A Street Through Time

Resources for Key Stage 2
History & English curriculum

National Centre for Writing



How to use this pack

This pack supports the Key Stage 2 History and English curriculum, using Dragon Hall — a medieval trading hall in Norwich — and its place in the city's history. Through observation, discussion, and creative writing, children are encouraged to explore how places change over time, investigate historical sources, and develop their understanding of life in the past.

The pack is divided into two activities, each with a resource that can be printed or displayed on screen for children to use as a stimulus. Each activity also includes suggested adaptations to support teachers' delivery.

Designed to be flexible, the activities can be altered to suit your pupils' needs and your local area. The structure of the pack has been informed by consultation with KS2 teachers, ensuring it is practical for classroom use.

Using archive images, maps, writing, and oral storytelling, this pack aims to help teachers support pupils in building historical enquiry skills while also developing their confidence in speaking, listening, and writing. It also provides opportunities for children to make connections between the past and their own local area, helping to make history feel meaningful and relevant to them.

Curriculum links

HISTORY:

- Local history study, focusing on a significant site.
- Develop a chronologically secure knowledge and understanding of British, local, and world history.
- Understand the methods of historical enquiry, including how evidence is used to make historical claims.
- Gain historical perspective by placing growing knowledge into different contexts and understanding connections between local, regional, national, and international history.

ENGLISH:

- Use discussion to clearly elaborate on and explain students' understanding and ideas.
- Develop description of settings through discussing and recording ideas.
- Select and use vocabulary purposefully, understanding how choices of words can change and enhance meaning.
- Write in role and from different perspectives, using evidence to inform narrative, descriptive, and creative writing.
- Plan, draft, revise, and evaluate writing for a range of audiences and purposes.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Identify key features of a historical place. In our example, Dragon Hall in Norwich.
- Explore how places, buildings, and streets have changed over time.
- Ask and investigate questions about change, cause, similarity, and difference using archive images.
- Understand the lives of local people in the past.
- Develop chronological understanding.
- Plan, draft, revise, and evaluate creative and descriptive writing.
- Write in role, adapting language, style, and vocabulary for different audiences and purposes.
- Use historical and subject-specific (tier 3) vocabulary appropriately.
- Make connections between the past and pupils' own local area to develop historical perspective.

Activity One

A street through time

A chronological view of Dragon Hall from the street, over the past 100 years

Aim

Pupils will investigate how buildings, streets, and everyday life have changed over time, using Dragon Hall over the past 100 years to develop chronological understanding.

They will explore connections to national events, such as World War Two, and consider how these impacted local communities and streetscapes.

Pupils will also examine daily life in the 1950s, including housing, play, schooling, and transport.

Using stimulus materials, teachers can guide pupils to develop historical enquiry, observation, and discussion skills, before moving on to a creative writing task that encourages reflection and connections between the past and their own lives.

Materials you'll need

- Resource 1: Images of Dragon Hall over time, or
- Resource 2: Susan's letter (page 12)
- Pens and paper

Spot the Difference!



Oral storytelling/Group discussion

Instructions

- Display the images of Dragon Hall over time on a screen or print them for the class.
- Ask students to look at the images carefully.
- Lead a discussion about what has changed and what has stayed the same.

Adaptation

Print two or three images and let small groups circle the differences between them.

Teacher tips/discussion points

- How are people travelling down the street?
  For example, by car, bicycle, leading cows?
- Can you spot any bomb damage from World War Two?
  (1946 image)
- Look at the building techniques. What does the ‘half-timbering’ and ‘wattle and daub’ tell us about its age?
- Encourage the use of tier three vocabulary.
- How have the colours of the building changed over time?
- Are there buildings in your local area that have changed over time? Do they use similar building techniques to Dragon Hall?

