Learning the Landscape through Language

SHROPSHIRE PLACE-NAMES AND MIGRATION

This resource pack combines aspects of English (language), History, Geography, Maths, Art and Design and Citizenship using pre-modern place-names to understand historical migration into Shropshire. Place-names are one of the earliest pieces of evidence for migration, and they can tell us a great deal about who lived in Shropshire, and which languages were in use over the last 1,500 years. The exercises outlined below will help students to explore who the people of Shropshire were. This pack will help students to build a rich picture of the range of people who lived in Shropshire hundreds of years ago.

This pack includes a set of exercises, a set of PowerPoint slides and a 'Normans' pdf file.

Exercise one: Where are we from?

Begin by asking the children to think about who lives in Shropshire today. Think about the following questions:

- Where is Shropshire / which country does Shropshire belong to?
- Is Shropshire close to any other countries?
- What would you say is the main language spoken in Shropshire today?
- Can you think of any other languages that people living in Shropshire might speak?
- What languages are spoken in your family? (include wider family here – at least three generations – children/parents/grandparents)

Ask the children to create a short family tree (to at least three generations, if they can). They should indicate in each instance where each of the family members listed on their tree was born (include the country where necessary). They can do this with the help of family members. Discuss the children's family trees as a group, and work out:

- How many people were born in Shropshire?
- How many people were born somewhere else?
- How many different languages were spoken by family members?

This can be done as an exercise focusing on percentages and fractions. You might also want to use a map (or create your own), with pins showing where people were born, and letting the children work out the distance between all these places and their school.

Exercise two: The people of Shropshire's past

Look at slide 1 'Living in Britain'. Ask the children to try and determine when each group of people arrived in Britain (there are some clues on the slide). In order to help the children to imagine how much time this represents, you could use a long rope and ask individual children to represent each point in time along the rope. Slide 2 provides more information on each of these groups (this slide

includes an additional group, the Welsh, who were descended from the Britons). This slide helps us to see why these groups might initially have come to Britain.

Now ask the children to think about how we know that these different groups of people came to Britain. You could use some props to help them think about this (or use slide three); their answers could include:

- Books/documents that tell us about people coming to Britain
- Pictures: these come in many forms, for example on coins and in books, paintings (on all sorts of surfaces, including stone, wood, pottery and parchment)
- Material culture/archaeology: things buried underground, like bodies in graves, and the possessions of the dead people (clothes/money/swords etc.) can tell us a lot about the people living in Britain hundreds of years ago. This might also include buildings (e.g. hill-forts, houses etc., and buildings whose remains are visible, like castle ruins)
- Place-names

We're now going to think about the key languages that were spoken in Shropshire in the past. The first slide indicated who the different (mostly migrant) groups of people were, and which languages they spoke. Now it's time to see if we can remember which people spoke which language. There are some clues on the slide to help, and you can also use the slide showing where each migrant group originated from.

Now refer back to the slide that shows all of the many ways in which we know about people in the past, and where they may have come from. If we think about language specifically, ask the children to point out which of the evidence on the slide incorporates language (words):

- Coin from the reign of King Offa of Mercia (silver, 8th century; language: Latin '*Offa Rex*')
- The beginning of Beowulf (parchment, *c.* 1000; language: Old English)
- The Bayeux Tapestry (textile, *c.* 1070s; language: Latin '*Et venerunt* – and they came')
- Sign-post (includes names in modern English, but with medieval origins)

So, words are a very important piece of evidence if are we are going to think about people living in Shropshire's past. Not all of the people that we have encountered so far left written records like books and letters, but one type of historical source provides us with evidence for the languages of migrant communities that have exercised an influence on Britain: place-names.

At this point, you could link to the Introduction in our Children's Guide to Place-Names if you need to spend some time thinking about what a place-name is:

https://www.learningthroughlanguage.co.uk/children-introduction

This could be done in class, or, it could form part of a homework assignment.

Exercise three - part one: Place-names and Shropshire's past

The next set of slides (six to eleven) looks at place-names that contain elements of particular languages, and that were either created or passed on by specific language speakers (e.g. British, Old English). There is a slide for each language, and these can be used as handouts. You may want to split the class into groups and give each group one handout.

Each slide focuses on one set of people (e.g. Britons/Anglo-Saxons/Normans), and looks at Shropshire place-names associated with each group of people. Each of the place-names on the maps is either associated with the languages spoken by (or written by) these groups, or they are marked out by later language speakers as being associated with specific people (for example, the Stretton group of names was created by the Anglo-Saxons, but they all refer specifically to Roman roads).

