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**What role does a ‘sense of place’ play in pupils’ ability
to construct large-scale historical narratives?
An investigation into the ability of Year 9 pupils
to narrate the history of the Cambridgeshire Fens**

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Abstract

‘Sense of place’ is a concept whose currency is growing in history teaching, but whose elements and purpose remain elusive. Drawing on cultural geography, environmental history and work in history education around world-building and narrative, this paper documents an explorative case study that aimed to examine the role that building a ‘sense of place’ might play in pupils’ historical learning. The case study centred around a five-lesson enquiry in which Year 9 pupils explored the story of the Cambridgeshire Fens since c.1600. The paper argues that a ‘sense of place’ can be framed as a tool which supports historical thinking or as a constitutive element of historical thinking itself. Considering this choice can help teachers to determine the types of knowledge that pupils need in order to build a ‘sense of place’, and how such knowledge can be built.

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Introduction

The English landscape itself, to those who know how to read it aright, is the richest historical record we possess.

(W. G. Hoskins, 1955, p.14).

These words of landscape historian, W.G. Hoskins, written over 75 years ago, were a clarion call, urging historians to put their beloved books to one side, and discover history in the physical environment on their doorstep – the fields, hedgerows, and ditches of the countryside, and the built environment of the cities. For Hoskins, the past leaves its traces not only in documents but in the very fabric of the places we inhabit.

Despite the riches study of the physical environment might offer, it is regularly pushed to the side in history teaching in schools. Pupils learn of individuals, events, periods, and socioeconomic structures, but the places these phenomena inhabit take a back seat. This is in spite of a resurgence of ‘the environment’ as a theme in historical writing. The growing sub-discipline of environmental history has asserted the imperative of placing the story of mankind firmly within the context of the natural world (Hughes, 2016). Its influence has grown to such an extent, at a time when environmental questions loom large in public discourse, that historians have begun talking about a natural turn in historiography, following on from the cultural turn of the 1970s and 1980s (Burke, 2019, c.f. Benger, 2021).

There have been isolated attempts to transfer this disciplinary concern into the classroom (Hawkey, 2004; 2015). This present study was born from a desire to theorise further ways in which environmental history could enrich school history. What follows represents an attempt at using the focus on the physical environment and natural world promoted by environmental historians to push forward theory and practice in the classroom around a concept whose currency has grown in history

teaching, but whose elements and purposes remain elusive: a 'sense of place'. Drawing upon recent work in history education around 'world-building' (Hill, 2020) and narrative, this work attempts to concretise what may be meant by the term 'sense of place' in the history classroom – in other words, what might be distinctive and necessary about a *historical* sense of place.

Literature Review

Environmental history and the history classroom

Environmental history is a broad field, better defined as a disposition towards the study of history, rather than a precise methodology. At its most fundamental, environmental history is the study of the mutual relationship of humans and nature through time (Hughes, 2016). Within this, three distinct approaches or themes can be identified (Hughes, 2016).

First, there are historians, influenced by the French *Annales* school, who focus primarily upon the influence of environmental factors on human history. As in Fernand Braudel's (1995) classic work on the Mediterranean world, this approach privileges the structural changes caused by geographical and environmental shifts at the deepest level, and long-term social and economic developments above that. It calls for a focus on the *longue durée*: historical changes which occur over centuries or millennia, across wide geographical areas, rather than within the lifetimes and spatial coverages of human beings.

The *Annales* approach has received criticism for a tendency towards environmental determinism, whereby geographical and environmental factors come to dictate the course of history (Hughes, 2016). A second group of historians have therefore sought to theorise a more reciprocal relationship between humankind and the environment (Hughes, 2016). They argue that humans live *in* and not separate from the natural world. In various places and at various times, human actions have sparked environmental changes whose ramifications have in turn reshaped human societies. The degree to which human action has shaped the environment has also changed over time and place, with attention paid particularly to the shift from the Holocene to the Anthropocene: the beginning of human influence over the environment on a global scale (see McNeill & Engelke, 2016; Bonneuil & Fressoz, 2018).

Arguably, these first two approaches have had the most influence on history education, notably in the work of Kate Hawkey (2015; 2004). Hawkey sees environmental history as offering an avenue through which teachers can introduce pupils to ‘big history’, an approach which calls for more ambitious timescales and spatial parameters, in order to inform engagement with the key challenges of the present, such as global inequality and climate change (see Guldi & Armitage, 2014). For Hawkey, ‘scale-switching’ (linking together the local, national and global dimensions of historical change) addresses a problem identified by various history education researchers: that pupils leave school without a ‘useable’ historical framework or a clear, integrated sense of the past (Hawkey, 2015; Shemilt, 2000; Howson & Shemilt, 2011; Dawson, 2008).

While acknowledging these broad curriculum issues, this article, as a small-scale case study, attempts to examine other ways in which environmental history can inform approaches to history education. It draws upon the third approach to environmental history identified by Hughes (2016), rooted in the traditions of intellectual history, which seeks to elucidate the ways in which human thought and ideas about nature and the environment have shifted over time. Historians in this tradition place a concern again on the reciprocal relationship of humankind and nature – how thoughts and ideas have been influenced by changing environmental conditions and in turn have led to changes in these conditions. For instance, the idea of ‘the environment’, as a global web of interrelating processes over which humankind has considerable influence, is itself historically specific, emerging only in the second half of the twentieth century (Warde, Robin & Sörlin, 2018).

William Cronon’s (1992) seminal article suggests connections between this approach, and two concepts which often arise in history education literature: ‘place’ and ‘narrative’. Cronon argues that the ideas people formulate and have formulated about the relationship between themselves and nature are articulated almost exclusively through the medium of *stories*. Moreover, all such stories take place inherently within a setting, a physical place on the earth. Far from a backdrop, the characterisation of setting interacts closely with the narrative arc of such stories. Cronon offers the example of histories that have been told of the American Great Plains. On the one hand, stories of progress depict the Great Plains as a harsh, unforgiving wilderness, gradually domesticated and made productive by pioneering human endeavour. On the other hand, declensionist stories describe a harmonious, natural landscape, destroyed and turned into the sterile Dust Bowl by intensive agriculture. Environmental history, for Cronon, involves not just the description of physical changes in environmental conditions and their reciprocal relationship with human society, but understanding the stories societies tell and

have told about the physical environment. As he puts it, “if we fail to reflect on the plots and scenes and tropes that undergird our histories, we run the risk of missing the human artifice that lies at the heart of even the most ‘natural’ of narratives” (Cronon, 1992, p.1367). Environmental historians must aim “not just to tell stories about nature, but stories about stories about nature”, although such stories must make “ecological sense” (in other words, be true to scientific evidence of environmental change) (Cronon, 1992, p.1375; p.1371). This call to tell ‘stories about stories about nature’, suggests that a fundamental aspect of environmental history lies in the narratives told and retold by humans about the places they inhabit. In other words, narrative and place are intimately linked, suggesting a need to draw the two closer together within history education.

