

Indentures



Blue Coat School Indenture. © The Liverpool Blue Coat School

Summary

Pupils will learn about the lives of children in the past and the opportunities they had when they left school. Pupils will think about how the lives of children have changed through time and the importance of freedom of choice.

Duration

Core activity: 1 x 1 hour session
 Extension activity: 1 x 1 hour session

Aims and Outcomes

- Pupils will have learned about the lives of people from the past
- Pupils will have learned about the idea of freedom and why it is so important

Curriculum links

English

Planning their writing by:

Discussing writing similar to that which they are planning to write, in order to understand and learn from its structure, vocabulary and grammar

Discussing and recording ideas

Considering and evaluate different viewpoints, attending to and building on the contributions of others

Noting and developing initial ideas, drawing on reading and research where necessary

History

A study of an aspect of history or a site dating from a period beyond 1066 that is significant in the locality

Background

Apprenticeship is a system where a young person works for an experienced craftsman or tradesman and their pay is principally the skill that they develop as the result of the training. Apprenticeships have a very long history, with young people made to work for a master for a fixed time (usually seven years) dating back to medieval times. By the 16th century, apprenticeships were a generally accepted means of providing technical training to boys and some girls in a wide range of occupations.

In an apprenticeship, the child effectively became an extra worker in their master's household. There were many rules that they had to agree to when they signed their indenture.

An indenture is a legal document that sets out these rules. The indenture was, in most cases, a private agreement between the master and the guardian of the child to be

apprenticed. Children had little or no say in the choice of apprenticeship and master. An apprentice's master did not have to pay them a wage as the training that was provided was thought to be payment enough. However, from early times it was usual for a master to pay their apprentice small sums.

The collection of indentures that we have as part of the My Bluecoat project give us a good insight into what happened to children after they left the Blue Coat School and what opportunities were available to them. They also serve to highlight the differences between education and childhood today and 300 hundred years ago.

Looking at the indentures, we know that the majority of boys who attended the school were apprenticed into maritime trades. We have documents that show a young girl apprenticed to a lace maker, and a boy apprenticed to a merchant.

Activities

Starter question

These questions will assess the pupils' prior knowledge and also alert you to any possible difficulties or sensitive topics

What job would you like to do when you're older?

Do you think your parents or carers would choose the same thing for you?

Can you choose to do any job you want?

Core activity

Read the rules that a Blue Coat School pupil would have to agree to follow when they entered an apprenticeship. *Do pupils think these rules are fair? If not, why not?*

Once they have discussed the rules, the pupils will fill in their own indenture template with the career that they would most want to do for seven years, with little or no pay. They should then discuss the differences between their indenture and those of the Blue Coat School pupils.

End questions

These questions will ask pupils to reflect on what they have learnt and ask them to apply this knowledge to the world today.

How are the choices children can make about their lives different from the choices that children could make 300 years ago?

Give an example of a time or place where children are not free to make their own decisions.

Extension activity

Children at Blue Coat School did not have the freedom of choice to choose their own career. Pupils should discuss why freedom of choice is so important and how this might have changed over the last 300 years, before completing the worksheet.

Think About

- What job you would like to do?
- What are the differences between choosing a job now and in the past?

Talk About

- Does the idea of apprenticeships seem fair to you?
- How has the working age for children changed?
- What do you think working life was like for the pupils who left Blue Coat School?
- Do we still have apprenticeships today? if so, how are they different from the ones in the past?

Find Out About

- We know that the maritime trade was very important to Liverpool but what other trades could a child be apprenticed to in Liverpool?

If you enjoyed this resource you might want to look at *Silhouettes* and *Bluecoat and the Blitz*