiry. This also appeared to enable some children to make connections between their own families and past events. It
was observed that some children did appear to have difficulty with chronology, (Appendix 12). The teacher used the internet to search for archived photographs of the Royal family at the time and talked with the child about how many decades had passed since the event to the present day, making reference to the class timeline. Several children included anachronisms in their work (Appendix 12). The novel was used as a way to explore what kind of activities children of the era may have undertaken (Appendix 9, line 145).

The children seemed to be able to relate well to this extract and appeared to have a greater understanding of what pastimes would have been typical for evacuees like Carrie, than without using the text. Could this same level of understanding have been achieved without the use of the text? Perhaps, using other resources may have had a similar outcome however; the children appeared to be fully engaged and also appeared to have a sense of enjoyment as they discovered more about the fictional characters. Bracey et al. (2006) highlight the importance of developing children’s enjoyment in History. To further enhance the activity, perhaps the children could also have researched into the author’s own World War 2 experiences, used other sources and debated which elements of the story were likely to be based on fact, which is supported through the research of Gillespie (2007).

These findings appear to endorse the results from the questionnaire data where historical fiction was deemed to occasionally enhance chronological understanding. Some of the children observed appeared to require intervention from the teacher to scaffold their understanding of chronology and causation. Knowledge and understanding of people, events and changes in the past appeared to be enhanced through the use of historical fiction, with communication (between children themselves and child and teacher) increasing as anachronisms used by the children were detected and subsequently discussed. Using sources such as online archived material and photographs (Appendix 10) appeared to enrich the children’s historical understanding and skills, with the novel providing the initial stimulus for further enquiry.
Whilst both lessons incorporated the use of *Carrie’s War*, the focus on the English lesson appeared to be on the quality of the written work, using adjectives to describe, using connectives to make their sentences more interesting, using adverbs, etc., which corresponds with the interview findings of the learning objectives relating solely to English. However, during the History lesson the objectives were more concerned with developing historical skills and understanding and so emphasis was placed on these. Perhaps it could be argued that a greater degree of creativity in the planning of lessons may have resulted in more children being able to meet the learning objective (in terms of including non-written outcomes as an additional option), or on the other hand, perhaps Piaget (1959) was correct in his assumption that primary aged children will not have a sophisticated understanding of historical terms until they are developmentally ready.

To conclude, this data suggests that historical fiction is used to support the learning objectives of the English or the History lesson. Historical skills and understanding appear to be enhanced through relating the fictional characters to real people, thus enabling children to make connections. Historical fiction also appears to provide opportunities for using sources, such as photographs or online archived material, and for promoting communication through discussion relating to the text.

Perhaps a combined English and History lesson, as advocated by Hicks and Martin (2001) would be an alternative consideration that may further enrich skills and understanding.
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Hicks and Martin’s (2001) research, as discussed in the Literature Review, suggested that combined English and History lessons could be beneficial to children’s learning. Findings from this research project similarly suggest that there are clear links between using historical fiction in History and English lessons in the primary curriculum, although the data suggests that when used in English lessons, the focus is solely on an English learning objective with the historical element supporting the development of English skills. It could be argued that as a foundation subject in the National Curriculum (DfEE/QCA, 1999), History cannot be afforded the same prominence as a core subject such as English and so it is therefore appropriate that teachers only focus on History objectives during History lessons. Alternatively, one could argue that English lessons are an ideal opportunity to develop cross curricular links, particularly when techniques such as drama can help children who may struggle with the written word to express their ideas and demonstrate historical understanding.

This research data indicates that historical skills and understanding are occasionally or usually enhanced through the use of historical fiction, particularly understanding of historical empathy. Data does suggest however, that some children struggle with the concept of historical empathy, seemingly displaying a superficial level of understanding which according to some teachers, deepens as children mature and are able to understand the abstract nature of empathy. This was supported in the Literature Review through the debates of Piaget (1959) and Elton (1970), and through the distinction Martin and Brooke (2002) made between children’s apparent empathy and empathy that is derived from rigorous historical research. Harnett’s (2010) viewpoint of
the possibility of teachers imposing their fixed views onto children was partially demonstrated in the findings of the History lesson observation and subsequent informal interview of the teacher, where her viewpoint of evacuees being “scared and sad” was transmitted to the children who appeared to relate this to all evacuees without questioning it.

Data similarly suggests that children’s enquiry skills are supported through the use of historical fiction, which is corroborated through research mentioned in the Literature Review, where it was highlighted how vocabulary may present a barrier to some children when using historical fiction (Bage, 1999; Hicks and Martin, 2001; Hoodless, 2004; Husbands, 1996). Some of the findings from teacher interviews would appear to support this viewpoint, although no evidence was found in the other two categories of data. On the contrary, during the lesson observations, the researcher observed the vocabulary of ‘host family’ and ‘billeting officer’ being introduced through the use of historical fiction, which is supported by research of Grugeon and Gardner (2000) and Cooper (2007).