‘Sense of place’, narrative and history education

‘Place’ as a concept emerged first in the discipline of cultural geography. According to Cresswell (2015, p.12, my emphasis) the simplest definition of place is that of “a *meaningful* location”. In other words, a place is a physical space (on any scale) which human beings have invested meaning into – without such meaning, a ‘place’ is merely ‘space’. For Agnew (1987), all places have three dimensions:

1. **Location:** a physical location on the earth, which can be described objectively through measurements such as coordinates.
2. **Locale:** the physical materiality of the place itself.
3. **Sense of place:** the meanings which are attributed to the place by people, both inhabitants and outsiders.

The concept of place gained prominence in the 1970s, when geographers such as Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) called for greater consideration of the meanings people ascribed to places, as opposed to the objective measurement of geographical phenomena which had previously dominated the discipline. Place became intertwined with the concept of globalisation: in a globalised world, it was contended that people were becoming alienated from place. This concern informed Yi-Fu Tuan’s (1977) theorisation of *place* as characterised by security and stability, and *space* as characterised by change and instability.

More recent theories of place have, however, contested this idea. Doreen Massey (1994) refuted the suggestion that places have single, essential identities or clear fixed boundaries and called for a

‘progressive’ sense of place. In this formulation, places draw their fundamental meaning from the intersection of multiple relationships at a single point: the specificity of any place, because every person and group ascribes different meanings to it, derives from the unique mixture of wider and local social relations in a single location. The meanings of any place are in constant flux as these intersections of social relations also change.

In 2004, Liz Taylor (2004) suggested ways the concept of place could be used in the history classroom. Crucially, her suggestions focused on what made *place* distinct from space: namely, the process by which human beings ascribe different meanings to places. These ideas were taken up by Mary Woolley (2004), who reformulated her revision resources for her GCSE class studying the American West, to encourage pupils to consider the different meanings that historical actors ascribed to the places they inhabited or encountered.

However, while the term ‘sense of place’ has frequently been used by history educators since (Hill, 2020; Smith, 2014; Waters, 2010), arguably it has not been applied with conceptual consistency. Waters (2010), for example, discusses his efforts to build a ‘sense of place’ for pupils during a trip to Berlin. However, his concern seems primarily to be with getting pupils familiar with the physical materiality of the city – the dimensions of *location* and *locale* which, according to Agnew (1987), constitute only a partial definition of place. Similarly, Smith’s (2014) investigation of using a physical place (Walsham-le-Willows) to build pupils’ sense of period of fourteenth-century England also privileges the more objective dimensions (*location* and *locale*), rather than the subjective (*sense of place*) dimensions which constitute *place* as a concept. It seems, from a geographical perspective, that these history educators’ concerns pertain more to *space* than to *place*.

Perhaps the most significant recent attempt to engage with the idea of a ‘sense of place’ has come in Mike Hill’s (2020) curricula concept of ‘world-building’. Drawing on the techniques of fiction authors, Hill is concerned with how to build rich ‘secondary worlds’ for pupils to inhabit: a coherent and richly textured rather than patchy and inert ‘imagined past’. In this endeavour, place is front and centre. Yet most of Hill’s suggestions focus strongly on the development of *location* and *locale* (though he does not describe it in these terms), for instance through the use of maps to develop pupils’ geographical sense of Weimar Germany. Hill (2020, p.16, my emphasis) does briefly draw on the idea of a ‘sense of place’, referring to the work of Taylor (2004) and arguing that “meaningful imagined pasts” are more likely to emerge if pupils are encouraged to “interrogate the *subjective*

relationships between places and their people". However, his concept of 'world-building' does not explicitly delineate the three elements of 'place' as defined by Agnew (1987) and may miss some of the aspects of a 'sense of place' as elaborated by cultural geographers. For example, Hill (2020, p.12) calls for "secondary worlds" to be curated by teachers so as to have a "sense of completeness and consistency". However, a 'sense of place', as understood by cultural geographers like Massey, lies in the difference and diversity of the meanings attributed to places, rather than coherence or completeness.

There seems to be a difficulty in translating the concept of 'place' into history education, particularly in unravelling the respective roles of its objective dimensions of location and locale, and its subjective dimension of 'sense of place'. As a result, what the meaning and goals of building a sense of place in the history classroom (a *historical* sense of place) might be remain fuzzy. Returning here to the work of Cronon (1992) provides one potential avenue through this fuzziness. Cronon (1992) argues that a fundamental feature of place is the tendency for individuals and societies to ascribe meaning to places through story. To understand place in the past, therefore, and build a *historical* sense of place, it might be contended that we need to, as Cronon (1992, p.1375) puts it, tell "stories about stories". Rather than building coherence or completeness, we should aim for contrast and diversity: an understanding of how places have been imagined, reimagined, and *narrated* in the past in different ways. In other words, place (and consequently building a sense of place) cannot be separated from narrative.

Narrative has enjoyed something of a resurgence in history teaching in the past two decades, both in terms of teaching through the telling of stories and getting pupils to construct their own narrative accounts as a learning outcome. Concerning the latter, Sean Lang (2003) challenged the previously pervasive idea that getting pupils to write narratives was an intellectually unworthy activity, inferior to analytic or thematic writing. He argued that not only was writing in the narrative form what most historians did, it was a complex task within which inheres deep historical thinking – it is not simply an exercise in 'knowledge-telling', as the inherent process of selection involved in constructing a narrative can be 'knowledge-transforming' (Scadarmalia & Bereiter, 1987).

