When were Jews in medieval England most in danger?

Exploring change and continuity with Year 7

A great deal has been written about causation in the pages of *Teaching History*. From camels to linguistics, this is a second-order concept that teachers and pupils frequently deliberate. Departments balance the need for substantive knowledge with explicit discussion of causation. Ben Jarman wanted to introduce a 'change and continuity' enquiry to his department, but similar questions arose: should change and continuity be considered explicitly and separately as concepts? This article describes a journey from one enquiry question to another; from 'When were Jews in medieval England most in danger?' to 'Were Jews in medieval England always in danger?' Along the way, Jarman uses a careful analysis of students' work to critique his own practice and thereby develop their understanding of the past.

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Recent research and writing by the likes of Peter Lee, Jonathan Howson and Dennis Shemilt proposes reorganising history education around explicit 'narrative frameworks', specifically focused at helping children to develop a 'usable big picture' of the past as a whole.[1] They address a weakness in school history education: 'young people's sense of chronology is relatively weak and they are generally unable to reflect on themes and issues or relate a longer narrative or story.'[2] I will return to these issues at the end of this article but do not intend here to join the debate directly. My purpose instead is to discuss the concepts of change and continuity as they are encountered by pupils in the context of a single enquiry. A working concept of change and continuity is essential for the development of large-scale narrative pictures of the sort identified by Lee and others.[3] Yet there has been a comparative paucity of articles (despite the vigorous and ongoing debate among history teachers about other second-order concepts) on the best way to deal with them in the classroom.[4] The history profession has isolated and investigated some second-order concepts thoroughly, as well as developing effective teaching methods to draw out and develop children's ideas about them. Causation is a good example; my pupils, while they may sometimes contend with the causal importance of individual factors within a historical account, generally have no problems in seeing that causation per se is a discrete and valid focus for enquiry, stemming from the content of the history. Change and continuity are more slippery, as I shall try to explain below. What has interested me in preparing this article and the lessons on which it draws is the extent to which it is possible to expect children at Key Stage 3 to address change and continuity directly and explicitly.

Aims of the research

My interest stems from the fact that I found it difficult to straighten out in my own mind precisely what I wanted my pupils to engage with in a change and continuity enquiry. Should change and continuity be considered explicitly and separately as concepts, or should the children be aiming to explain second-order concepts within and as they applied to the enquiry's substantive content? Would I assess my pupils' work by reflecting on their implicit or explicit grasp of change as a discrete abstract concept, or by considering how well they comprehended the nature of, and reasons for, change and continuity in one particular period and place? This raises larger questions of how we uproot and isolate second-order learning, which themselves go to the heart of the applicability of history learning in the real world. In considering all of these questions I was also conscious of a recurring tension in my planning and teaching: what is the right balance between explicit second-order reflection and a focus on substantive content?

Figure 1: Jews in medieval England – a brief overview of the enquiry's substantive content

Jews started to arrive in England post-Norman Conquest, mainly invited by William I as financiers with continental connections. Jewish immigration accelerated after the First Crusade and associated pogroms in Europe.

English kings in the 12th and 13th centuries protected Jewish rights in exchange for ultimate legal ownership of their persons and property, including loans. Legally they were an anomaly within feudalism – they held their privileges from the king in exchange for his right to tax them, and their property (including outstanding loans) passed to him on their death. In such circumstances it was usually taxed before the remainder was returned to the inheritor.

Under Henry II, England became 'the safest place in Europe' to be Jewish. He allowed them considerable religious rights including the right to their own court system based on Talmudic law, which dealt with all legal disputes involving Jews except for serious criminal offences.

Jews were not universally liked, however. The late 11th and early 12th centuries saw Gregorian Church reforms and the official position of a self-confident, reformist Church became increasingly hostile to Jews as 'Christ-killers' and usurers. Meanwhile, the Crusades inflamed popular feeling against non-Christians generally.

Usury made major Jewish financiers highly unpopular (interest rates were typically between 22% and 44% p.a.), particularly because debtors usually offered their feudal landholdings as surety on the loans. Some ecclesiastical borrowers even offered their institutions' precious ritual artefacts or saints' relics as collateral. When Jews collected these from borrowers who could not pay off their loans they encountered furious opposition. Jews' wealth made them an easy target for taxation if money was needed.

Jewish safety therefore depended heavily on royal power meaning that kingly successions were periods of intense uncertainty. In 1189, a Crusader king (Richard I) came to throne. Expecting light punishment, debtors organised numerous attacks on Jews around England in 1189-90, including the York Massacre. But Richard actually expanded protection to moneylenders and punished those who attacked Jews. Why? Remember, Jews were his property and attempts by Christians not to repay their debts to Jews threatened the king's ability to tax the resulting wealth.