Research findings suggest that chronology and causation are less supported by the use of historical fiction than interpretation, communication and using sources, which contradicts findings from the Literature Review where historical fiction was highlighted as a way to allow children to make chronological connections (Bage, 1999; Daniel, 2012; Gadd, 2009; Hedeen, 2010), although the additional use of a time line in the History lesson (combined with teacher explanation) appeared to aid chronological understanding.

Some teachers cited a lack of time as a reason for not researching new titles to use with children, with many teachers relying on titles that have been used for a topic within the school before or have been recommended by another teacher. Professional journals (such as Primary History), associations (such as the Historical Association) and teacher forums (such as those found on www.tes.co.uk) were not mentioned as a way to keep up to date with new titles and the researcher would suggest that more awareness of these opportunities
may increase teachers knowledge of different resources to use, and consequently increase their confidence when selecting new titles to use with children. The findings suggest that this would perhaps be particularly beneficial to teachers with less than ten years’ experience, and may also allow teachers to source suitable titles to use with topics such as the Ancient Egyptians, which were mentioned as being harder to find appropriate titles for use in the classroom.

Whilst the researcher has taken all reasonable steps to ensure validity and reliability through gathering data using different methods to provide triangulation (Cohen et al., 2000), the lesson observations were conducted in one year group in the same setting. Whilst not directly comparable, as the lessons are different subjects, they do reveal useful data about how historical fiction is used from which some tentative conclusions may be drawn. Therefore, this data is relevant within the context of this research and could potentially be used as a basis for comparison with future research from other settings. This research could be developed further in a future project perhaps exploring how historical fiction is used within Key Stage 1 compared to Key Stage 2. Alternatively, this study could be extended to include a consideration of children’s own opinions on the use of historical fiction in their lessons, and their views on its impact on their historical knowledge, skills and understanding which may prove to be informative to primary teachers.
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## APPENDICES

### Table of contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 1</td>
<td>59-60</td>
<td>Aspects of a History lesson observed by researcher on Key Stage 2 school placement February 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2</td>
<td>61-65</td>
<td>Example of questionnaire used (online version)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 3</td>
<td>65-66</td>
<td>Letter to Head Teacher to request permission to conduct interviews and observations in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 4</td>
<td>67-68</td>
<td>Example of completed questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 5</td>
<td>69-72</td>
<td>Summary of questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 6</td>
<td><strong>Page 73-74</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>contextual responses</strong></td>
<td>Semi-structured interview questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 7</td>
<td><strong>Pages 75-82</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verbatim interview with teacher</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 8</td>
<td><strong>Page 83</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Information regarding “Sandbags And Sirens” used in Guided Reading</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 9</td>
<td><strong>Pages 84-90</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summary of lesson observations including synopsis of Carrie’s War</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 10</td>
<td><strong>Page 91</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Photographs used in lesson observation</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Appendix 11</td>
<td><strong>Pages 92-93</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Appendix 12</td>
<td>Pages 94-95</td>
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<tr>
<td>Example of children’s work:</td>
<td>Example of children’s work:</td>
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<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>History</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 1

Aspects of a History lesson observed by researcher on Key Stage 2 school placement February 2013

The researcher observed on final teaching practice (February 2013) during a history lesson, an Egyptian themed fiction book (*Mummy Family series* by Tony Bradman) being looked at independently by a group of Year 3 pupils. The book was discovered in the ‘topic box’ which contained information books about the particular topic of study which this particular term was the Ancient Egyptians. The book was a fiction book with colourful illustrations based around the adventures of a ‘mummy family’ – Daddy mummy, Mummy mummy, children mummies and pet mummies. It depicted them eating their dinner and watching television. When the researcher asked how the book helped the children to find out about the Ancient Egyptians, the children stated that “mummies ate different weird than us” in response to a section about their dinnertime, but that “they were like us too because they watched TV”. The researcher asked them to consider what they already knew about mummies, referring back to the prior lesson on the Afterlife, and the children appeared conflicted about fact and fiction, seeming unable to ascertain that the fiction book in question was a fantasy book and was not historically accurate. After the lesson, the work in their books appeared to suggest that they had used the fiction book as containing similar ‘facts’ to those found in the information books.

The researcher used this as a teaching point during the plenary, asking children to consider how they would know what they were reading was true or not, prompting some of the children to ask their own enquiry questions for the next session which they could research.

What this suggests to the researcher is that these particular children were not confident in handling books of different genres and need more experience of looking at different sources of information,
questioning them and thinking of ways they could find out information for themselves.
APPENDIX 2

Example of online questionnaire

The published form can be viewed here:
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/viewform?formkey=dGpHS01JNjIKNUd2bVd6WVpRd2NSQ0E6MQ

Neither you nor your institution will be named in my dissertation or any publication associated with it. All information and data collected will remain anonymous.