Resource 1: Images of Dragon Hall over time

1925



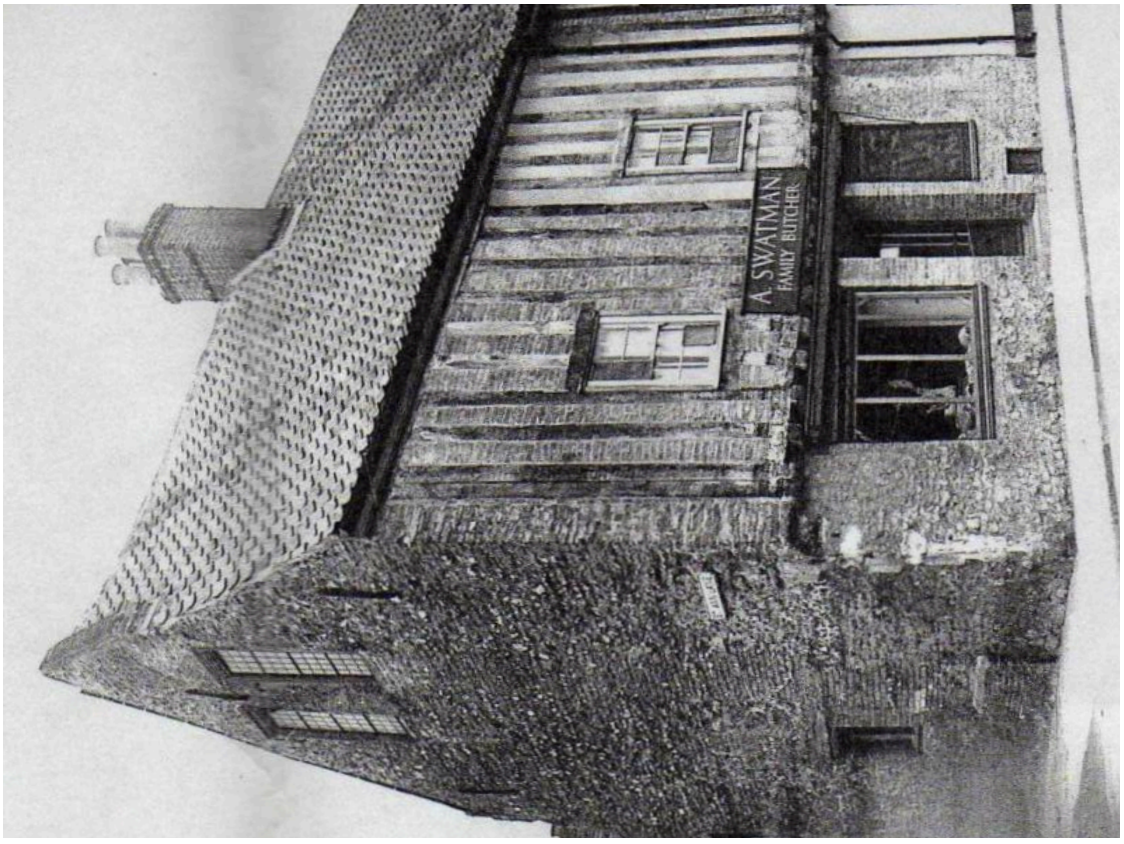
1930s



1946



1950s



1960s



2006



2026





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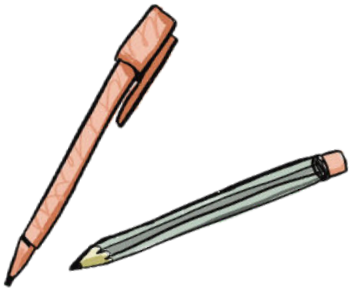
Changes through time

Creative writing activity



Instructions

- Introduce the class to Susan (Sue), a fictional 10-year-old girl living on King Street in 1950s Norwich. Read Susan's Letter (resource 2, page 12).
- Lead a discussion comparing the 1950s to today: What has changed in daily life? How has the wider world changed? (new monarchs, technology, toys, etc.)
- Now, ask students to write a letter to a child in the future describing life today.

Adaptation

Assign small groups a topic and combine their letters into one group letter. Alternatively, this can be led as a whole class activity rather than an independent or small group writing task. You can also adapt the character to your local area; choose a street your students know, and imagine Susan living there.

Suggested topics:

- Home life
- School
- Money and currency
- Play and toys
- Technology



Teacher tips/discussion points

- How did families heat their homes? (coal fire vs central heating)
- What technologies were common? (TVs, radios)
- What school subjects were taught? (sewing lessons)
- How did the currency system work? (pounds, shillings, and pence)
- What were typical prices for everyday items?
- What toys did children play with? (yo-yo, hula hoop)
- How has technology changed? (phone box vs smartphones)

Resource 2: Susan's Letter

My name's Susan, but everyone calls me Sue.