13th-century kings were ambivalent; they demanded outrageous taxes (Jews became 'the royal milch-cow') but to allow this mulcting to continue they also further protected Jewish credit rights and instituted legal systems for official registration of Jewish loans. This made it extremely difficult for debtors to evade their creditors which made Jewish lenders yet more unpopular.

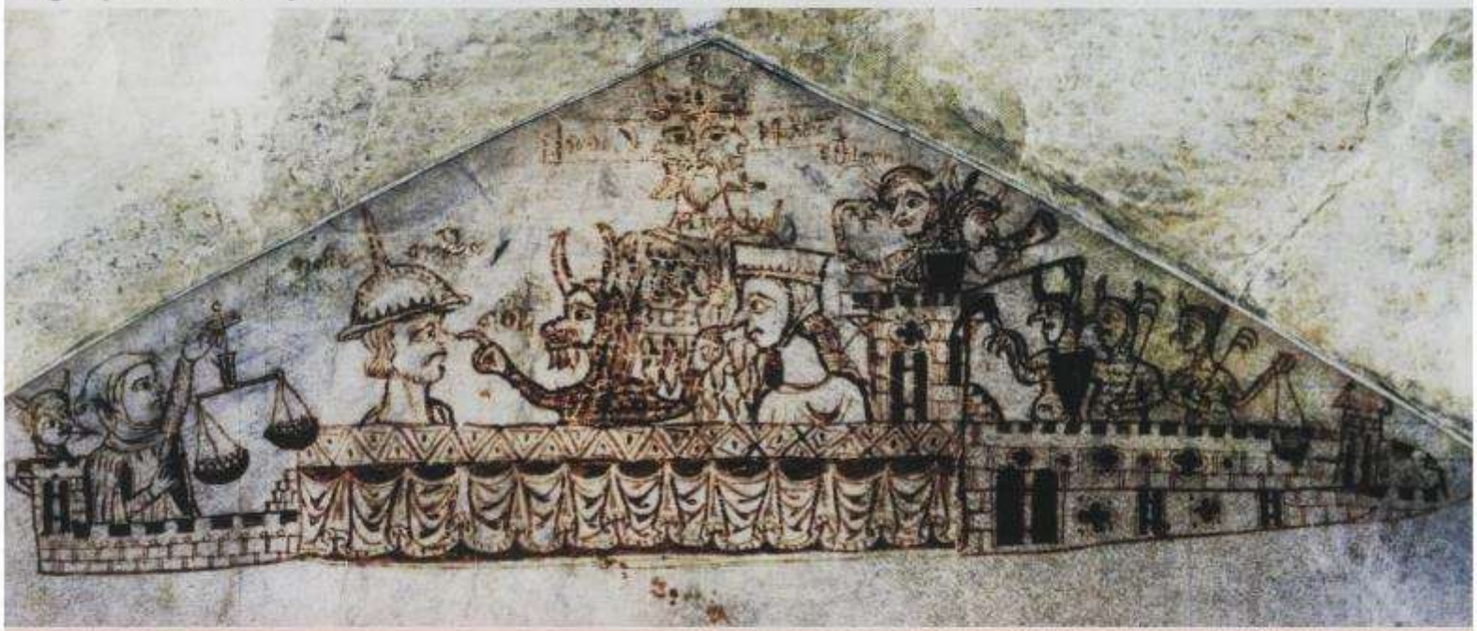
The wider European picture also had an impact. Increasingly Jews had 'outsider' status after the fourth Lateran Council of 1215; they were forced to wear insignia from 1218. Henry III's piety and acquiescence to papal policy didn't help. Greater efforts were made during Henry III's reign to convert Jews to Christianity and in general official persecution increased over time. Accusations of ritual murder against children (the 'blood libel') were a recurring hallmark of these attacks, but did not begin in the 13th century; the first accusation concerned the killing of William of Norwich in 1144, during Stephen's reign. This indicates the complexity of the picture and background of anti-Semitism. Accusations of ritual murder were often encouraged by the Church, which took great pains to keep alive the memories of these innocent, murdered Christian children by declaring them saints and allowing cults to develop around their relics.

'Myopic taxation' by John and Henry III – taxation at unsustainably high rates – gradually but inexorably depleted the wealth of the Jewish community and therefore their long-term usefulness to the monarch. Many Jews started to emigrate during these reigns and others were banished for not paying up when taxes were demanded. Each tax levy on Jews further enraged ecclesiastical and lay debtors because loans had to be called in early to meet the king's demands.