1. What is your current role (e.g. Year 4 class teacher, Science co-ordinator)?

2. What previous roles have you had?

3. What was your specialism during your teacher training?

4. What type of school are you currently teaching in?
   - • urban
   - • village
   - • multicultural
   - • Other: 

5. How many years have you been teaching?
   - • I am currently in Initial Teacher Training
   - • less than 5 years
   - • 5-10 years
   - • 10-20 years
- 20-30 years
- 30-40 years
- Other: 

6. What is your experience of using historical fiction in the History classroom?

- I have never used it in history lessons
- I have used it for one history topic
- I have used it for some history topics
- I have often used it in history topics
- I always use it in history topics

7. What is your experience of using historical fiction in the English classroom?

- I have never used it in English lessons
- I have used it for one English topic
- I have used it for some English topics
- I have often used it in English topics
- I always use it in English lessons

8. Do particular units of work in English or History lend themselves to using historical fiction more than others (please give examples of titles used if possible)?
9. Please rate how you consider historical fiction may enhance the following history skills: chronology 1 = no effect, 2 = occasionally enhances, 3 = usually enhances, 4 = important means of developing it

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no effect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>interpretation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no effect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>using sources</td>
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<td>no effect</td>
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<tr>
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<td>communication</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>no effect</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

knowledge and understanding of people, events and changes in the past

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
no effect ✔️ ✔️ ✔️ ✔️ important means of developing it

10. What would you consider the benefits of using historical fiction in the classroom?

11. What would you consider the limitations of using historical fiction in the classroom?

12. If you have any further comments regarding historical fiction then please give details below:
Thank you for your comments. If you would be willing to discuss your responses in more detail then please give contact details below:

APPENDIX 3

Dear Mrs Woodhouse,

I am currently in my third year at Northampton University studying Primary Education.

The focus of my dissertation is how historical fiction is used in primary schools and how this impacts on children’s historical skills and understandings.

My study will involve compiling questionnaires for teachers in a range of primary schools, interviewing teachers and observing lessons where historical fiction is being used.

I would be most grateful if you would consider allowing me to interview any willing teachers at your school and to observe any lessons where historical fiction is being used. All data collected will be treated confidentially and remain anonymous at all times, and will be stored securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998).
Ideally, the dates when I will be available for conducting research are on Mondays up until half term although I can be flexible should this not be convenient for you.

You are welcome to look at my findings and I can provide you with a copy of my final dissertation should you request it.

With many thanks,

Diane Williams

Email : 

Phone: 

APPENDIX 4

1. What is your current role (e.g. Year 4 class teacher, Science co-ordinator)?
   Year 3 Teacher

2. What previous roles have you had?
   KS1 Leader, P.E. Coordinator

3. What was your specialism during your teacher training?
   PGCE N/A

4. What type of school are you currently teaching in?
   - Urban
   - Village
   - Multicultural
   - Other

5. How many years have you been teaching?
   - I am currently in Initial Teacher Training
   - less than 5 years
   - 5-10 years
   - 10-20 years
   - 20-30 years
   - 30-40 years
   - Other

6. What is your experience of using historical fiction in the History classroom?
   - I have never used it in history lessons
   - I have used it for one history topic
   - I have used it for some history topics
   - I have often used it in history topics
   - I always use it in history topics

7. What is your experience of using historical fiction in the English classroom?
   - I have never used it in English lessons
   - I have used it for one English topic
   - I have used it for some English topics
   - I have often used it in English topics
   - I always use it in English lessons

8. What topics in English or History lend themselves to using historical fiction? Please provide examples of historical fiction books used if possible.
   - Stories with historical settings
   - WW2
   - Victorians

Diane Williams
APPENDIX 4

9. Please rate how important historical fiction is in developing children’s understanding of the following historical skills:
   1 = no effect, 2 = occasionally enhances, 3 = usually enhances, 4 = important means of developing it (please circle your response)
   CHRONOLOGY
   1 2 3 4
   WHY THINGS HAPPENED (CAUSATION)
   1 2 3 4
   INTERPRETATION
   1 2 3 4
   ENQUIRY
   1 2 3 4
   USING SOURCES
   1 2 3 4
   EMPATHY
   1 2 3 4
   COMMUNICATION
   1 2 3 4
   KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF PEOPLE, EVENTS AND CHANGES IN THE PAST
   1 2 3 4

10. What would you consider the benefits of using historical fiction in the classroom?
   Children enjoy story.
   Can give opportunities to explore/ research own questions.

11. What would you consider the limitations of using historical fiction in the classroom?
   They may believe everything is true.
   Accurate.