For this exercise, you may want to ask each group to present one group of people to the rest of the class. Ask them to tell the class who these people were, where they came from originally, and what language they spoke. Using the place-names on the maps, you could also ask the children to say something about what sorts of activities some of these groups of people were doing in Shropshire, or the kinds of features they noticed. For example:

- Britons: travelling by roads/noticing landscape features
- Romans: building long roads/building settlements in high places so that they could see who was approaching
- Anglo-Saxons: farming/industry/metal-working/defending their settlements
- Vikings: noticing specific landscape features
- Welsh: building/naming churches and chapels
- Normans: these places were all named after the Norman lords associated with each settlement

Exercise three – part two: the English and the Welsh

Looking at settlement-names helps us to understand who lived in Shropshire's past, and which people named its villages and towns. This only gives us a partial view of who lived in Shropshire in the past, however. Looking more closely at documentary sources can help us to visualise some places in more detail. Look at the map of Bishop's Castle on slide twelve. This is a map of Bishop's Castle's fields. It is dated 1843, but the field-names are often much earlier than this. You will see that some field-names have been shaded in pink. These names are either in Welsh, or they relate to places associated with Welsh people. Ask the class to think about what this map tells us about Bishop's Castle and the people that lived there, for example:

- Some of the field-names are written in the Welsh language
- Does this suggest that Welsh speakers lived in Bishop's Castle?
- Can you find any of the names of the Welsh people there (James [*Beech-O-Cwmago*], Rees [*Rees Piece*])?
- Why do you think that Welsh-speaking people lived in Bishop's Castle (you could perhaps have a look at a map of Shropshire, and find out whereabouts in Shropshire Bishop's Castle is)?
- Using the map of the fields, can you tell which languages were once spoken in Bishop's Castle?

Slide thirteen features two short extracts from manorial court records in Clun, which is close to the modern border with Wales. Most settlements in medieval England held a local court which lots of local people had to attend. In Clun, we can see that there were two separate courts: a Welsh court,

and an English court. Ask the children about this. What does this tell us about the people living in medieval Clun? Does this help us to say anything about people's identity at this time? Think about the people living in medieval Clun – who were they? Where did they come from? What language(s) did they speak?

Teachers' notes: The name of the Welsh defendant, David ap Gilbert is what is known as a patronym: a name that identifies a person in relation to their father. Here, the medieval Welsh word 'ap' means 'son of'. Now look at one of the women listed as having business in the English court, Isolde, daughter of Thomas – this name has been constructed in a similar way. Isolde's name (and the majority of this text) has been written in Latin, the main language of medieval administration. It says 'Isold[e], fil[iam] Thom[e]…': Isolde, daughter of Thomas. So, the Welsh name has been written in Welsh, suggesting that its bearer identified himself as Welsh (or, possibly that the court's scribe identified him as Welsh – or both, of course).

What we can draw from these examples, is that in the medieval period (and later) people who identified personally as English or Welsh lived together in some places in Shropshire, especially in settlements in the west of the county. They give us a slightly more nuanced picture of the makeup of part of Shropshire's population.

In case you are asked any questions about the court cases, 'drawing the blood' usually means that there was a relatively minor altercation, but one that ended in bloodshed. Alice le Theyn's ox may well have escaped, and was eating the lord's hay (or she might have deliberately led it there…); and Isolde would have been a servile peasant who had to pay a licence fee for permission to marry. The documents themselves were written on parchment, which is made from animal hides (usually sheep, for this type of document) that have been treated. The text is written in a contracted form of Latin. It was written like this to save space on the parchment, which was expensive and time-consuming to produce.

Exercise three – part three: the Normans

Look again at the map of the Normans in Shropshire (slide fourteen). The map shows that some of Shropshire's place-names include the names of their Norman lords (in fact, these were all names that were modified by the addition of the Norman family-names). If we look really carefully at them we can see that some of the Norman family-names relate to the places in Normandy where these men came from:

- Hopesay: Picot de Say was from Sai, in Normandy
- Stokesay: Theoderic de Say was also from Sai in Normandy
- Moreton Say: Robert de Say was also from Sai in Normandy
- Stanton Lacy: Roger de Lacy was from Lassy in Normandy
- Cleobury Mortimer: Ralph de Mortimer was from Mortemer in Normandy
- Aston Botterell: William Boterell was from Les Botteraux in Normandy
- Eaton Constantine: the Costentin family came from Cotentin, an area in Normandy

With this information, we can have a look on a map to see where these people came from before they came to Shropshire. Slide fifteen shows two maps of Normandy at different scales. Slide sixteen shows the villages and towns in Normandy from where these families came. The de Lacys were from

a very important Norman family, and they held lots of land in Shropshire (slide seventeen). Roger de Lacy built Ludlow castle.

Ask the children to look carefully at the Norman family-names that indicate where they came from. In the next exercise, it's their turn to think like a Norman!

Teachers' Notes: The Latin word 'de' means 'from' or 'of', and this type of family-name was called a toponym, because the name tells us where a person came from originally.

Exercise four: William the Conqueror's New Norman Knights

Now that we know how some of our Shropshire place-names associated with Norman families were created, it's time to make some new Norman place-names for Shropshire. In this game, the children will become Norman knights, arriving in Shropshire just after the Norman Conquest.