Edward I finally bowed to intense Church pressure and banned Jewish usury in 1275. Jews were unable to compensate for this with other economic activity, and so ceased to be a source of useful tax revenue to the king. Edward expelled them, amid general Christian rejoicing, in 1290. Edward punished harshly anyone caught attacking Jews as they were leaving the country. They did not officially return until Oliver Cromwell readmitted them in the 1650s.

Figure 2: Lesson outlines

Figure 3: The 1233 tallage roll cartoon, depicting Jewish figures from medieval Norwich
Image reproduced courtesy of The National Archives – E401/1565



This cartoon explicitly names two Jews who can be identified from other documents: Isaac fil Jurnet was one of the richest financiers in England at the time and a major creditor of the abbey of Westminster; Mosse Mokke was a shadier character, convicted in the 1220s of assault and executed for coin-clipping, a form of currency fraud. Isaac is shown as a three-faced figure with a crown. In other illustrations from the time, Antichrist was often depicted with three faces, and Isaac's crown may in some way be intended to draw attention to his use of royal courts and royal authority to enforce his debts on the Abbey; perhaps to allude to his protection from the King as a Jew, and perhaps to indicate the usurpation of royal power that his wealth has given him. The inclusion of Mosse, who may have been known in Norwich for his underworld activities, may have been meant to draw an explicit connection between him and Isaac, perhaps to indicate that Mosse collected debts for Isaac, or perhaps in a more general sense to allege that all Jews were cheaters, whether using royal courts or more direct methods to collect their debts. The cartoon also contains myriad other details, such as demons playing a ram's horn shofar (a Jewish ritual instrument), another fiend pointing to the exaggerated noses of Mosse and a Jewish woman, Avegaye, and assorted other creatures whose significance is less clear.

I therefore wanted to create a sequence of lessons that would allow my pupils to:

- Explain change and continuity over a relatively extended period of time
- Make a distinction between events and changes, seeing the latter as processes
- Consider the reasons for changes that happened over this period of time

Centring the enquiry

I developed a plan and resources for a Year 7 enquiry. This lasted for six one-hour lessons and centred on the life of Jews in medieval England between their arrival in numbers after the Norman Conquest and their expulsion from the kingdom (the first of its kind in Europe) by Edward I in 1290. This fascinating story (summarised in Figure 1 on p.5), provides a complex and multi-stranded example of historical change. It was also my intention that focusing in depth on the deeply ambivalent relationship between medieval Jews and the English monarchy would illuminate issues featuring elsewhere in our Year 7 syllabus, specifically the restraints on medieval kings and the importance of their relationship with the Church. This, I hoped, would unlock the 'overview that lurks within the depth'.[5] I settled on the enquiry question, 'When were Jews in medieval England most in danger?' The enquiry's outcome activity was to be an essay, scaffolded using a 'grand prix' structure borrowed from Dale Banham's work on King John.[6] The enquiry was first taught in the spring of 2008. After evaluating the enquiry as part of an in-service training course, I made some alterations ready for 2009, including changing the essay and enquiry question.[7] Figure 2 (opposite) presents a diagrammatic summary of both versions of the enquiry; it also shows how my planning evolved, a process I will explain further below.

Grabbing attention using a medieval cartoon

In both versions the enquiry began with a lesson setting a puzzling medieval cartoon (reproduced in Figure 3) into its historical context. Drawn at the bottom of a tax roll in the 1230s, its origins and purpose are unclear; it is most likely to have been a doodle by a medieval scribe. What is clear is that it represents considerable anti-Jewish feeling in Norwich (where it was made).

The cartoon proved to be an excellent introduction, both in the sense of stimulating interest as well as framing a wider discussion on the nature of 'danger', a concept that was crucial to both versions of the essay title. Pupils worked in small

groups and collected their thoughts in Post-it notes that were stuck under four headings; as the lesson progressed they were allowed to revise or discard some of their earlier Post-its, or substitute them for new ones. I 'wondered aloud' about certain interesting features of the cartoon (for example, the devil pointing towards the noses and what this might mean) and fed in certain key contextual information, giving the groups time to digest and record some of their thoughts about what the picture reveals about attitudes at the time. Their responses made ready, strong links to modern anti-Semitism, drawing direct comparisons with the ideas held about Jews by the Nazis. The lesson also provided a 'hook' for the rest of the enquiry and introduced the complexity lurking behind the apparent simplicity of the enquiry question.

At the end of this lesson, I introduced the question of whether the Jews in this picture could be said to be 'in danger'. From the obvious answer of 'yes' it was possible to introduce several ideas to problematise this concept: if Isaac was so rich, had he always been in danger? Were other Jews equally in danger? Why were they in danger? Why would they have come to England in the first place if this was the kind of attitude they faced? The lesson really sparked my pupils' interest. I think this was partly because it was the first history they had studied at the school that dealt specifically with Jews, but also because it was their first encounter in history lessons with a familiar concept in an unfamiliar context.