Several history teachers have since sought to formulate goals and approaches for teaching pupils to construct their own narratives (Ellis, 2020; Foster & Goudie, 2019; Kemp, 2011; Gadd, 2009). Some of this work has built on the ideas of the philosopher of history Allan Megill (2007), who has contested the idea that narrative is a non-analytic form of writing. Megill defines narratives as texts

written in chronologically sequential order, which exhibit the elements of narrative: events (actions and happenings) and existents (characters and settings). In their attempts to support pupils in writing narratives of the past, each of the history teacher-researchers cited above pay close attention to events and characters. For instance, Gadd (2009), teaching an enquiry about Britain and India in the nineteenth century, got pupils selecting from small stories to tell a single, overarching narrative. Yet, in Gadd's work, and Ellis's (2020) enquiry on narratives of change in Stalin's Russia, *setting* was not dwelt upon. One might construe setting as the cultural world in which events and happenings occur, in which case Foster and Goudie's (2019) work, which reconstructed the culture of pre-1914 Europe marks an example where the place of setting in pupils' narratives is theorised. Yet one could also construe setting as the *physical places* in which all historical events and characters occur and inhabit.

In this respect, there is arguably a gap in the history education literature in two respects. First, it remains unclear precisely what building a 'sense of place' should look like in the history classroom, and what its goals might be. Second, the role of setting (understood herein to be coterminous with place, though it is acknowledged this may be contestable) in the construction of narrative has been under-theorised. It is the suggestion here that bringing these two elements together may shed light on both of these gaps in understanding.

Rationale

Purpose, nature and context of the investigation

As per the argument laid out in the literature review, this study represents a tentative attempt to theorise about place, and about the connections between place and narrative, in the history classroom. The study is exploratory and theory-seeking. It does not attempt to measure the impact of any specific teaching method on pupils' historical learning. Instead, I wanted to examine how an exploration of place in connection with narrative could uncover certain ways of thinking, both in myself and my pupils, which might point the way for more concrete elaborations of pedagogy and theory around place and narrative in the future. I hoped to elaborate some initial ideas about what developing a historical sense of place in the classroom looked like, and what its goals might be, particularly how these might differ to existing theories like 'world-building'.

The study would, therefore, interrogate not only the sorts of historical thinking about place and narrative that inhered in my pupils' work, but also how my own thinking emerged and developed as I planned, taught and evaluated an enquiry with the aim of developing a historical sense of place at its forefront. This would involve examining how my own understandings of place, and its connections to narrative, changed over the course of the investigation, including what I thought was worthwhile and distinctive about building a historical sense of place. The investigation therefore had two separate goals: to uncover my own understanding of place and how this shifted as I attempted to apply it to an enquiry, and to examine how a focus on place would manifest itself in pupils' historical thinking and writing.

I chose to investigate a single Year 9 class, which had just completed work on the causes of the First World War. The enquiry would use environmental history as a vehicle for exploring place and narrative, with a substantive focus on the Cambridgeshire Fens since 1600. Working with Year 9 would mean pupils would have a working knowledge of the broader history of England since 1600, and so would begin with a useful sense of period in which new knowledge could be situated. The enquiry would end with pupils writing a narrative of the Cambridgeshire Fens since 1600. The aim would be for pupils to construct a narrative which exhibited the three dimensions of place as defined by Agnew (1987) and sought to tell a 'story of stories': in other words, narrating how the story of the Fens as a place has been told and retold by different people throughout its history. The narratives of seven pupils would then be analysed for noteworthy themes which could inform future approaches (the process of selecting these seven pupils is described in the next section).

The rationale above led me to develop three research questions:

RQ1: What assumptions and pre-existing ideas about what it meant to construct a 'sense of place' was I drawing on when planning the enquiry, and how did these change in the planning process?

RQ2: What sorts of ideas about 'place' did pupils seem to be operating with throughout the enquiry?

RQ3: In what ways did 'place' manifest itself in pupils attempts to construct their narratives?

The research was undertaken during my second professional placement on my PGCE, at a medium-sized 11-16 comprehensive situated in a village in Cambridgeshire, with approximately 1,300

students on roll. Lessons were observed by my mentor, an experienced history teacher in charge of my training. The class taught was a mixed-ability Year 9 class of approximately twenty pupils.

Research design

This study is best defined as an example of case study research (Bassegy, 1999). It does not attempt to make statistical generalisations beyond this case, limiting its findings to ‘fuzzy generalisations’, a “kind of statement that makes no absolute claim to knowledge but hedges its claim with uncertainties” (Bassegy, 1999, p.3). As such, the study can be defined as “theory-seeking” (Bassegy, 1999, p.60). Unlike other examples of case study research, such as action research, it makes no attempt to change a situation or suggest changes, whether within or beyond the case, instead seeking to describe, interpret and theorise about a wider issue (Bassegy, 1999). There exists only disparate research into the concept of ‘place’ in history education, and (to my knowledge) no research bringing together place and narrative. As such, the case study can be defined as ‘exploratory’ – patterns were searched for within the data, to illuminate trends which might inform theory (Yin, 2009). This differs to explanatory or descriptive approaches which involve greater *a priori* theorisation before data collection and analysis (Yin, 2009). Furthermore, the study can be considered as ‘instrumental’ in nature: the case is not of intrinsic interest but is being used to develop general understanding of the meaning and purpose of building a ‘sense of place’ within the history classroom (Stake, 1995).

The choice to pursue an exploratory, theory-seeking case study comes with strengths and limitations. As Simons (1996) notes, case studies offer the possibility of rich descriptive knowledge of the single case but are regularly criticised for an incapacity to generalise findings. This presents an issue for an instrumental case study where the case itself is not of primary concern (Stake, 1995). However, as mentioned above, the study makes no claim towards formal generalisation. Following in the tradition of Stenhouse (1988), it invites the reader to make their own judgement as to the applicability of the findings to their context. The study takes steps to mitigate limitations stemming from the close involvement of the researcher in the research process (Yin, 2009). The first step is to recognise the role I as researcher play, which is not that of an objective outsider but what Kemmis (1980, c.f. Bassegy, 1999) refers to as a ‘knowledgeable observer-participant’. As I was directly involved in the teaching and planning of the enquiry, my own thoughts and actions would have influenced the manifestation of ‘place’ in the lessons and pupils’ work. I was as much an object of the research as the pupils, as the methods of data collection make clear.

Data collection and analysis

As Yin (2009) outlines, the involved role of the researcher in case studies requires a rigorous approach for maintaining transparency in data collection and analysis. Mathematical standards of 'reliability' and 'validity' concerning the strength of generalisations in experimental research are not suitable for a study of this type. I therefore allowed Lincoln & Guba's (1985) qualitative research principle of 'trustworthiness' to guide my decisions around data collection and analysis. I have provided 'thick descriptions' of the research context and lesson sequence, to allow judgement by other teachers of the 'transferability' of the findings to their own context.

