

Project-Based Learning at Bedales

In Block 3 we have embraced an interdisciplinary, 'real-world' approach to our study of the humanities. Rather than perpetuating artificial subject boundaries, we have designed our courses around content that borrows from different disciplines and addresses compelling questions about contemporary issues, aiming at practical outcomes presented to real audiences wherever possible. After a short introductory project in which students explore different aspects of the school's ethos, history and practice, so that they can understand their own place in our tradition, they take each of the following projects on a rotating basis.

Project 1: Who made my clothes?

Do you know the effect you have on others, when you buy, wear and discard clothes? Who picked the cotton? Who dyed the fabric? Who sewed it together, and for what wage? In this project, Business and Environmental Ethics meet Geography. Examining core concepts such as globalisation, sustainability and our moral responsibilities to others, students will map the journeys of their clothes, and will use real case studies to debate whether fast fashion is worth the human price. We will also consider the journey fast fashion takes once it is discarded, and hope to do some volunteering in charity shops in Petersfield. The project culminates in students selecting one item of their own clothes, and creating a display board and presentation in response to the question 'Who made my clothes?' They might do an ethical audit of the garment, or map its journey to their wardrobe. They might even choose to customise a pre-loved item of clothing. Parents, guests and peers will have the opportunity to see these presentations and feed back to students at an EXPO, which we hope to hold in the Library.

Project 2: Was it for this the clay grew tall? Remembering the First World War one hundred years on.

This project will examine how we remember the events of the First World War 1914-1918, and how that remembrance has changed over the course of the last one hundred years. It will cover different kinds of memories- be they family, military or civilian, and will cover remembrance in different media (art, architecture, music, drama, poetry). The final artefact produced by the students on the project will be their own form of remembrance for the First World War, drawn in part from a focused study of Benjamin Britten's War Requiem; a piece containing the poetry of Wilfred Owen, and premiered at the dedication of the new Coventry Cathedral in 1962.

Project 3: Democracy and 'Julius Caesar'

This project will use Shakespeare's 'Julius Caesar' as a core text from which to study forms of government, especially democracy, as well as persuasive language and conflicting beliefs whilst having the opportunity to explore the play.

Students will start by looking at the birth of democracy in the Athenian system. Then how this led into the concept of direct democracy and why this is no longer used as the main system of governance anywhere in the world. They will explore how individuals and their campaigns can influence the electorate (legitimately or corruptly) and how/ why political alliances are made.

Students will produce a variety of writing outcomes and work collaboratively to present a pair of debates with a mock election at the end.

Project 4: Coming of Age Literature and Philosophy of the Self

Jamila Gavin's novel 'Coram Boy' explores some harsh realities of growing up and confronts issues of race, inequality, oppression and artistic liberty. This project seeks to combine the detailed study of literature with the philosophy of the self and will lead students towards a learning expedition where they consider themselves and their own place in the world around them. With some consideration of curation and archiving the students have the final target of producing a museum style panel exhibiting their research on an individual important to them and, hopefully, to others in their community.

Project 5: Refugees, racism, and diversity

This project will explore the phenomenon of forced migration throughout history, focusing in on the causes and effects of the contemporary refugee crisis, and work towards practical responses that Bedales can make in support of our friends at the Rural Refugee Network. In parallel it will explore issues and attitudes around race, and develop resources for future use in Dunhurst and Dunannie.

Project 6: The art of story in oral traditions

Far from static, the English language is constantly adapting to suit the influences and needs of its users, and yet many techniques used by contemporary English speakers and writers can be traced back through time. In this unit Block 3 students will explore extracts from works, modern and contemporary, that draw on this rich oral tradition, learning how writers have developed and adapted these techniques to create striking new interpretations of their own. Students' independent research projects will allow them to explore folklore, myth and legend in written and oral form from a country or culture of their choice.