The enquiry: version 1

In lessons 2 and 3, pupils worked in small groups and examined cards showing different events that affected Jews in medieval England. I first asked them to find cards that they felt represented particularly high and low levels of danger to Jews. They then explained their choices, and this opened out possibilities for us to identify different kinds of danger – physical, financial, religious and so on. The children then plotted the events on the cards on to a graph. There were some unanticipated technical difficulties with pupils who drew their lines willy-nilly between one point and its nearest neighbour, leaving their 'danger line' travelling backwards as well as forwards through time, but the activity further piqued their interest and laid a strong foundation for what followed.

The following lesson then took a different perspective and added new lines to the graph, based on the same 18 cards, but this time considering the source of the danger. Was the danger to Jews coming from ordinary people, the Church, or the king? I again asked them to find examples of each type and these were discussed, before pupils plotted new lines on their original graphs. This highlighted some problems with change graphs, partly because some pupils drew graphs that were jumbled and confused, and partly because not all fully understood the difference between the three new lines, or expected that they should map the one from the previous lesson exactly. Nevertheless I was able to get children who

Figure 4: Selected extracts from pupils' final essays in 2007/8

[G] Some kings had different views on Jews ... Earlier kings protected Jews better than later kings [because they provided a service to the king through their loans]. Later kings made conditions worse for the Jews as they were poor from all the taxes they had to pay. As the Jews became poorer there was less of a profit for the kings which meant that Jews became less useful as time went on which meant that as time goes on the protection of the Jews is less important therefore when they were no use at all king Edward I expelled them from England ... Jews in medieval England were most in danger at the end of the medieval period ... expelling them was not very different from a death penalty because they would probably have been killed by crusaders in another country.

[Y] To summarise this essay the most danger from a single side [ie. Church, King or the ordinary people] was in 1190 when the massacres occurred and King Richard went on Crusade. The danger from all three groups at the same time was in the 1200's as all the King's were unclose to the Jews and did not want to debate [sic] with them. Overall the ordinary people of England caused the most havoc as they were often threatening them.

[E] I have decided that the time when the Jews were in the most amount of danger was in 1210, when huge amounts of tax were put on the Jews, and they were arrested and hurt whilst the money was collected ... It was bad because [later] there weren't many Jews left in England ... most of them were so poor that King Edward I felt that it was no longer useful to him to tax them.

[L] King Edward was religious and the Jews had no money so he could not raise the taxes so he listened to the Church and expelled the Jews even if they could make anoth [enough?] by money lending as I said the king was was religious and the Church said it was a sin for Jews to money lend so people were angry with them.

[A] I think that King Richard and King John made it hard for the Jews because they did not really help them, they just wanted their money. This shows that sometimes in life people don't help others because they really wanted too; they just do it because they would get a reward in return. I think that King Henry III made it hard for the Jews because he was influenced by the Church and therefore was mean to the Jews. He also was not very fond of the Jews because of his religion. This shows that if you follow a bad influence it can lead you to things that you do not really want to do. I think King Edward made it hard for the Jews because he told the Jews to leave because they were not helping him and giving him money. He also expelled them because he was being influenced by the Pope. From this whole essay I think that the worst time for the Jews was in the years 1250-1290. In this period of time the two kings ... made life hard for the Jews and did not let them run their lives their way. The main year I think they were in danger was in 1290, as they were expelled from England only because they were becoming poor.

Figure 5: Selected extracts from pupils' 'change description' sheets from 2008/9 lesson 4

Name	When the change happened	What changed (or stayed the same)	Words to describe this (try to make a sentence or two if you can)	Are there any events that go with this change?
S	1216	A new king came to the throne Henry III and Jews were in more danger Jews were expelled from England as they were taxed too much	'Slow' because it took a long time for danger to increase. 'Gradual' because Henry was a boy king and he did not get his own way straightaway. 'Got going' overnight. 'Swift'. 'Hurried'. 'For the worse'. 'Mistreatment'. 'Continuous'.	
	1190-1184 [sic]	He started believing that anyone who attacks Jews will be punished. And anyone who refuses to trade with the Jews. This must have started as nothing and ended up going well.	It got 'triggered' by King Stephen and it was 'ongoing' for some time. 'Dangerous' because of how it made Jews feel.	
RS	1200-1300	The Jews are more and more heavily taxed by the Kings ... and during these periods of time more people are turning against the Jews, so much money is taking from them that they get poorer and poorer, and life was much harder, until in the end they got expelled because they weren't useful to the king/kingdom.	'Slow', 'Gradual', 'Dangerous', 'Increasing', 'Unexpected'	Jews were accused of murder and some were put in jail (1239)
	1154-1189	Henry II's rain [sic] was very calm and pleasant for the Jew and the king tried to be kind to the Jews.	'Brought about', 'short-lived', 'unexpected', 'developed'.	Henry allows the Jews to practice [sic] their religion (festivals and synagogues) like the new courts (1154-89)
D	1188	Jews are very heavily taxed	'Sudden', 'Unexpected'	
	1255	A Jew was hanged	'Worrying', 'Short-lived'	
	1239	Jews were thrown into jail	'Unexpected', 'Cruel'	