12. If you would be willing to discuss your responses in further detail, or if you have any further comments regarding historical fiction then please give details below or overleaf:
   Contact via school office.
### APPENDIX 5

**Table iv: Summary of respondents’ contextual questionnaire answers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. What is your current role (eg. Year 4 class teacher, Science co-ordinator)?</th>
<th>2. What previous roles have you had?</th>
<th>3. What was your specialism during your teacher training?</th>
<th>4. What type of school are you currently teaching in?</th>
<th>5. How many years have you been teaching?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Year 6, Numeracy, PSHE Coordinator</td>
<td>Re, Science Coordinator, Year 4 &amp; 5 Teacher</td>
<td>N/A- PGCE Environmental Studies</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>5-10 Years</td>
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<td>Year 1 Teacher DT And Events Coordinator</td>
<td>Year 2 Head Of Year Head Of PE</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>10-20 Years</td>
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<td>Year 1 Teacher</td>
<td>Head Of PE</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>10-20 Years</td>
</tr>
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<td>Reception Teacher</td>
<td>Music/Literacy</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>30-40 Years</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Music Co-Ordinator,</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>5-10 Years</td>
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<td>Role</td>
<td>Specialization</td>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>Urban/Village</td>
<td>Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
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<td>Urban</td>
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<td>Student Prim Ed</td>
<td>Teaching Assistant</td>
<td>PE</td>
<td>Urban</td>
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<td>Assistant</td>
<td>Head Of Year Museum Marketing, Graduate</td>
<td>None, PGCE</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Less Than 5 Years</td>
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<td>Trainee Librarian</td>
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<td>History Teacher</td>
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<td>Science</td>
<td>Urban</td>
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<td>Trainee Teacher</td>
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<td>Urban</td>
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<td>Year 6 Teacher, ICT Co Coordinator</td>
<td>Head Of Year, Y4 Teacher, Y6 Teacher, Gifted And Talented</td>
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<td>Less Than 5 Years</td>
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<td>Yr3 and Yr4 Year 5 Teacher</td>
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<td>Year 3 Teacher, D &amp; T Co-Ordinator</td>
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<td>Maths</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>5-10 Years</td>
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<td>Urban</td>
<td>10-20 Years</td>
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<td>Yr 4, 5, 6 Teacher</td>
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</table>
APPENDIX 6

Semi-structured Interview questions

1. You mentioned in your questionnaire that you have used historical fiction books with children. How did you choose those particular titles to use with children?

2. Do you prefer teaching a bit of background in the history lessons prior to the use of the novel or would you use it at the start of the unit?

3. Is it hard for children to develop empathy or is this something they can do easily?

4. How often do you change the titles of the historical fiction you use?

5. How easy do you find it to look for new historical fiction titles to use?

6. How are different social aspects addressed through the use of the novels?

7. Do children have the chance to write their own historical fiction?

8. How far do the children explore the extent to which the book is based on evidence or story?

9. What would you consider the benefits and limitations to using historical fiction?

10. How are English and history linked? In English, are historical skills and understanding able to be developed?
11. Do the skills children develop in history help them in English?
This interview was conducted in the Autumn term 2012 with a primary school teacher who is currently teaching Year 5 in an urban junior school in East Northamptonshire. She has been a qualified teacher for 15 years and is English coordinator at the school.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you for allowing me to tape this conversation, please just let me know if you’d like me to stop recording at any point. I will transcribe this at a later date, preserving your anonymity, and will make a copy available to you for your approval prior to submission of my dissertation should you request it. Are you happy to start?

TEACHER: Yep that’s ok.

INTERVIEWER: OK, you mentioned in your questionnaire that you have used historical fiction books with children. How did you choose those particular titles to use with children?

TEACHER: I chose Oliver Twist last year specifically because we had a theatre group who came in, and they um did a performance of um Oliver twist and so um that opened itself up beautifully. It linked really well with the history, um and we were able to do a lot of drama and different things to do with that. The children got such a lot out of it, when they came to do some writing and it was based on, um, Oliver’s feelings, they came up with some great work because they could empathise, you know, they had the understanding of what it must’ve been like for children at that time. Um, but that was also linked in very much with looking at, um, looking at understanding that Oliver was a fictional character but then we linked it in to actual factory reports from the times where children were giving their points of view. Um, so yeah, there’s a lot of links with the Victorians History Unit especially and the fact that it is children you’re looking at. It’s important to them, I’d rather do that than look at say Queen Victoria, because they can’t relate to that; that’s your starting point but they need to be looking at
children the same age as them at that time because then they can make connections.

INTERVIEWER: **So, does historical fiction help them make those connections?**

TEACHER: It can do, yes. If children read about, um, say, a Victorian child who is wearing rags, who has a very limited food supply, who is in a workhouse then they can...um, they can start to imagine what it must have been like as a child during those times. Text books don’t always give children that insight, that leap of using their imagination. Of course, they might not always, like, imagine historically accurate things but as a first step, um, it is a useful medium to engage them and to get them to want to find out more.