The first research question interrogated my own pre-existing ideas about what it meant to construct a 'sense of place' in the history classroom. I predicted that these ideas would shift as the enquiry developed. I therefore placed a high priority on writing reflective lesson evaluations, examining evidence of pupils' thinking and how this shifted my own thinking. On top of this, I opted to keep a reflective research diary to document how my thinking changed over the research process. This would allow me to subject my own thought processes to analysis and consequently "realise hitherto hidden assumptions" (Altrichter, Posch & Somekh, 1993, p.22).

The second research question involved examining pupils' pre-existing ideas about 'place'. Mentor observations and lesson evaluations were used to record how pupils made use of the term 'place' and seemed to interact with the different elements of place. Lesson observations have the potential to misrepresent the contributions of pupils, through the inherent selection and interpretation by the third party-observer (in this case my mentor). I mitigated this by requesting that pupil quotations were always written verbatim when specific reference to 'place' was evident. Similarly, in analysing my lesson evaluation, I was careful to view them primarily as my interpretation of the lesson, not as an objective record of what happened and what was said.

The third research question aims to analyse how 'place' manifests in connection to narrative, and so pupils' final written narratives form the data source. I first read all of the essays produced before selecting seven to be analysed in more depth. Analysis of the work of these seven pupils (Pupils A-G) is presented in the Findings section below. The rationale for selecting these particular seven pupils followed Marshall's (1996) technique of 'judgement sampling', whereby the researcher selects a sample which will best serve the purposes of the research question. I considered probability or random sampling to be inappropriate, as statistical generalisation was not the goal. Judgement sampling freed

me to select students who produced a range of different kinds of narratives exhibiting different understandings. The seven essays chosen for closer analysis therefore represent rough archetypes formed in the initial reading of all the essays, allowing revealing comparisons to be drawn between different types of understanding held by the class.

As no formal theories or hypotheses informed the study, I chose to analyse the data inductively. This meant drawing out initial themes from the data and returning to it to interrogate their applicability (Bryman, 2008). For Van Manen (1990, p.88), a ‘theme’ is something which gives “shape to the shapeless”: it cannot unlock fundamental meaning but allows the researcher to begin to articulate certain aspects of a phenomenon, pertaining to the research questions asked. I adopted Van Manen’s (1990, p.93) “selecting and highlighting” approach, which proved especially useful when analysing pupils’ essays. I read the essays holistically before selecting (highlighting and underlining) statements, phrases or sentences which seemed particularly revealing. From this, several formal themes were created and refined by returning to the data according to the inductive process of theory-generation (Bryman, 2008). Once refined, these themes became the core findings for each research question.

Finally, as with any educational research, I needed to take into account the ethical implications of the research (BERA, 2018; Bassey, 1999). All data collected throughout the project has been anonymised to protect the privacy of the participants. Furthermore, any potential for the research to adversely affect the educational opportunities and advantages of the participants was discussed with my mentor beforehand and mitigated by ensuring the lesson sequence would fit within their established scheme of work.

Overview of the lesson sequence

Deciding what to teach

In order to analyse the role of ‘place’ as a concept within history education, I needed an enquiry which would foreground place as a fundamental part of the story to be told. Teaching in a secondary school located in the Cambridgeshire Fens, the answer came naturally. The Fens are an area of eastern England characterised by their low-lying topography. Until the 1600s, the Fens were a wetland region supporting a regional economy unique in England (Ash, 2017). In the 1600s, under the direction of

Charles I's government and then the Protectorate, large areas of the Fens were drained and enclosed as farmland to be held by private landowners. Large numbers of Fenlanders found themselves dispossessed of their common land and the local economy shifted to resemble that of the arable farming areas of much of England. Land subsidence caused by drainage meant that this initial project had to be followed up in the centuries that followed, with ever-larger areas of the Fens being drained (Ash, 2017).

In recent years, there have been several historical studies of this process in the Fens, notably by Eric Ash (2017) and James Boyce (2020). Both have stressed the interrelation of environmental factors and human agency, in transforming a landscape over centuries. They focus on the role human ideas about nature played in shaping the physical environment, and of the physical environment on shaping these ideas. Ash (2017, p.184) emphasises the importance of the *meanings* that different people placed on the Fens at different times: "the fate of the Fens in the future was always shaped by the power to define it in the present". Ultimately, a definition of the pre-drainage Fens as a useless swamp, supporting an understanding of drainage as necessary progress, won out, not dissimilar to stories of progress told of the American Great Plains (Cronon, 1992).

The role of *stories* in the history of the Fens, highlighted by Ash (2017), presented the possibility of integrating place and narrative with a single enquiry, and to examine how place manifests itself within pupils' attempts to construct narrative. I developed an enquiry question, 'How can we tell the story of the Fens since 1600?'. The focus on how the story *might* be told intended to foreground the idea that place and narrative interact, and that stories of places can be told in different ways for different reasons. The final outcome task would see pupils answering the question 'How have the Fens changed as a place since 1600?', with freedom to construct a narrative by drawing on the different elements of their knowledge of the Fens developed over the lesson sequence. The lesson sequence is outlined in further detail in Table 1 (next page).

The lesson sequence was planned to introduce pupils, at different stages, to the three elements Agnew (1987) identifies as constituting 'place' as a concept. The first, second, third and fifth lessons focused on building substantive knowledge of locale. The fourth lesson got pupils considering how different groups and individuals would have made meaning of physical and ecological changes, depending on their relationships with the Fens. In this way, straightforward objective knowledge of change relating

to locale was complicated by consideration of ‘sense of place’, although these terms were not used with pupils.