had grasped the task to draw their lines on the board, and this stimulated discussion about why the lines were in different places. My hope that this activity would help pupils see the crucial link between Jewish safety and the king's protection was overambitious. Pupils' comments showed they understood that danger from different sources was changing constantly; even so, the interplay between these remained mostly obscure, and I think this was the fault of over-complicating the task. When kings were perceived by the medieval Church or the people to be ill-disposed towards Jews, attacks and accusations often resulted. This is a lot to try and get an 11-year-old to understand, especially when they are looking at an unannotated graph.

Lesson 4 was not a success and didn't contribute a great deal to the enquiry as a whole.[8] Lesson 5 was more productive. Here I re-presented the 'stories' of different kings' reigns through the lens of their dealings with Jews, using individual 'stories' written from each king's perspective.[9] Pupils worked in small groups to 'rate' the kings, according to how much of a threat they posed towards Jews. I then asked them to discuss and explain to other groups how they had made their decision. I also asked them whether any kings did things that were surprising. Several groups singled out Richard I, who as a Crusader, might have been expected to treat Jews negatively, but in fact understood the importance of their taxes to his war-making, and therefore instituted a new system for protecting the ability of Jews to collect their debts. I was even more pleased that some pupils inferred that this put Jews in much more danger, because calling in loans from Christian debtors to pay the king's taxes meant that those Christians often swallowed the bitter pill of giving up their collateral, for example precious Church artefacts or feudal landholdings. This is an impressive insight: they had grasped something quite profound about the nature of change, in that it is a multi-stranded process and that different strands may be travelling in different directions, affecting others as they go. I was also delighted at the end of the lesson with one class, when one girl, N, said that the moment Jews were really most in danger was when Richard brought in his new system for protecting Jewish loans, because it meant (and I paraphrase) that Jews were now able to collect loans very efficiently, making it possible for unscrupulous later kings to squeeze them until they were so poor that they were no longer worth protecting.

N's comment is illuminating. Clearly Jews were not in clear and present danger at that point, showing the risks of asking the wrong enquiry question. However, N's selection of such a counter-intuitive event as a symbol of danger is a revealing way to look at Richard's reform: it is not construed as an isolated and discrete event, nor as a simple difference between one state of affairs and another, but instead as a *historically significant* difference, in this case one that N is able to weave into an *overall process of change*. The process, as she is imagining it, has many strands which themselves can be valued positively or negatively (kings were getting richer, Jews were becoming more endangered and so on), but she bypasses these issues and selectively judges that this seemingly innocuous change 'for the better' is significant because of its place in the account of the past that she is constructing. In this sense 1194 can be seen as a moment when things could have been different, and N's insight into counterfactual divergence surely indicates what Lee and

Shemilt call a developing historical consciousness, in that it shows a long-term approach to change and continuity (a narrative framework?), and looks beyond the obvious moments of danger such as the York Massacre.[10]

Reflecting on pupils' written work

I was bowled over by the quality and quantity of written work that many pupils produced using a more or less straight adaptation of Dale Banham's 'grand prix' and 'burger' writing frames, which were introduced in the enquiry's final lesson.[11] However, neither my pupils (nor I) were readily able, as a result of this work, to draw specific and explicit conclusions concerning the nature of change and continuity as discrete and abstract concepts in themselves. This is crucial, because it is important to be clear about what we expect when we ask children to consider explicitly second-order concepts.

Causation and change are both useful concepts in constructing accounts of the past, but they need to be disentangled and treated discretely. Peter Lee's description of children's preconceptions is useful here: 'one minute "nothing" is happening, and then something does happen (often, someone does something). So there has been a change, and the change is that an event has taken place.'[12] This is a problem because:

> *[h]istory tends to deal with longer scales than the moment-to-moment scale of everyday life … Change in history is generally to be understood in changes of states of affairs; it is not equivalent to the occurrence of events.*[13]

This implies that if they are to be said to progress, pupils must move towards construing change as a process, and possibly as one of many processes 'going on' over different timescales. N's comment does this, but how might she be encouraged to achieve the same result in writing?