INTERVIEWER: **How far would you consider that historical fiction allows you to explore diversity effectively with children?**

TEACHER: Well, um (pause)...it can allow you to explore various aspects of, um, diversity. Like...er...how rich and poor can be compared. We do this quite effectively in our Tudor topic by looking at everyday people in relation to Henry VIII, but we haven’t used historical fiction for this topic yet as we tend to do a unit of poetry alongside this in English which doesn’t lend itself as well. But, when doing Victorians, we have used Street Child and looked at the poorer citizen in relation to Queen Victoria, and compared how they live to er, Osbourne House for example. There are some of the My Story books that deal with strong female characters in History too which the children enjoy reading in the library, they like to talk about these types of book when we are covering a similar History topic and it, um, allows us the opportunity to, you know, explore why women aren’t always represented as well as men sometimes in History. Anything that opens up dialogue and prompts the children to ask questions has got to be a good thing.
INTERVIEWER: **Do you prefer teaching a bit of background in the history lessons prior to the use of the novel or would you use it at the start of the unit?**

TEACHER: Um...(sigh)...no, not right at the start. We tend to um, we introduce by looking at, like, their older brothers or sisters and any jobs they may have and why they would have those jobs – you know, he’s got a paper round because he wants to save up for whatever, and you know, understanding the fact that they are not forced to do that. It’s a choice. A choice that as you’re a little bit older you might make. And actually what, what we tend to do is start with a first person account from a child in Victorian times just describing their job um, in the mines, the coal mines and not saying it’s a child and what do you think about this person and then this is actually a child, a person that is actually younger than you and this is what they had to do every day. But also, you have to put a lot of drama into things, so when we looked at the coal mines we had to, we had equipment that was like um, the height that they would be working in and they all had a go, to give them an idea of what it would’ve been like.

INTERVIEWER: **So do you think it’s hard for children to empathise what it was like or is this something they can develop easily?**

TEACHER: Yes, definitely. It’s hard for them. Lots of, um, children struggle....(pause) they do definitely find it hard. Empathy is quite a hard thing for younger children.

INTERVIEWER: **In what way is it hard for them?**

TEACHER: Um, well...(pause) some of the children just don’t appear to be able to put themselves into someone else’s shoes. It’s quite a sophisticated concept. Some children can begin to understand, especially if we use examples of children of their own age...um...this seems to help them to realise what it was like for children then, and enable them to compare to their own lives now.
TEACHER: No, we’ve used it for two years. Um, we’re also, this year, for the first time will be using – it wasn’t written at that time but – Street Child the Berlie Doherty book. We’re actually using it in guided reading for the more able readers.

TEACHER: Yes, that’s right. I think just giving them as many opportunities as possible. There are a lot of books you can use. I think it’s important selecting (teacher emphasis) parts of the text that are accessible to the children because some of these are quite difficult...they, you wouldn’t expect a child of that age to sit and read but actually just to unpick a little bit and um, um start to look at the difference in the language and how, you know, how the books are written in a much more formal way than today. It’s just giving them a taste really and it just links in with everything we are doing.

TEACHER: um, yeah, well...I think, you know, every year we review the curriculum and we look at what has worked, what has worked well, and we are using Oliver Twist and the Water Babies this year because they worked well last year but it’s not something I would like slog for years as I think um, you know, they’re fine because they are classic novels and you would want to be using that kind of material but there are other things that you could use as well.

TEACHER: Yes, that’s right. I think just giving them as many opportunities as possible. There are a lot of books you can use. I think it’s important selecting (teacher emphasis) parts of the text that are accessible to the children because some of these are quite difficult...they, you wouldn’t expect a child of that age to sit and read but actually just to unpick a little bit and um, um start to look at the difference in the language and how, you know, how the books are written in a much more formal way than today. It’s just giving them a taste really and it just links in with everything we are doing.

TEACHER: um, yeah, well...I think, you know, every year we review the curriculum and we look at what has worked, what has worked well, and we are using Oliver Twist and the Water Babies this year because they worked well last year but it’s not something I would like slog for years as I think um, you know, they’re fine because they are classic novels and you would want to be using that kind of material but there are other things that you could use as well.

TEACHER: um, yeah, well...I think, you know, every year we review the curriculum and we look at what has worked, what has worked well, and we are using Oliver Twist and the Water Babies this year because they worked well last year but it’s not something I would like slog for years as I think um, you know, they’re fine because they are classic novels and you would want to be using that kind of material but there are other things that you could use as well.
TEACHER: Yeah, it’s looking at things and thinking you know, that would be a really good one to look at with the children. Um, we’ve also this year, we’ve had the theatre in just very recently and it was Tom’s Midnight Garden and so of course part of that is based in Victorian times as well so we’ve, we’ve touched a little bit upon that, the fact that it’s the same kind of period as what we’re looking at. It gives them another experience of it and the fact that it’s a completely um different social um scene from Oliver Twist so...(pause)

INTERVIEWER: How are different social aspects, such as rich and poor people, addressed through the use of the novels?

TEACHER: Yes, we tend to do that more through art, um we look at um we look at examples of um Victorian art, of children working, but we also look at examples of children at play, more affluent children and we look at the differences. This tends to be more through art than through literature that we’ve done. We make historical links with the art and history; it’s a big part of the history work we do as well. There’s a lot of cross curricular links, and it’s the children understanding what evidence have you used to understand about the key question and you know, what are the differences between us and children in Victorian times so think about all the things we have used to help us come to that understanding. And we also have our visit to Holdenby.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, that must be coming up soon?

