

A Curriculum for Social Justice and Cultural Capital

Economic and social disadvantage is widely recognised as being one of the greatest barriers to educational achievement and future life chances. Here at Netherton Moss we ensure that we use every aspect of school life to enable the children, whatever their background, to access and build up their reserves of both Social and Cultural Capital as well as the full range of Literacy skills that are essential if they are to understand, communicate and be successful in the world. Engagement in social issues, the arts and culture throughout childhood enables young people to develop the knowledge, language, values and habits that help them to know who they are, engage fully with the world around them and navigate the important choices that are to come as they get older.

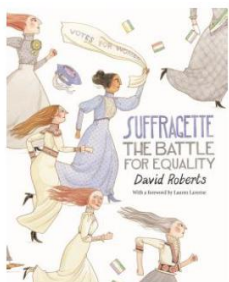
Through all our work we are always looking to forge strong links between the knowledge, skills and dispositions the children develop and their understanding of the connections that exist in the world as these can inform their role and responsibilities within it. This is a key part of the way in which we deliberately design our school curriculum, its content and delivery.

In Year 6 this year we have chosen to explore the theme of equality, social justice and democracy and to have this running as a strong and distinctive thread through much of our work. Collectively, the people, institutions and social movements we have selected, symbolise many of the values and attitudes we want our children to adopt around academic learning, leadership, striving for excellence and making a difference in the world.



We started the year with a visit from the Parliamentary Outreach Officer who ran a series of workshops exploring the history of the UK Parliament and examined the important role it plays in contemporary life, this has been particularly pertinent as the children have followed the process of Brexit as it is played out on the national stage. As part of their participation in the study of Ancient Greece, the children investigated the birth of democratic values and practice in the ancient world and made links to the role the UK Parliament has played in fostering democratic values across the world. To underline this, a visit from Peter Dowd, Member of Parliament for the Bootle Constituency allowed the children to meet and question their representative and gain an insight into the way in which laws are made and the country is governed. The children enjoyed writing and asking their own questions and later evaluating the quality of the answers they received!

For many years we have watched the daily broadcast of Newsround from the BBC and this first hand contact and insight into the process of government has enabled the children to engage more readily with the reports of what is happening in the political world and in societies and cultures throughout the world. To enhance this further, we have received class copies of 'First News' a weekly, child-friendly digest of the week's national and international news. These two sources of up to date news form a key part of our regular 'What's happening in the World' discussions in which the children have opportunity to question their teachers and each other on the issues of the day and share their own opinions. The children were particularly challenged by the campaign to reduce the pollution of the world's oceans by the naturalist Sir David Attenborough, and so they wrote to their MP to raise the issues involved.



Moving forward, in December, we marked the 100th Anniversary of the first women to receive the vote, which prepared the children for their next focus of study. High quality texts form the basis of so much of our work, particularly as we strive to overcome the vocabulary deficit that so many children experience. A new illustrated history of women's suffrage 'Suffragette: The Battle for Equality' by New York Times reporter David Roberts was the key text for our exploration. The children's new found knowledge of Parliament and democracy enabled them to make strong connections to the story of women's struggle to win the vote, this was made all the more relevant with its inclusion in the national news agenda at the time. The children were genuinely shocked at many of the events, actions and attitudes that formed the battle for women's suffrage. The

children explored the issues in a range of discussion, debate and drama based activities along with relishing each and every chapter of the class text. The culmination of this work saw the children write and perform their own drama and presentation for their class assembly thus sharing the key messages of this work with the other year groups and the wider school community.



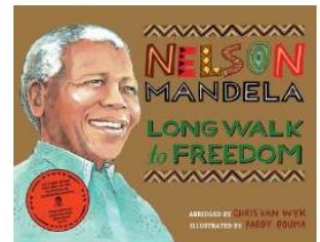
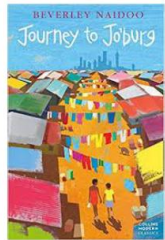
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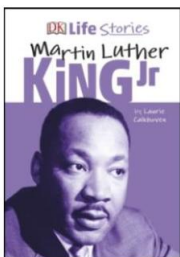
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Moving forward, the children explored the struggle for justice and democracy under the apartheid system in South Africa as they shared the story, 'Journey to Jo'burg' by Beverley Naidoo. Essentially read for pleasure, the story allowed the children to discover the grim realities of the apartheid system, the pass laws and ingrained racism that ruled a nation for centuries. The children made an immediate connection with the struggle of the Suffragettes and Suffragists and the struggle to overcome centuries old discrimination in South Africa. To follow, the children shared and abridged version of Nelson Mandela's biography 'Long Walk to Freedom' by Chris Van Wyk. The children were able to marvel at the story of one of the most significant figures of the 20th Century, a childhood troublemaker who went on to lead a nation to freedom and become a symbol of justice and equality in every corner of the world. The children were shocked to realise just how recent these events have been, and surprised to learn that Nelson Mandela died within their own lifetime!