The work completed by some pupils in my classes did coherently explain some changes inasmuch as they affected Jews in medieval England (see Figure 4). G, for instance, identified changes, and explained the reasons for those changes, though not hinting at their pace or nature. L, on the other hand, did none of these explicitly, though from his verbal contributions in the classroom and the implicit thrust of his writing, it was clear that his understanding was on a par with G's.[14] It did seem that attempts in many essays to deal with change and continuity were hampered by the fact that pupils were diverted into dealing with causation – *why* people did things and *why* certain changes were going on at the time.

In their written work, only a small number of my 2007/8 pupils chose events other than the obvious pair of 1190 (York Massacre) and 1290 (expulsion) as emblematic of the greatest danger to Jews, and only a few of these argued that the greatest danger applied over a period of time rather than at a particular time.[15] A's work (see Figure 4) shows his grasp of a wider process of change – Jewish impoverishment caused by over-taxation – and he hints that change is something operating beyond and behind the level of mere events, but he was in a small minority in grasping this. Y and E both show awareness that individual events are part of a longer process, and that their consequences produce ripples further down the stream of time, but neither of them elaborate explicitly on this. Even so, these responses were not typical, and many pupils considered the question of 'when was there the most danger?' simplistically, as if it was a question of 'which was the worst event?'

I therefore faced two main issues when re-planning the enquiry for 2008/9:

- How to try and focus on change and continuity as processes that deserve consideration more explicitly and discretely, rather than just as background issues in substantive content
- How to maintain the narrative drive of the enquiry, as an unfolding story that gained colour following an initial, thought-provoking encounter with a medieval cartoon

The enquiry: version 2

To achieve these aims I made two principal changes. The first was to increase the pace of the narrative. I did this using the same 'kings' stories' sheets but added a new version with simpler language, to be used in parallel by lower-attaining readers. Pupils read in pairs with highlighters or coloured pens, using these to highlight and annotate:

- Evidence that some kings protected Jews from others
- Evidence that Jews were sometimes in danger
- Evidence that Jews were able to become wealthy and prosper

I modelled the sort of highlighting I wanted my pupils to do and then they read the kings' stories on their own. We then came together as a class to draw a line showing the level of danger to Jews during these reigns. This was done on the board, but slowly, and with time for extensive contributions from the class; pupils gave their opinions about where the line ought to be during a particular reign. This took two lessons and a homework. In the third lesson, the pupils used the 18 event cards used in the previous year, but for a different purpose. This time events were plotted as 'points' on the graph, again acquiring a 'height' on the Y axis to signify the amount of danger to Jews that each event represented. Having modelled two or three of these, pupils then worked in pairs to add the rest to their graphs. This too was completed for homework. The idea was to create a deliberate contrast between specific events and overall 'currents' of change.

Lesson 4 therefore aimed to exploit this contrast. It began with a starter that explicitly and deliberately asked pupils to consider what events and changes actually are. I started by asking them to work in groups and come up with examples of both, and then asked whether they were the same thing, or if not, what the relationship was between them. This prompted interesting discussions with both classes. Pupils in both were able to define events – typical descriptions included 'stuff that happens' and 'something that happens,' or referred to specific examples such as 'they're important times like a bar mitzvah or a big family event.' The boys opted for a football metaphor,

with one positing an event (Arshavin joins Arsenal) that was part of a wider process (the team gets back to the top four). I asked them to develop on this theme – was Arshavin *the* cause of the improvement in the team? The boys' answers indicated that they were aware something bigger was going on, that Arshavin was part of a larger process, though we agreed perhaps an important one. This carried us on to the difference between events and changes when talking about medieval Jews. Here the small groups were given a sheet of words with which to describe changes.[16] Again, modelling what I wanted them to do first, I asked them to work in pairs and identify and describe changes that affected medieval Jews, as well as attaching examples of events they felt were 'part of' these changes.

The remaining lessons in the enquiry were used to introduce and familiarise pupils with the grand prix and burger sheets, only this time they were asked to plan a paragraph or two for homework and then return for lesson 6 ready to peer-assess each other's plans.