I am writing this in 1954.

I'm ten years old and I live in a little terraced house in Norwich with my mum, dad, and my little brother Billy. We've got a coal fire in the living room, and we listen to the wireless most evenings. My friend Maggie has a television in her house, we all went round to watch Queen Elizabeth's coronation last year, it was so exciting!

At school I enjoy reading and sewing lessons the most. Oh, and every day we get a little bottle of milk.

The money we use can be a bit confusing. It's pounds, shillings, and pence. There are 12 pence in a shilling and 20 shillings in a pound. When Mum sends me to the shop with a shilling, I get a loaf of bread and a pint of milk. That comes to about eightpence (1d) altogether, so I still have fourpence left! So, I can pop over to the sweet shop and get four sherbet lemons, one for me, one for Billy, and the rest I save for later.

After school we play skipping in the street, or hopscotch on the pavement, and the boys kick a football about until someone's mum shouts that tea's ready. Sometimes, we go down to the phone box at the end of the road in the evening with Dad to talk to our Grandad who lives in London.

I like to play with the yo-yo that I got for my last birthday, and I am hoping for a Hula Hoop this year.

I hope you find this interesting in the future. I wonder what it is like in your time?

Best wishes,
Sue

Activity Two

Dragon Hall, inside-out

A medieval local history activity

Aim

Pupils will develop a deeper understanding of the significance of Dragon Hall within the wider context of medieval Norwich, exploring trade and architecture.

Using the map and images provided, you will explore Norwich in the 1400s. The creative writing activity encourages writing with style and purpose while learning about history.

Pupils will also make connections about how the past has shaped their local area today.

Materials you'll need

- Resource 3: Images of Robert Toppes' trading hall
- Resource 4: Medieval map of Norwich
- Resource 5: Dragon Hall fact sheet (page 19)
- Pen and paper

Inside a medieval trading hall

Oral storytelling/Group discussion

Instructions

- Read through the Dragon Hall fact pack. You might choose to read all of these to the class or select a few facts you feel are appropriate and interesting for your group.
- Display the images of the trading hall on a screen or print them for the class.
- Lead a discussion about what you can see in the trading hall.
- Annotate the image. This can be done on screen as a group activity or as an individual task with printed images for each child.

Adaptation

Is there an example of a medieval building in your local area?

Can you see any similarities or differences?

What trade was important in your local area during this time period?

Teacher tips/discussion points

- What do you think it felt like to be a merchant buying and selling fabrics in Robert Toppes' trading hall?
- What do you notice about the design of the trading hall? (Dragons in the spandrels, construction of the building, crown post roof, wattle and daub, large oriel window etc).

Resource 3: Artist impressions of Robert Toppes' trading hall







A dragon's eye view

Creative writing activity

Instructions

- Introduce the class to the Dragon character. Read aloud the Dragon's introduction to the medieval map of Norwich.
- Take a look at the map and discuss the places you can see. Maybe you recognise some of them or have visited them?
- Now, ask students to write a story in the voice of the dragon. You can use this as a story starter:

  'One night, Robert Toppes left a window open in the trading hall. A few of the other dragons and I decided to sneak out and explore the city. When I flew out of the window, I saw...'

Adaptation

Alternatively this can be led as a whole class activity rather than an independent writing task. Adapt this activity to your local area by finding a map or images of your local area during the medieval period.

Teacher tips/discussion points

- After the Norman Conquest in 1066, Norwich became a major centre for trade and power.
- In the 1400s Norwich had approximately 58 parishes. A popular local saying is *'Norwich had a church for every Sunday of the year and a pub for every day.'*