The start of the Spring Term, marked the 90th Anniversary of the birth of another of the 20th Century's great troublemakers, and a varied mix of multi-media resources and texts allowed the children to explore the life and times of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his leadership of the civil rights movement in the United States. Through their study of a great new biography 'Life Stories: Martin Luther King Jr' by Lauri Calkhoven, the children continued to make those all important links to their previous learning and experiences, building up layers of social and cultural capital as well as vocabulary and communication skills. The richness and depth of their understanding was strengthened as their knowledge grew and they made connections at all levels with the resilience of the human spirit as it struggled to overcome adversity and inequality.



Through discussion and debate the children were able to explore and contrast the oft times violent struggles of the Suffragettes and Nelson Mandela' ANC with the non-violent protests of the Suffragists and Martin Luther King. Another important connection was made when the story of the civil rights movement reached the stand or rather the sit made by Rosa Parks in Montgomery Alabama in 1956 and the subsequent bus boycott. The children really

enjoyed comparing and contrasting this with the actions of the Suffragette Emily Davison who was arrested many times, went on hunger strike and met her tragic end at the Epsom Derby of 1913. It was great to see the children making these links for themselves and to be able to have high quality literature and archive video footage as well as dramatised reconstructions to help support this development of a historical world view. Conveniently, the BBC obliged with a special episode of Dr Who that featured the story of Rosa Parks, historic social issues become a narrative for popular culture, it was time for another discussion!

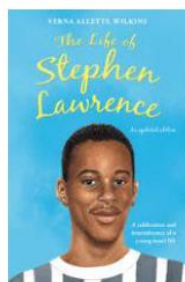


Our visit to the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra Schools Concert in March saw us exploring the themes of the concert's title, *Sound Values*. The music and activities chosen to develop the children's understanding of British Values



of Democracy, The Rule of Law, Individual Liberty and Mutual Respect and Tolerance of Different Faiths and Beliefs. The classroom based learning prior to the concert enabled the children to understand that values are things that are important to us and shape the way we choose to live and that wherever there is a group of people, however small or large, there needs to be an understanding and agreement of their shared values.

At the start of the summer term we looked at the life and loss of the teenager Stephen Lawrence as the UK marked the 25th Anniversary of his murder during an unprovoked racist attack. The children shared a specially commissioned

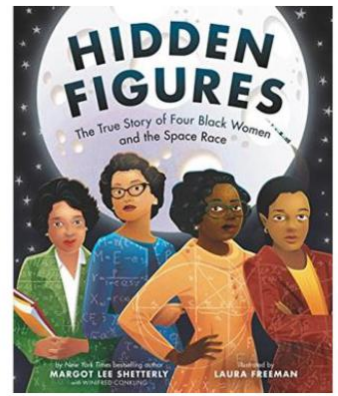
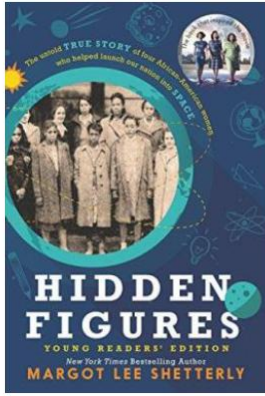


biography 'The Life of Stephen Lawrence' by Verna Allette Wilkins and made use of teaching materials produced by the Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust. Through a series of Ethical Dilemma Philosophy sessions the children explored what it means to 'Live Our Best Life'. This work gave the children an insight into the challenges to equality and justice that the UK has faced in more recent years both within society and its institutions. It allowed an exploration of tolerance and respect that was much closer to home than in previous work, both historically and geographically, understanding the need to challenge gang culture and the violence and conflict that can result from intolerance and prejudice. These key themes were further developed and the depth of the children's understanding further layered as they studied Shakespeare's Romeo and

Juliet. They were able to make important connections between the violence that happens each day on the streets of their own community with the streets of Shakespeare's Verona. Historic family prejudice, gang culture, loyalty, conflict and revenge are all wrapped up in the tragic story of the star-crossed lovers and their friends Tybalt and Mercutio. To complement our explorations of the themes contained within the text, we arranged for a touring version of the play to visit school and the children got to experience Shakespeare in performance, just as the bard intended. The post performance Q&A with the cast was another opportunity for the children to explore the themes more deeply.



As we approached the end of the school year, the world celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the first Moon landing in July 1969. The children looked at the battle for equality and recognition faced by the female, African-American scientists and mathematicians who put man on the Moon. They read the story 'Hidden Figures' by Margot Lee Shetterly and drew comparisons between the illustrated children's edition, the abridged junior version, and the original film. The participants in this particular piece of history faced discrimination on the grounds of both race and gender and allowed further conversations and connections to be made.



From the outset it was our intention, that as a result of our work, the children would acquire a good deal of social and cultural capital as they gain a wide range of interrelated knowledge about the world and the struggle of individuals and groups in their battle for justice and equality. The children's exposure to a wide range high quality texts, video footage, and discussion has helped them to develop the knowledge and vocabulary they need to help make sense of the world in which they live. The children have found both the scope and range of the work endlessly engaging and they have developed an outstanding range of literacy skills that have enabled them to respond enthusiastically through drama, discussion, debate and the full range of written forms. The outcomes for the children at every level of the literacy curriculum have been outstanding, but more importantly they have grown and developed as responsible individuals and as passionate global citizens.