Reflecting on pupils' written work again

In terms of asking pupils to distinguish between changes and events, lesson 4 met with mixed success. The scaffolding provided for my pupils' written work was not universally well understood, and pupils who demonstrated understanding of change in everyday life in class struggled to apply this understanding when writing about changes and events in medieval England. The task relied on their having a good grasp of what happened and a good memory for the kings' stories, which was not always the case. Nevertheless, some gave examples of changes, and selected examples of events that 'belonged with' these changes in their written work. Some examples are included in Figure 5 on p. 9. In these extracts, both S and RS show signs of understanding several important things about historical change. They both describe changes that take place over a longer period of time (though S appears confused by the 'when the change happened' column and describes a change that 'happened' in 1216 but where the danger to Jews 'took a long time … to increase'.)[17] They can both be said to have understood change as a process. RS also selected events that validly 'belonged' with the changes, though she did not elaborate on why each event was selected or how exactly it relates to the change. She was also among the few who showed awareness in this task of continuity as something that takes place as part of the same processes as change. D, on the other hand, was more typical of pupils in her class in that she appears to have been completely bamboozled by the task in hand, confusing events and changes and using any old descriptive terms from the sheet of words to describe changes. This was a challenging task and still a work in progress, because not all pupils got to grips with it, though upon reading the essays it was clear that the change descriptions sheet had unlocked some interesting ideas regarding change.

The essays also yielded food for thought. The same method of scaffolding was used as in 2007/8, but with different text in the burgers and on the grand prix sheet, adapted to better fit the new essay title. The final essays showed that, at least in some way, the practice gained at describing changes in lesson 4 was used in writing the final essay. A, for example, who finds written work challenging and whose final essay was incomplete and lacking an introduction or conclusion, still managed one brilliant passage, where he uses words (e.g. 'saddening', 'continuous', 'predictable') from my change description sheet to great effect. This displays a high-level skill: the ability to *characterise* a change and understand that it can constitute regress as well as progress. Here events are neither random nor part of an eternal forward march of progress from a deficient past to the present.[18] A's ability to see the future consequences of such accusations against Jews also hints at his apprehension of change as a process: ongoing and apart from mere events, though events clearly have their place in the process. It was also noteworthy that over half of my pupils managed to identify continuities as well as changes. S and G among others noted that Jewish money-lending and royal taxation were constants, and yet seen in different ways they could be seen as agents of change, in the sense that they created their own problems for Jews. Taxation in particular could go far beyond being 'not really that much of a danger'. S's statement, that, 'from [one] point of view', Jews *were* always in danger, hints at something present in all these extracts and many others: an awareness of the importance of the historian's perspective in answering historical questions. All of these pupils are learning to look at the issue of whether and how much something has changed from a variety of angles. This in itself shows that they are beginning to see the diversity and complexity of experience in human history, as well as the ability of a historian to untangle it. SE's essay reconciled 'continuous' anti-Semitism with the fact of Christian guests at a Jewish wedding just four years before all Jews were expelled from England. The fact that this does not appear a paradox to him shows that he has grasped important ideas about the complexity of change. G was the only pupil who stepped beyond identifying the difference between events and changes. He began to analyse what the relationship between them might be: 'an event can cause a change/continuity or a change/continuity can cause an event, but they are not the same thing. One shows that the other has happened.' G's ability to step back from the history and make a more general, abstract statement about change is remarkable, though it was by no means typical.

Reflections on second-order concepts and narrative frameworks

This enquiry has focused my thinking about change and continuity, despite some resources that are not yet fully developed. It was hard at times to isolate and disentangle the issues of change and causation, and causation remains an important focus, because it interests children and plays a key role in historical explanation. My pupils were able to answer causative questions directly. Some also grasped important ideas about change and continuity and hinted at such ideas in their work without necessarily describing them. However, only one (G) groped towards more explicit and direct conclusions regarding change and continuity more generally. He is an unusually gifted and interested pupil, and the sort who takes an interest in 'big ideas' such as this, but the key point is that he is atypical in this respect.

It is probably natural that few pupils see this kind of reflection as a valid element of what they are doing as historians. Indeed, the ability of several students to 'sense' important

conclusions about historical change and continuity says something about how the ideas required to deal with these concepts arise in everyday reflection on similar processes at work in the everyday world. Hence the lack of difficulty my students had in coming up with examples like the Arshavin/Arsenal one mentioned above, and hence, perhaps, the reluctance to deal explicitly with second-order concepts in their writing – why write about something so obvious? Equally, their lack of focus on second-order concepts might also result from confusion over how to describe them – the difficulty many pupils had getting to grips with the change description exercise from lesson 4 in 2008/9 indicates that this resource needs more thought, though Woodcock's findings indicate that this is a question of resources and pedagogy rather than of general principles.[19] It may also be that the nature of the essay task gets in the way of considering change directly; an essay is by its nature an explanatory medium and this implies some focus on causation, which if left alone could draw attention away from change and continuity themselves. But if there was one conclusion emerging strongly from the work I did in the second year I taught this enquiry, it was that any attempt to get children to think and write about second-order concepts has to give them the language to do so first of all. Even A, who is by no means a fluent writer, was able to take suggested words and phrases regarding change and use them to express ideas that were refined and highly original. Further reflection on Woodcock's conclusions, then, seem to be the next step forward for this enquiry.