Lesson	Lesson objectives	Lesson Activities
1. How can we tell the story of the Cambridgeshire Fens?	<p>Describe the location and geography of ‘the Fens’</p> <p>Describe the natural features of ‘a fen’</p> <p>Characterise the beginning and ending of two contrasting stories that have been told about the Fens</p>	<p>ISM (Initial Stimulus Material): Contrasting descriptions of Fens in 1600 – pupils record words to summarise and guess the place being described</p> <p>Information sheet and comprehension questions on ‘the Fens’ and ‘a fen’.</p> <p>Pupils repeat ISM activity but for descriptions of Fens <i>after</i> drainage</p> <p>Pupils characterise the two separate stories being told about the Fens</p> <p><i>(Initial Stimulus Material (ISM) refers to a method common in history teaching, with a starter structured around a primary source (often a document, image or video), used to set up the conceptual puzzle of the lesson.)</i></p>
2. What kind of a place were the Cambridgeshire Fens by 1600?	<p>Describe the opportunities and challenges that regular flooding brought to the people of the Fens before 1600</p> <p>Weigh up these opportunities and challenges to characterise the kind of place the Fens were by 1600</p> <p>Consider the limitations and origins of our two grand narratives</p>	<p>Recap of ‘what is a fen?’ and ‘what are the Fens?’</p> <p>Recap of destruction and progress narratives</p> <p>ISM: Printed image of 1607 Fenland floods – what is the representation of the Fens being given</p> <p>Information sheet – opportunities and challenges of Fenland flooding</p> <p>Pupils characterise the Fens in 1600 by placing themselves on the spectrum of destruction to progress</p>
3. How did the Fens change as a place between 1600 and 1700?	<p>Describe the key physical changes to the region of the Fens brought about by drainage</p> <p>Identify the key political moments that pushed drainage forward</p> <p>Explain why the residents of Bottisham rose up in the 1650s</p>	<p>ISM: Anonymous descriptions of the Fens in 1600</p> <p>Represent physical changes caused by drainage on a map of the Fens</p> <p>Answer lesson question by describing physical changes in words</p> <p>Answer lesson question from the perspective of Bottisham residents</p>
4. How did the Fens change as a place between 1600 and 1700 for...?	<p>Describe the <i>physical changes</i> which occurred in the Fens due to 17th century drainage</p> <p>Identify individuals involved in Fen drainage and describe their relationship to the Fens</p> <p>Explain how the relationship of these different individuals with the Fens would have changed how they made sense of the physical changes</p>	<p>Recap drainage timeline</p> <p>Describe drainage from the perspective of Charles I, Bottisham residents, Sir Miles Sandys, 4th Earl Bedford and French drainage workers</p> <p>Place individuals on society line from narratives of destruction to progress</p>
5. Did drainage really change the Fens for good?	<p>Explain why the draining of the Fens leads to more need for draining further down the line</p> <p>Describe the different methods used to drain the Fens since the 1600s</p> <p>Identify the characteristics of narratives of Fen drainage from the 20th and 21st centuries</p>	<p>ISM: Daniel Defoe description of flooding in 1724</p> <p>Assess evidence of change and continuity in the Fens after drainage</p> <p>Explain the phenomena of peat shrinkage</p> <p>Watch government video on Fenland floods in 1947 and Wicken Fen Vision from 2020 – characterise according to representation of Fen history</p>
6. How has the Fens changed as a place since 1600?	<p>Explain why choice of descriptive words, perspectives, and end-point all affect the type of story we tell about the Fens</p> <p>Narrate the story of how the Fens has changed as a place since 1600</p>	<p>Identify the narrative features of Boyce’s description of the Fens</p> <p>Write a narrative of the Fens since 1600.</p>

Table 1: Overview of Lesson Sequence

Meanwhile, throughout the enquiry, pupils examined the different narratives which have been used to describe change in the Fens over the past 400 years. At the very beginning of the enquiry, pupils examined the extreme narratives of progress and destruction, which reappeared throughout the enquiry to allow pupils increasingly to problematise them as their knowledge of the objective and subjective dimensions of the Fens as a place grew. In this way, when pupils came to write their own narratives at the end of the sequence, I would be able to examine how these different kinds of knowledge about the Fens as a place manifested themselves in their writing.

Findings

RQ 1: What assumptions and pre-existing ideas about what it meant to construct a 'sense of place' was I drawing on when planning the enquiry, and how did these change in the planning process?

Re-reading my planning notes, reflective diary and lesson evaluations, it became apparent to me that my ideas about place shifted during the process of planning and teaching the enquiry. Under further analysis, several themes emerged which describe this shift. These themes are presented together in Table 2 at the end of this section, and discussed throughout this section and the discussion.

First, my *initial* ideas about what building a 'sense of place' would mean for the enquiry seemed to relate more closely to the objective dimensions of location and locale than to the subjective dimensions which constitute the term 'place' (Theme 1.1). Re-reading my first lesson plans and early research diary entries, it struck me that my initial aims were primarily to problematise narrative *in isolation from* place – I wanted pupils to see that the history of the Fens had been narrated in different ways at different times and for different reasons. Place, and building a 'sense of place', appeared to emerge in two forms. On the one hand, it was present in the descriptions of setting in the narratives of the Fens that pupils would encounter and later problematise. Secondly, it would emerge through building a strong picture in pupils' heads of the physical surroundings of the Fens before, during and after drainage: what at that time I saw as 'basic' ecological and geographical knowledge of 'the Fens' as a region and 'a fen' as a natural phenomenon (Lesson Plan 1). For the most part, I seemed to be understanding a 'sense of place' as constituted by substantive knowledge of the Fenland environment which pupils would use to add depth to the narratives of the Fens they encountered throughout the enquiry, a rationale which upon reflection appeared to lie behind the formulation of

the early enquiry questions: *'What kind of place were the Fens by the 1600s?'* (Lesson Plan 2). A 'sense of place' would simply be a vehicle to get *'pupils thinking both about [the second order concepts] change and continuity over time and historical interpretations – how can the story of a place be told in such radically different ways'* (Lesson Plan 2). In this sense, my concept of 'sense of place' did not differ greatly from world-building – it was about creating a rich physical past world which pupils could inhabit. It was therefore something which served deeper historical thinking but was not *a part of it*.

However, **over the enquiry my priorities seemed to shift towards an emphasis on the subjective, over the objective, dimensions of 'place'** (Theme 1.2). I was struck by this shift when reading back over my research diary entries, which appeared to show that as I began to delve into the writings of cultural geographers, my understanding of what mattered about 'sense of place' shifted, to *'not necessarily something we build in pupils [but] an awareness amongst pupils that people in the past related and gave meaning to their physical environment in diverse ways'* (Entry 2.3). My comments seem to reveal that I came to realise that what I had been building amongst pupils was not a sense of place, but a sense of *space*, substantive knowledge of the Fens pertaining to its objective physical features, rather than the subjective meanings ascribed to it by different people at different times. I was beginning to see the conceptual differences which seem to separate a 'sense of place' from 'world-building'. Thus, in my new understanding, *'sense of place mean[t] building pupils' awareness of contested and changing senses of place throughout time, rather than building a 'complete' and 'coherent' world for them to inhabit when studying a particular period [as in my understanding of world-building]'* (Entry 2.4). My priorities therefore shifted towards engaging more fully with the term 'sense of place', which Agnew (1987) separates from 'location' and 'locale' as components of 'place' more broadly (Entry 3.4). Overall, I began to become more concerned with bringing pupils from understanding how the Fens changed physically, and how these physical changes had been narrated, to an understanding of the relationships different individuals and groups had with the Fens and how this informed the stories they told about it.