TEACHER: Yes, it is, November- and that’s a great learning tool, it’s fantastic.

INTERVIEWER: Is the visit at the end of your unit of work?

TEACHER: Um, no, it’s kind of in the middle we go and um, that’s fantastic. It really helps those children who struggle with the written word so, for them to have that practical experience is really good, it really does open their eyes. They are very good there.
INTERVIEWER: Do children go on to have the chance to write their own historical fiction?

TEACHER: Um, no...what we’ve done with the likes of Oliver Twist is they have written from Oliver’s point of view or they have written as a child in that period um...but that’s as far we have really taken it.

INTERVIEWER: How far do the children explore the extent to which the book is based on evidence or story?

TEACHER: With Oliver Twist we looked a little bit at Charles Dickens and just touched a little bit on the political thing...(pause)...we do look at Dr Barnardo and Lord Shaftsbury and um, the fact that they were very you know, important figures for children and they really changed things for children at that time. Um, so we do look at what is real and what is fiction and the children understand that Oliver is a fictional character, a piece of fiction, but actually there were children who were just like him. And if you look again at the factory reports, you know, they tell us um, the reports from Lord Shaftsbury and Dr Barnardo being out on the street, that could’ve been Oliver Twist. And looking at the art as well. So yeah, all of that. It’s really quite easy to make links with this one.

INTERVIEWER: What would you consider the benefits and limitations of using historical fiction with children?

TEACHER: Well I think the benefits are...are...because it’s cross curricular and the children are then using so many of their skills and you’re going to get much better quality writing if they understand the background if they have some understanding of the background of the period, and the experiences that those children have gone through then their writing is going to be much, much better quality. Um, and if you’re looking at history from lots of different angles then obviously this must deepen their understanding. It’s that ...it’s that age old thing about we’ve got books but we want to get away from just opening the book and finding the evidence on that page. There has to be other ways of approaching it really. So, yeah...
INTERVIEWER: **Any downsides then to using it, that you can think of?**

TEACHER: Um, I would say that the downsides are again, the age old problem of access – that every child is able to access the literature because those books are quite tricky and when you’ve got children working at Level 2 you wouldn’t be looking at those really, but it’s just finding something that they can, kind of tune in to and um, try and bring it to their level. Yeah...yeah (pause)...

INTERVIEWER: **So, history and English then, are closely linked in your opinion?**

TEACHER: Yeah, I would think, yeah they are. They’re the easiest subjects to link I think, yes.

INTERVIEWER: **In your experience, in English, are historical skills and understanding able to be developed?**

TEACHER: I think if you’re doing, teaching English then your objectives must be English based – they have to be. Um, but the historical skills and knowledge that they have, they should be able to bring that to the content of what they’re writing. But it’s actually the English that, that you’re focusing on rather than the history. Um, so yeah...yeah...history can help with research skills though, and we do try and link ICT time into this too.

INTERVIEWER: **Do the research skills that children develop in history help them in English?**

TEACHER: Yes, and I do think that they are very closely linked because in English, in your reading, you’re doing lots of work on scanning, skimming text, looking for the key information. All of that kind of thing. So obviously that’s going to help them with their history and any research that they do, and then of course you’ve got the ICT that fits into that as well in terms of being able to access historical information. There’s a lot of links really.
INTERVIEWER: Your history lessons are usually taught in the afternoon?

TEACHER: Yes, yes.

INTERVIEWER: So do you have any other adult support in the classroom for those lessons?

TEACHER: Um, yes, I would have an LSA normally for some of them. But sometimes we can be flexible in that if we want to use the ICT suite then I would do it in the mornings but generally it tends to be in the afternoons yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you very much for answering my questions today, I really appreciate it. Once typed up, I will let you have a copy so you can check it over before I use it in my dissertation.

TEACHER: Not a problem, it sounds like some interesting research you’re doing...good luck with it!

END OF INTERVIEW.
APPENDIX 8

_Sandbags And Sirens_ and _Heroes_: two examples of World War 2 based books used in Guided Reading sessions in a Year 4 classroom. Whilst _Sandbags And Sirens_ is a non-fiction book, _Heroes_ is a fiction book and has many illustrations that depict life for children during World War 2 such as the use of gas masks (see below).
APPENDIX 9

Synopsis of *Carrie’s War* by Nina Bawden

*Carrie’s War* is the story of Carrie and her brother Nick, who are evacuated to Wales from London during World War 2, and are sent to live with the authoritarian Mr Evans. In the Afterword of the 2003 revised edition, Nina Bawden explains how *Carrie’s War* “is loosely based on my wartime experiences...Carrie’s story is not mine, but her feelings about being away from home for the first time are ones I remember” (Eccleshare, 2003, p171). This is illustrated on their first night in the Evans’s home where Carrie climbs into Nick’s bed at night when he was upset about missing his parents:

“I don’t like it here. I don’t want to be safe in the country. I want Mummy and Milly and Dad.”