Hello everyone,

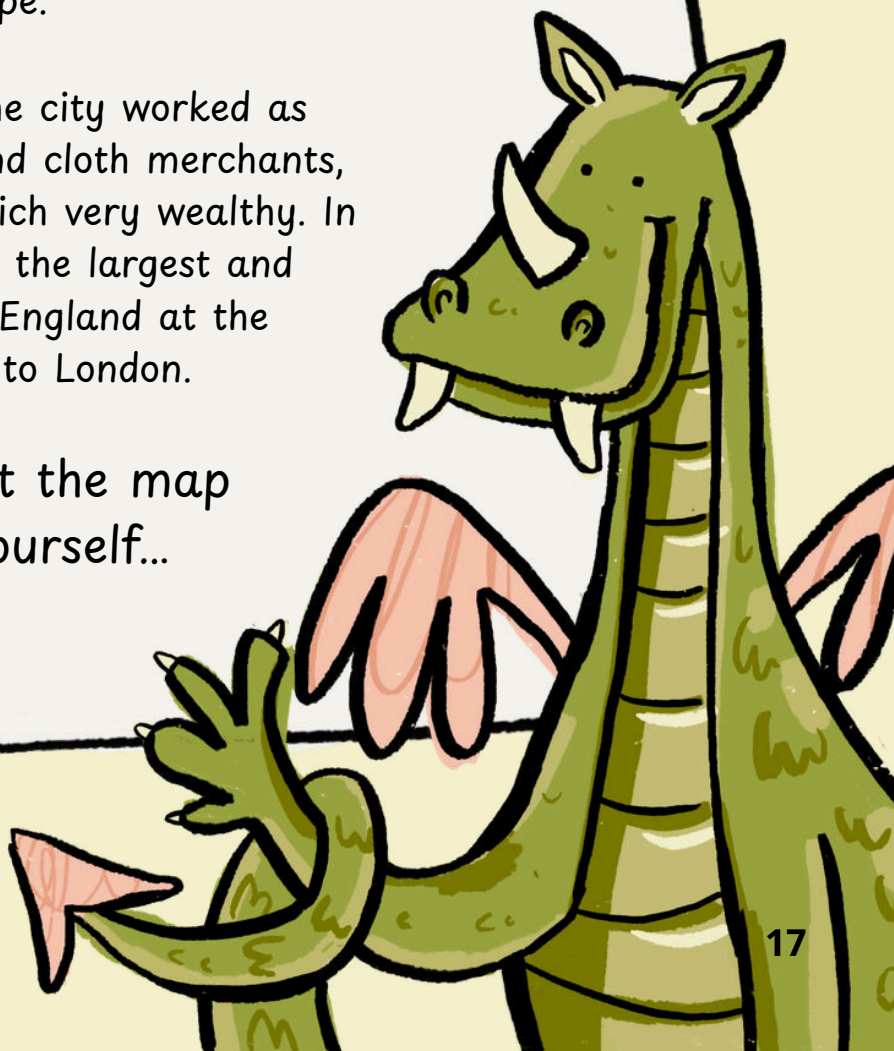
I am the dragon you can see in the painting!

When Robert Toppes, a wealthy merchant, built his trading hall in 1427 there were 15 of us Dragons keeping watch. This street was one of the best in Norwich—being so close to the river meant it was the ideal spot for a great trading hall like this one.

The cloth that was traded here would come in off the river, ready to be sold. Back then the city was famous for its fabrics. They were sold all over England and Europe.

Many people in the city worked as weavers, dyers, and cloth merchants, which made Norwich very wealthy. In fact, Norwich was the largest and wealthiest city in England at the time, second only to London.

Take a look at the map and see for yourself...