Triangulating the themes emerging from my reflective diary and my subsequent lesson planning, it appears that this shift had a direct impact on the planning of future lessons, which developed a more explicit division between knowledge of location, locale and sense of place. I seemed to have concluded that I had not really been building a 'sense of place' at all: *'pupils have so far developed knowledge of location and locale and a vague, general sense of the meaning of the place'* but without

any *'detail to see the complexity'* (Entry 3.5) My reformulated lesson questions highlighted this distinction in my thinking. Thus, lesson three asked *'How did the Fens change as a place between 1600 and 1700?'*, building knowledge *only* of location and locale, while lesson four asked, *'How did the Fens change as a place between 1600 and 1700 for...?'*, getting pupils looking explicitly at the relationships of different contemporary historical actors with the Fens during drainage and to understand *'the different senses of place people had of the Fens in the 1600s and why'* (Entry 3.5).

This change seemingly marked the most significant shift, but my lesson evaluations and latter diary entries suggest that my thinking continued to change in response to the latter lessons. **I began to lean towards seeing 'sense of place' as less about ensuring that pupils built a clear sense of the Fens for themselves, and more about ensuring they could reconstruct the 'senses of place' held by others in the past. This threw up new considerations, especially about the relationship between 'place' and second-order concepts** (Theme 1.3). My research diary entries demonstrate the influence cultural geography had on this thinking, convincing me that building a sense of place would require a shift away from a 'world-building' approach, towards an approach that emphasised the diversity of 'senses of place' historical actors in the Fens held at different times. (Entry 3.1). Moreover, as the enquiry came to an end, I seemed to come to perceive sense of place in new ways still. Lesson four had built pupils' understanding of the relationship between different individuals and the Fens as a place, but as the findings to RQ 3 demonstrate, pupils rarely ascribed *meaning* to this relationship, viewing it instead in instrumental terms, using language and reasoning common in similarity and difference enquiries. A new issue consequently arose concerning how 'sense of place' fits in with the second-order concepts used by history teachers to frame lesson enquiries, especially similarity and difference. I began to see that, throughout the enquiry, I had been *'avoiding approaching [the enquiry] as a change and continuity question because I [had] been focusing on "sense of place", which leads then more towards a similarity and difference or interpretations angle'* (Lesson Evaluation 5). I had felt that, while change and continuity lends itself to more objective descriptions of the past, similarity and difference foregrounded subjective experiences. This issue will be explored further in the discussion section.

RQ 2: What sorts of ideas about ‘place’ did pupils seem to be operating with throughout the enquiry?

Pupils appeared to approach the lesson enquiry with differing ideas of ‘place’. I had made the decision not to introduce pupils explicitly to the term ‘place’ in a theoretical sense. As a result, the term ‘place’ in the lesson or enquiry questions would have been interpreted by pupils according to their own working definitions of it. Two themes emerged from the data collected.

First, **only some pupils seemed to have an implicit distinction between space and place (although this distinction was never articulated in these terms)** (Theme 2.1). For example, some pupils (generally higher-attainers) were able to spontaneously articulate the limitations of narrating the history of the Fens *only* in relation to the physical changes that occurred in the landscape because of drainage. When, in Lesson four, I asked pupils what the issues might be with studying physical transformations exclusively, a higher-attaining pupil responded that *‘it doesn’t talk about the people and their opinions, [it] only talks about the changes physically, but not how the Fens changed as a place, the islands and communities’*, thus linking the idea of ‘place’ instinctively to *‘people and their opinions’* (Mentor Observation 4.6). Another pupil, when tasked with describing the ‘biggest’ change that occurred in the Fens during the 1600s, also made this distinction spontaneously, querying: *‘do you [the teacher] mean the biggest change or the biggest physical change?’* (Mentor Observation 3.6). They concluded that the ‘biggest’ (or most significant) change to occur were the transformations of the early drainage projects under Elizabeth I, because they *‘set everything up’* (Mentor Observation 3.6). This implies an understanding of place as something more than just location and locale, instead as relating to the ideas and meanings ascribed to the Fens. The claim the pupil makes is that the first attempt to fully drain the Fens, although leaving little physical imprint, shifted ideas about the Fens as a place, laying the foundation for claims that the Fens could not continue to exist undrained. However, the significance of this finding lies as much in the fact that most pupils did not articulate any difference between space and place.

Second, **pupils seemed to hold an understanding of the connection between place and narrative which illuminated a particular way of viewing the production of stories in history** (Theme 2.2). At the beginning of the enquiry, I had taken the decision not to present pupils with many actual individuals who have told the story of the Fens. My rationale was that I wanted the narratives to be perceived by pupils not simply as belonging to single storytellers, but as having something of a life

of their own. Stories are constitutive of history, belonging to collective discourses which continually define and redefine the meaning of places. This understanding of story going beyond the storyteller is at the heart of Cronon's (1992, p.1375) call to tell "stories about stories about nature". However, as will also be seen from their narratives, the idea of a story being *collectively* constituted and having a life beyond the storyteller seemed to clash with pupils' pre-existing understanding not just of place and narrative, but of history more fundamentally. This theme emerged sparingly in the data and so is only a very tentative finding. When evaluating the second lesson, for instance, it struck me that one pupil had been puzzled by the fact that the narratives we were examining crossed over centuries, suggesting that this could not be, as a single storyteller must have needed to construct such a narrative (Lesson Evaluation 2.2.1). Though tentative, this finding is corroborated by the approaches pupils took to writing their narratives.

RQ 3: In what ways did 'place' manifest itself in pupils attempts to construct their narratives?

Three tentative themes emerged in connection to this research question.