“You’ve got me,” Carrie held him tight to comfort them both. She said, “it won’t seem so bad in the morning.”

(Bawden, 2003, p25)

Carrie and Nick suffer from homesickness but swiftly adapt to their new surroundings, and begin to consider that the photograph of their parents serves as a reminder that they belong to another time and place. The children have a lot of freedom, free from parental supervision, and Bawden reflects on this aspect of her own experiences, stating, “no one bothered with us much, except our teachers occasionally, and even they had more important things to think about. There was a war on after all” (Eccleshare, 2003, p173).

*Carrie’s War* is a popular book used by teachers when teaching World War 2 topics, and is the focus book used by the Year 4 teachers who the researcher observed teaching for the purposes of this dissertation.

Children in Year 4 have been using *Carrie’s War* to support their English unit of work of writing a narrative with a historical setting.
During the lessons the teacher has been reading extracts of the text to the children and the lesson observed demonstrates using this background knowledge of the characters to plan two characters for their own story set in World War 2.

**English lesson observation**

*LO: To Plan Two Characters For A Story Set In World War 2*

11.05 It is the lesson after playtime and as the children enter the classroom the teacher reminds them it is English then asks them to come to the front of the room and sit on the carpet. The teacher asks the children what story have they looked at in English so far. A child is picked to answer and replies, “Carrie’s War”. The teacher asks the children what a character sketch is, then asks children to offer their explanations. She then recaps ensuring everyone understands. They read the LO and SC aloud as a whole class then the teacher asks the class if both of their characters will be the same or different, making the connection between the different characters in Carrie’s War, Carrie and her brother Nick. She asks the children to think about how those characters are different. One boy says, “Nick was sick and Carrie wasn’t”. The teacher continues to question them, asking specifically about their personalities. One girl says, “Carrie doesn’t eat much but Nick is a bit greedy”. Praise for using a good example.

The teacher models on the board how to plan a character, deciding to call her first character Sam. She refers to four pictures she has displayed next to the whiteboard depicting scenes of evacuees from WW2 (Appendix 10). She asks the children how do they know these are pictures from WW2? What hints are there in the pictures? Children respond: gas masks, have to leave homes on trains (teacher scaffolds vocabulary – evacuees, then gets all children to say ‘evacuation’). One child suggests they are from WW2 because they are “black and white pictures and a long time ago” – teacher says “It might be” then praise another child who has spotted that not all of the four pictures are black.
and white, one is in colour. Another child suggests ‘nametags, so they won’t get lost’.

The teacher points to one of the children in the photos and tells the class she is basing her character on this particular child, and she will call him Sam. She asks the children what else she can say about Sam. Pair talk about what’s Sam’s appearance is like. Feedback on ideas, children suggest he wears a hat (like the cap in the photo), that he looks a bit worried. Teacher asks for a hint to show he is worried – she models ‘he was hanging his head and his hat is pulled down’. She asks the class what else that hints: they suggest ‘bit scared as well’ and ‘shy’. The teacher tells the children she does not want the children to explicitly write “he’s worried” but wants them to use description about what he does. The teacher models how to write notes on the board.

11.20 Teacher reads out her character list that she prepared prior to the lesson, “Sam was quick tempered”...asks children to discuss what that might mean. She goes over their task so that they can be independent when back in their seats.

Differentiation –

Greens (HA) 2 contrasting characters
Blues (MA) start with 1 character and try and do 2
Yellows (MA/LA) teacher support
Reds (LA) LSA support outside the classroom.

Children write date and LO in books, prompted several times by teacher.

11.30 Most children are starting their task. One child asks if she can write WW2 in the LO, the teacher replies that she can because it shows she understands what WW2 means. The teacher refers children back to the photos to give them ideas on what to describe. She prompts her focus group to look closely at the photos to see what the evacuees are wearing.
11.40 LSA returns to the classroom to collect three WW2 textbooks to show her group pictures.

11.45 Teacher circulates the room to check children’s work. Five children have gathered around the photos on the board, they are discussing together what the evacuees are wearing and what they look like. Teacher moves back to work with focus group.

11.50 Two boys (blue group) have under the ‘actions’ heading for their character “plays Angry Birds a lot”. The teacher points to the LO in their books at the WW2 part and asks “would they play with that in WW2 do you think?”

Reply : “Hmmm….no, not in WW2 I suppose. I might make my own name up for a game cos I don’t know what they played”.

The other boy said, “they had play boy things” then demonstrated with his fingers a small handheld game with buttons.

Teacher : “do you mean a game boy?”

Boy: “yeah, that’s it! They had them then cos it was a long time ago”.