The 'Normans' handout (pdf) contains some village signs from Normandy (in red), and some Shropshire place-names (in black). Cut these out, and put them in two separate piles. Tell the children that they are each going to become a Norman knight, and they need to find out where in Normandy they are from. Ask them to pick a Norman place-name first (you can choose whether to make this a free choice, or get the children to draw a name from a box). Now, ask them to write their Norman name down. So, for example, if their name is Isobel, and they picked the place-name Planquery, they will be Isobel de Planquery and so on.

Now, they must find out which town or village in Shropshire William the Conqueror has given them. Use the same process for everyone to select one of the Shropshire place-names. Thinking back to the Norman place-names that we know about already (e.g. Aston Botterell, Stanton Lacy), join the English and Norman names to create your new village name. So if our fictional Isobel de Planquery chose Wem as her Shropshire place-name, its 'new' Norman name would be Wem Planquery.

Exercise four – part one: the Norman Experience

Ask the children to write a short essay from the point of view of 'their' Norman knight. They could write about:

- Who they are
- Where they came from
- What they experienced at the Battle of Hastings
- Their thoughts on seeing Shropshire for the first time
- Their new Shropshire lands
- What do they like about Shropshire? What don't they like?
- How they communicate with locals (they speak a different language, remember!)
- What sort of buildings they might construct in their new lands (a castle? A grand manor house?)

Now that you have a classroom full of Norman knights, you might also want to ask them to create their own coat-of-arms. Have a look at the de Lacy coat-of-arms on slide seventeen for some inspiration!

Exercise five: Guess Who?

Now that we are more familiar with all of the different people who lived in Shropshire in the past, we can play a game of Guess Who! With the children in groups, cut out the cards from the last three slides. Hand each group one card, and let them have access to the earlier slides that showed where people came from, what languages they spoke, and which places in Shropshire they named. Ask the children to fill in the cards, using the information they have learned. For 'I live in…..', there is one final map (slide twenty-one) that includes one settlement related to each group of people. The answers are written below:

- Ninian / speaks British / comes from Britain / lives in Hodnet
- Livia / speaks Latin / comes from Italy / lives in Wroxeter
- Cuthbert / speaks Old English / comes from Germany, the Netherlands or Denmark / lives in Shipton
- Gunward / speaks Old Norse / comes from Scandinavia / lives in Clungunford
- Branwen / speaks Welsh / comes from Wales / lives in Trefonen
- Matilda / speaks Anglo-Norman / comes from Normandy in France / lives in Cleobury Mortimer

These exercises support the following aspects of the National Curriculum for Key Stage 2:

Citizenship

- Pupils should be taught that they belong to various groups and communities, such as family and school
- Pupils should take part in discussions, for example, talking about topics of local, national, European, Commonwealth and global concern
- Research, discuss and debate topical issues, problems and events
- Reflect on social and cultural issues, using imagination to understand other people's experiences
- Appreciate the range of national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the UK
- Understand that differences and similarities between people arise from a number of factors, including cultural, ethnic, racial and religious diversity, gender and disability

Geography

- Name, locate and identify characteristics of the four countries of the UK
- Devise a simple map
- Developing competence in the skills needed to interpret maps
- Communicating geographical information
- Describing key aspects of human geography

History

- Understand historical concepts such as continuity and change, cause and consequence, similarity, difference and significance, and use them to make connections, draw contrasts, analyse trends, frame historically-valid questions and create their own structured accounts, including written narratives and analyses

- Know and understand the history of these islands as a coherent, chronological narrative, from the earliest times to the present day; understand how people's lives have shaped this nation, and how Britain has been influenced by the wider world
- Understand the methods of historical enquiry, including how evidence is used rigorously to make historical claims, and discern how and why contrasting arguments and interpretations of the past have been constructed
- Gain historical perspective by placing growing knowledge into different contexts, understanding the connections between local, regional, national and international history; between cultural, economic, military, political, religious and social history; and between short- and long-term timescales
- The Roman Empire and its impact on Britain
- Understanding Britain's settlement by the Anglo-Saxons
- Undertaking a local history study
- Understanding how knowledge of the past is constructed from a range of sources (including place-names)

English

- Plan writing by discussing and recording ideas
- Writing (composition): note and develop ideas, drawing on research where necessary
- Draft and write by selecting appropriate grammar and vocabulary, understanding how such choices can change and enhance meaning
- Draft and write by describing settings, characters and atmosphere
- Draft and write by organising paragraphs around a theme

Maths

- Solve simple measure problems involving fractions
- Solve problems involving increasingly harder fractions to calculate quantities
- Develop the connections between multiplication and division with fractions and percentages
- Solve problems which require knowing percentage and decimal equivalents of various fractions
- Solve problems in familiar practical contexts, taking measurements including 'distance between' and the measurement of time
- Sequence events in chronological order

Art and Design

- Produce creative work, including drawing, painting and sculpture
- Develop their techniques, including their control and use of materials