First, **most essays referred to 'place' consistently within the objective dimensions of 'location' and 'locale'** (Theme 3.1). When referring to the Fens in their narratives, most pupils drew upon knowledge of location and locale, with sense of place largely absent. Often, this knowledge would be used to set the scene of the narrative early on, in objective terms, as Pupil A does: *'The Fens are a region of wetland situated in the east of England, in the counties of Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire and Huntingdonshire. The Fens are wetlands created by regular flooding from freshwater rivers'*. Equally, the changes brought about in the Fens by drainage were described in such terms, as by Pupil G: *'From 1625-56, the Morton's Leam and Bevill's Leam was [sic] dug. Later there was Vermuyden's drain and the Bedford river too'*. Setting thus played a background role, rather than functioning as a device for shaping the narrative.

In contrast, **a small group of pupils made conscious use of the narrative device of setting to give their writing narrative shape and describe the history of the Fens as either a story of progress or a story of destruction** (Theme 3.2). These pupils used knowledge of location and locale in setting up their narratives but inflected their writing with a conscious choice of meaningful descriptive words. Pupil B, for example, kicks off their narrative with the charged statement that *'before draining, the Fens were a wilderness of vast, reed-covered lakes and rich, fertile summer fields'*. Pupil E takes

an opposite, but equally charged approach to describing the setting of the Fens: *‘Over the course of the past 400 years, the Fens of England have progressed – changing from a [sic] unpredictable, watery wilderness to more of a profitable, orderly field’*. In this way, both pupils mimicked the writing of Boyce (2020) or of the contemporary commentators of the Fens in the 1600s, whose descriptions of the region impute meaning onto the land, turning it from space into place.

This contrast suggests a differing conception of the interaction between the historian, as storyteller, and the setting of the story. For the first set of pupils, their role as storyteller was an objective, detached one. To them, the Fens is simply a space to be described, rather than to which a subjective meaning might be given. They opted to tell a story that made ‘ecological sense’ (Cronon, 1992) and no more. The historian, by definition, has no relationship with the place, and so has a duty not to attempt to shape the narrative through a choice of affective words. In the most extreme example, Pupil C attempted to weigh up the relative merits of the ‘destruction’ and ‘progress’ narratives and come to a middling judgement between them:

In the present day, it is difficult to believe whether drainage was progress or destruction. It wrecked the fen ecosystem, and changed the environment. However, in today’s modern world, it would be incredibly difficult to go to school, work, to get food and to travel, and the ordered agricultural land allows us to benefit from it...

(Pupil C)

The second set of pupils saw things differently. The historian’s role as storyteller is a subjective one, and they make use of the setting accordingly to shape the narrative.

For both groups of pupils, though, the knowledge of place drawn upon related primarily to location and locale and the *meanings* ascribed to the Fens by historical actors took a back seat (Theme 3.3). This is not to say that pupils did not refer to the different perspectives of various individuals and groups involved in drainage. However, it seemed to me that, despite this, pupils did not really *engage* with sense of place as Agnew (1987) and other cultural geographers like Massey (1997) or Cresswell (2015) might define it. Cronon (1992, p.1367) writes that a key role of the environmental historian should be to “recover the narratives people tell themselves about the meaning of their lives”. However, when referring to the perspectives of others, most essays did not engage with *the meaning* of the place for different people per se, instead reducing this to a matter of instrumental relationships. Perspectives on drainage were explained according to how far the individual in question benefited or suffered as a result of drainage. Thus, Charles I narrated drainage as *‘progress...because he wanted to be able to profit more from the land and be able to move his*

armies through successfully' (Pupil C), and it was *'super beneficial to him'* (Pupil A). Another clear, extended example of this instrumentalist approach to place was found in Pupil G's narrative:

The drainage of the Fens was successful for many people. Vermuyden, the Gentleman Adventurer's and the Frenchmen [French Protestants who came to England to work on the drainage projects] all benefited from this [...]. However, the local Fenlanders were forced to become labourers once the common land was made into fields for crops and their old way of living was changed forever.

(Pupil G)

In both sets of pupils' essays, the *stories* told about the Fens and the way in which the place has been described and related to is of secondary interest. Events, characters and happenings (Megill, 2007) drive forward the narrative, especially decisions made (for instrumental reasons) by individuals such as Charles I. The *stories* themselves (for instance, of destruction or progress) *justify* or excuse certain actions. Even those essays, then, that used the setting as a narrative device, did so primarily through inflecting knowledge of location and locale with carefully chosen descriptive words borrowed from elsewhere. They did not attempt to construct a 'story of stories' that used what might be termed a historical sense of place (an idea of how and why different people have given different meanings to the Fens at different times). 'Sense of place' in most cases, it seems, collapsed into an exercise in similarity and difference, with comparisons drawn between those who benefited from and those who suffered from drainage.

Only one pupil (Pupil D) began to construe the stories themselves as having significance beyond an instrumental relationship with the individuals that subscribed to them (Theme 3.4). They did this by placing the stories more firmly within the context of their historical period. Thus, the progress story holds relevance in 1947, a time of rationing and calls for agricultural self-sufficiency in Britain, whereas the destruction story returns to the ascendancy in the twenty-first century, *'because in [the] present day we are combating global warming and so we have noticed how much we really need [fenland]'* (Pupil D). In this Pupil D's essay, there seems to be an implicit awareness that narratives of the Fens exist *beyond* their telling by individuals. They are collective, discursive phenomena, which emerge and re-emerge as public discourse shifts, rather than simply the tools of individual characters with instrumental motivations. This points towards an implicit understanding of the role of narrative and sense of place in history not evident in the other essays. It sees discourse as potentially constitutive of historical change, rather than lying below the more objective level of individual decisions and actions (the stuff of character, event and happening (Megill, 2007)). That said, for this pupil, this more discursive understanding of narrative was stronger in the two examples given (1947

and the present day) than in attempts to make meaning of stories told in the seventeenth century. Pupil D does refer to the ‘view of Charles I’, in which the Fens ‘was seen as an unproductive mess that could be used for almost nothing’, clearly centring the idea of meaning and perspective in the relationship of historical actors to place. However, Charles I’s perspective is not contextualised within broader currents of thought of the time. Moreover, the ‘sense of place’ of other historical actors was understood once again in terms of the instrumental relationships between character and setting. Thus, the Fourth Earl of Bedford only wanted partial drainage ‘so he could still get the full usage of his wetland farming’ (Pupil D). As is discussed in the next section, this owed partly to the construction of the enquiry itself and the types of knowledge of the period pupils were given access to, which limited their ability to engage more fully with a ‘historical sense of place’.