Teacher moves around the class to mark work

11.54 Plenary. Feedback on some of the children’s characters. One boy says, “he’s scared” for character, teacher offers suggestions on how he could give clues without stating that he is scared – he wrings his hands, his breathing is fast... Children offer their suggestions. One girl says her character “wears a dress” so the teacher prompts her to look at the photos again and describe the dress. The girl replies, “a raggy dress”.

12.00 End of lesson.

History lesson observation

In History, children have also been using Carrie’s War to support their historical understanding of why children were evacuated in World War 2 and to understand how they might have felt. Links were made
between how the children would feel if they were sent away from their own homes today to somewhere new, and to relate it to how the characters felt in *Carrie’s War*.

**LO: To Know Why Children Were Evacuated During WW2 And Understand How They Might Have Felt**

**Main outline of lesson:**

- Use of a website to discuss evacuation
  
  [www.bbc.co.uk/primaryhistory/world_war_2_/evacuation](http://www.bbc.co.uk/primaryhistory/world_war_2_/evacuation)

- Links made between how children when going away from own homes to somewhere new and to evacuees – mixture of responses, CT links to mixtures of experiences of evacuees. Apprehension, excitement, happy and sad.

- London compared to countryside in terms of bombing – focus on why cities were targets – factories, weapons, food production, clothing, air raids, evacuated, host families.

- Description of possible host families – characteristics, location, jobs, home, countryside: comparison to London.

- Discussion on role of Billeting Officer.

- Children’s first task is to draw and label a picture of an evacuee, paying attention to details do reader will know they are an evacuee eg. name tag and gas mask, clothes, suitcase. Refers to pictures of evacuees to show hats worn.

- Focus on annotations not artistic outcome – reasons why they would have been “excited” or “scared”.

- Children’s second task is to write a letter home as if they were an evacuee to their mother. Class generate ideas together and teacher scaffolds use of keywords and phrases such as “host family” and “billeting officer”. Address discussed – Devon,
Cornwall or Wales suggested. Date discussed – not modern, within WW2 time frame.

- As children work independently, they mention family links to WW2 eg, “my granddad was in WW2, and my grandma- she worked on a farm that got bombed. He’s 92 now”.

- The teacher uses example from the novel to illustrate free time was not spent like children do today:

  “I help in the shop sometimes. Mr Evans’s shop. Nick’s not allowed now, but I am. And I play on the mountains and I slide down the slag heap.” (Bawden, 2003, p55).

- Children are observed talking about their work using some anachronisms eg. the host family “won’t let me play on my DS” (gaming console), and mentioning Queen Elizabeth II as the sovereign, later changing her wording to Princess Elizabeth after a discussion with the teacher. One child mentions that his character plays “Angry Birds a lot” (iPad app).

The researcher informally interviewed the teacher after the lesson to clarify what the teacher’s learning objectives were and her views on how children can develop skills such as empathy. She made reference to one child who had appeared to comprehend the concept of empathy, summarising that:

"It’s a challenge for them to grasp ...when Emily [pseudonym] was writing, she got the idea, you know, that it’s a different way, she understood that it’s a different way of life. And that things in London weren’t the same as the country, that they felt sad ...the emotions...of leaving their parents to go to a place that was really strange to them. They’d be sad, they’d be anxious, worried..."
She also mentioned the cross curricular elements of using *Carrie’s War*,

"We use ICT and go onto the BBC websites a lot, and even with the air raids, the empathy- they could see how difficult it could be for children, they saw the pictures, how sad the children looked. We’ve looked at like, *Carrie’s War*, we’ve been doing that in English and they have seen the film extract where the children were taken away from their parents, they were crying so it helps them to understand. But I think that by seeing it, they get a better picture of events to help them understand it rather than reading about it."
Appendix 10

Examples of photographs used to support historical understanding alongside the use of Carrie’s War.
APPENDIX 11

Monday 1st October 2012

Feelings of an unsure

Confused because

Excited because

She has never been out of the city

Mixed emotions because she is

Happy, worried, sad and angry

She doesn’t know what he parents are going to do.
APPENDIX 11

Monday 1st October 2012

Feelings of a penguin

terrified

excited because she might
read new stories

shy

worried

sad

upset because there might be

horrible
APPENDIX 12

Dear Mum,

I am writing to you at 8.15 am and I have

problems especially because my host family

are all focused on education. My host family are

very well mannered, they taught me all of

the basics of settling in with new people. There

are six people in our family and I am the youngest.

There is Big Eric the dad, Sophie mom, Jamie, 10th

Little Eric, Lusi, Leigh brother and Eleanor than me,

but luckily there is five girls and I have

no boys. School here in Germany is very different

from home as it has strict discipline.
Dear Mum,

I am writing to you because I want to share with you about what my host family is like. The family that I am with is the Smiths. They live on a farm. I do like it here because we can enjoy the sunshine and we can ride horses. I love it here, but I do want to come home. You know why London has a nice park. The Prince of Wales still lives in the park. How is it in London?

*The child originally thought Queen Elizabeth II was the monarch in 1944 and spoke about how Prince William wouldn't have liked the evacuations, as if he was alive then.*