Resource 3: Medieval map of Norwich



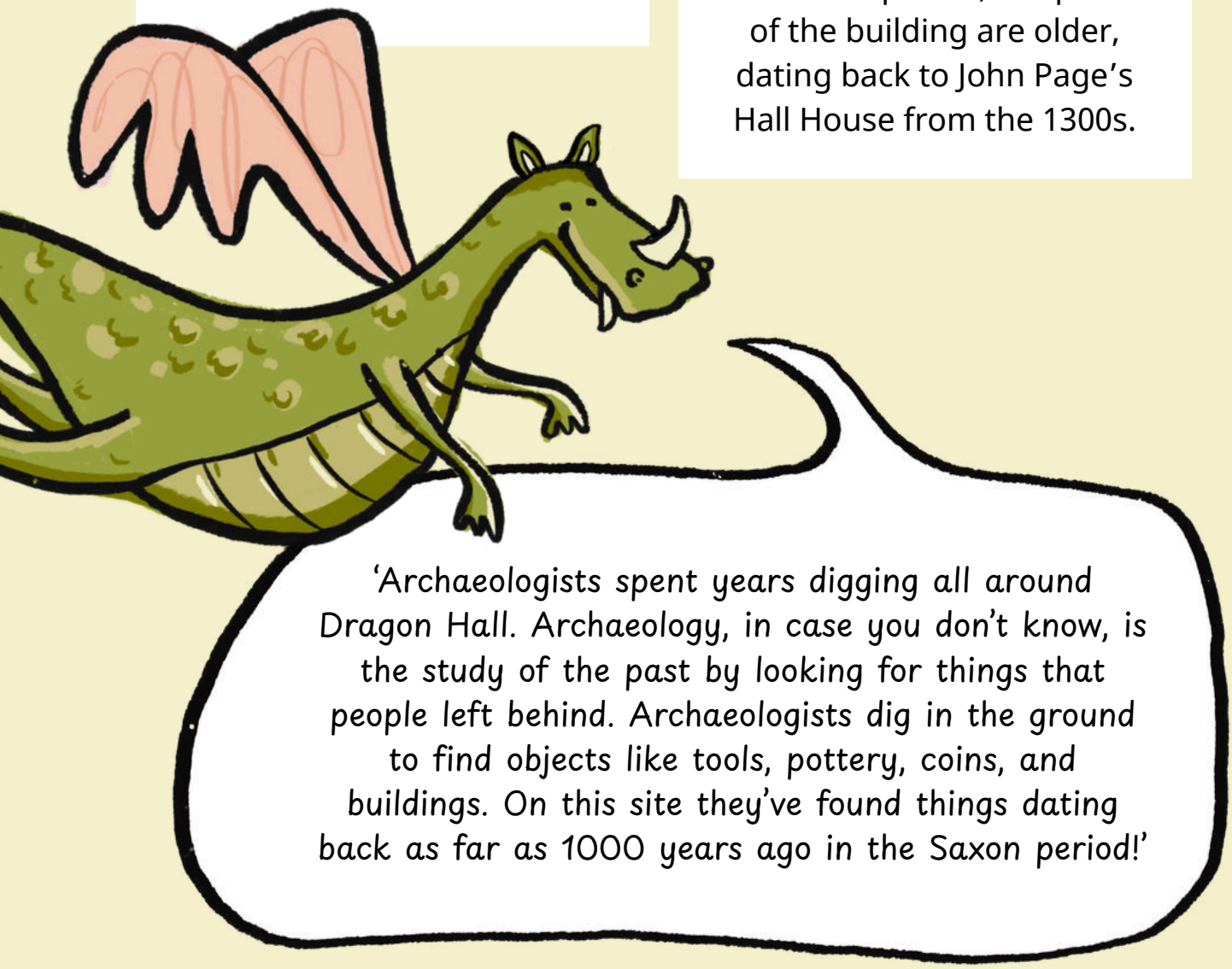
Resource 5: Dragon Hall fact sheet

WHO?
Dragon Hall was built by Robert Toppes, a wealthy merchant in Norwich.

WHAT?
It was a medieval trading hall, a place where merchants bought, sold and stored goods — in this case cloth and fine fabrics.

WHERE?
Dragon Hall is on King Street in Norwich, near the river so goods could be brought in easily.

WHEN?
The main hall was built in around 1427, during the medieval period, but parts of the building are older, dating back to John Page's Hall House from the 1300s.



'Archaeologists spent years digging all around Dragon Hall. Archaeology, in case you don't know, is the study of the past by looking for things that people left behind. Archaeologists dig in the ground to find objects like tools, pottery, coins, and buildings. On this site they've found things dating back as far as 1000 years ago in the Saxon period!'

HOW?

The building was made using timber frames and oak beams, with walls of wattle and daub. It has a crown-post roof, a large oriel window, and decorative dragons carved into the wood.



WHY?

Robert Toppes built Dragon Hall to run his trading business and make the most of Norwich's famous cloth and textile trade at the time. Its impressive design also showed that he was wealthy and important in the city.

Further reading & resources

DK and Noon, S. (2020) *A street through time: A 12,000 year journey along the same street.* London: DK Children.

Guillain, C. and Zommer, Y. (2017) *The street beneath my feet*. London: Words & Pictures.

Dragon Hall Heritage Volunteers (n.d.) Available at: https://www.dragonhallnorwich.org.uk/ (Accessed: May 2026).

More resources for schools & educators

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