Research Question	Themes
1. What assumptions and pre-existing ideas about what it meant to construct a ‘sense of place’ was I drawing on when planning the enquiry, and how did these change in the planning process?	1.1 My initial ideas about what building a ‘sense of place’ would mean for the enquiry seemed to relate more closely to the objective dimensions of location and locale than to the subjective dimensions which constitute the term ‘place’.
	1.2 Over the enquiry my priorities seemed to shift towards an emphasis on the subjective, over the objective, dimensions of ‘place’.
	1.3 I began to lean towards seeing ‘sense of place’ as less about ensuring that pupils built a clear sense of the Fens for themselves, and more about ensuring they could reconstruct the ‘senses of place’ held by others in the past. This threw up new considerations, especially about the relationship between ‘place’ and second-order concepts.
2. What sorts of ideas about ‘place’ did pupils seem to be operating with throughout the enquiry?	2.1 Only some pupils seemed to have an implicit distinction between space and place (although this distinction was never articulated in these terms).
	2.2 Pupils seemed to hold an understanding of the connection between place and narrative which illuminated a particular way of viewing the production of stories in history.
3. In what ways did ‘place’ manifest itself in pupils attempts to construct their narratives?	3.1 Most essays referred to ‘place’ consistently within the objective dimensions of ‘location’ and ‘locale’.
	3.2 A small group of pupils made conscious use of the narrative device of setting to give their writing narrative shape and describe the history of the Fens as either a story of progress or a story of destruction.
	3.3 For both of the above groups of pupils, the knowledge of place drawn upon related primarily to location and locale and the meanings ascribed to the Fens by historical actors took a back seat.
	3.4 Only one pupil began to construe the stories themselves as having significance beyond an instrumental relationship with the individuals that subscribed to them.

Table 2: Summary of Research Findings

Discussion

This exploratory study has sought to concretise thinking around a term characterised by the fuzziness of its applications in history teaching: a 'sense of place'. Having interrogated my own ideas, those of my pupils, and my pupils' attempts to construct narratives of the Cambridgeshire Fens, some tentative suggestions can be made as to the direction the concept might take in history education.

First, Themes 1.2 and 1.3 suggest that building a historical 'sense of place' is a process whose purpose is difficult to pin down. As I found while planning, the incorporation of 'place' within an enquiry can have different manifestations. On the one hand, knowledge of 'place' may refer to pupils' *own* knowledge of the physical and locational elements of the place studied, and so privilege the dimensions of location and locale (Agnew, 1987). Here, building a historical 'sense of place' compares closely to 'world-building' (Hill, 2020), in that it refers to the enriching of pupils' knowledge as a means of *enabling* deeper historical thinking. By contrast, building a historical 'sense of place' may also involve emphasising the subjective dimensions of knowledge about place, and so an awareness amongst pupils of the 'sense(s) of place' held by *the historical actors under study* (Theme 1.2) In this formulation, a 'sense of place' is an element of historical thinking in and of itself.

The contrast between 'sense of place' as a means of *enabling* historical thinking, and 'sense of place' as a *constitutive* part of historical thinking, points to a need for further theorisation as to how the concept fits in with the second-order concepts history teachers use to give structure to enquiry planning. If we approach 'sense of place' from the first angle, then it might be understood as a form of 'hinterland' knowledge which can further pupils' historical understanding, regardless of the conceptual focus of the enquiry (Counsell, 2018). However, if we approach 'sense of place' in history education from the second angle, then further thought is needed as to its relationship with the second-order concepts. Theme 3.3 suggested that, in their narratives, my pupils tended to engage with 'sense of place' from this second angle within a mode that echoed language common in similarity and difference enquiries. They did not convey much about the affective relationship between past actors and the Fens, drawing instead on instrumental logic by identifying the winners and losers of drainage (Theme 3.3). This approach did not reflect the fundamental role which Cronon (1992) ascribes to meaning and storytelling in the human relationship with place. While 'sense of place' may have parallels with similarity and difference, its requirement to interrogate the meaning of relationships between people and place might suggest that it is more appropriately understood as a subset of what

Benger (2020) has termed ‘historical perspective’. For Benger (2020), ‘historical perspective’ involves pupils emulating the approach of cultural historians, reconstructing the perspectives of historical actors through ‘thick description’ based on deep contextual knowledge and sense of period. What I was really asking my pupils to do was to reconstruct such perspectives, focusing on the relationship of past actors with the Fens. Understood this way, a historical ‘sense of place’ may be described as forming part of historical thinking, fitting under the broader umbrella of ‘historical perspective’. From this angle, ‘sense of place’ may still enrich other dimensions of historical thinking (for example understanding causation more deeply by examining why events happened *in a particular place*) but may equally be pursued as a curricular goal in and of itself. More theorisation is needed here, but the findings above suggest that defining ‘sense of place’ solely as something which *enables* rather than *constitutes* historical thinking, may exclude some of its core dimensions.

Framing a historical ‘sense of place’ as sitting under the umbrella of ‘historical perspective’ illuminates potential practical principles for future enquiries which approach place from the second angle described above. My pupils struggled to engage in any kind of ‘thick description’ in their narratives because they did not hold the rich contextual knowledge necessary to understand the meaning of the relationships between past actors and the Fens (Theme 3.3, 3.4). This may have been due to the depersonalisation of the stories which were presented to pupils. This decision had the effect of denying pupils the rich contextual knowledge of character which they needed to properly engage with setting (Megill, 2007) in their narratives and may have been at the root of most pupils falling back on similarity-and-difference-style instrumental reasoning (Theme 3.3, 3.4). This observation suggests a final, tentative point. As my findings suggest, pupils struggled to understand that stories or narratives can exist beyond the individuals directly responsible for producing them (Theme 2.2, 3.3., 3.4). Presenting the narratives to them in an abstract form may well have clashed with, or at least gone beyond, the working understanding of history most pupils held. History teachers engaging with place may face a difficult task in balancing the concrete (contextual knowledge of real individuals and their relationships to place) and the abstract (the narratives and discourses of place which develop across multiple generations and become constitutive of historical change itself).

The tentative nature of this study means it will not attempt to make firm recommendations for how future practice should move forward. Rather, it is hoped that history teachers will find the exploration of the concept of ‘place’ useful for theorising, in their own contexts, a clearer direction for building a historical ‘sense of place’ within the classroom (Stenhouse, 1988). If one suggestion might be made,

it is that much awaits the history teacher who chooses to pay attention to the physical environment, as rich in potential as the traditional sources which form the bedrock of history (Hoskins, 1955).

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