This is where my reflections return to the narrative frameworks mentioned at the start of this article. Characteristically, Shemilt frames his advocacy for their use in a wider argument about the point of history education – what distinctive contribution does history have to make at a time when its place on the curriculum is threatened? Shemilt's argument is that:

> *knowledge of the past can impact upon the ways in which pupils … analyse present situations, evaluate options for future action and conceive of themselves as members of minority nations, hegemonic nations, or supra-national 'cultural communities'.*[20]

In such historical knowledge, a working concept of change, and an ability to see historical events as connected to longer-term historical processes, can help young people to orient themselves in time, to 'think of a past in terms of more sophisticated conceptions of change and significance [and thereby] appear better equipped to consider issues of present and future concern'.[21] Without this working concept, events are construed without meaning and young people become passive in their orientation towards them. The focus is on 'usable big pictures' and 'big history', and resources are beginning to appear that support the use of narrative frameworks on the sort of timescale that is being proposed.[22] If the use of synoptic frameworks is to contribute to children's understanding of such second-order concepts as change, then the work done in this enquiry suggests that teachers themselves need to be clear about how exactly they expect their pupils to describe change, especially if this is to be done in words. This means we need to adopt much more defined approaches to enable our students to describe and define changes and continuities and their relation to mere events.

REFERENCES

1 Arguments in this direction have been made recently by Howson, J. (2007) '"Is it the Tuarts and then the Studors or the other way round?" The importance of developing a usable big picture of the past' in *Teaching History, 127, Sense and Sensitivity Edition*. A more comprehensive development of the importance of 'big pictures' can be found in Foster, S. *et al.* (2008) *Usable Historical Pasts: A study of students' frameworks of the past. Full Research Report*, ESRC End of Award Report, Swindon: ESRC.

2 Ofsted (2007) *History in the Balance: History in English Schools 2003-2007*, Ofsted July 2007, p. 14.

3 Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (2007) 'History Programme of Study for Key Stage 3 and Assessment Target' in *The National Curriculum 2007*, p. 112, available from http://curriculum.qca.org.uk/key-stages-3-and-4/subjects/history/index.aspx.

4 I should also hasten to add that I have not yet myself been experimenting with the use of larger-scale frameworks for history teaching, though I am convinced of their applicability and their potential.

5 Greater explanation of this richly illuminating insight can be found in Banham, D. (2000) 'The Return of King John: using depth to strengthen overview in the teaching of political change' in *Teaching History, 99, Curriculum Planning Edition*.

6 Historians' accounts of the period used were as follows: Roth, C. (1964) *A History of the Jews in England*, Oxford: Clarendon Press; Felsenstein, F. Frank (1995) *Anti-Semitic stereotypes: a paradigm of otherness in English popular culture, 1660-1830*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. (chapter 1 only); Carpenter, D. (2003) *The Struggle for Mastery: Britain, 1066-1284*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. The article by Banham referred to and heavily borrowed from in my scaffolding and differentiation of the essay is Banham, D. 'Getting ready for the Grand Prix: learning how to build a substantiated argument in Year 7' in *Teaching History, 92, Explanation and Argument Edition*.

7 The first version was 'When were Jews in medieval England most in danger?'. The second was 'Were Jews in medieval England always in danger?'

8 Lesson 4 was not a great success partly due to contingent factors like a fire alarm while I was teaching it to two of the three 2007/8 classes, and partly because the creative writing activity was poorly conceived. I had thought it would allow children to empathically explore change as experienced by Jews in the period but it belongs in an enquiry on its own, not as a brief stopover on the way to an analytical essay. In the end the work the children produced was more of the generic 'I was walking down the street in York when the Christians attacked, I was very scared' variety than producing anything insightful or adding much to their ideas about how change affected the Jewish community.

9 I modelled the style and some of the content for these on the similar stones in Byrom, J., Counsell, C., and Riley, M. (1997) *Medieval Minds: Britain 1066-1500*, Harlow: Pearson, pp. 90-95.

10 I am heavily indebted for my understanding of how children progress in conceptualising change to Lee and Shemilt's model quoted in Appendix F of Foster S. *et al.* (2008) *op. cit.*, p. 28. The depth of her comment quite passed me by until I sat down to write up the enquiry for this article.

11 So much so, in fact, that I was asked to prepare an INSET based on this work on methods to get children to work more independently – something of a paradox, but testament to Banham's ideas and also to the fact that the right scaffolding can often lead children to express their own thinking with the correct level of support. One problem that did become apparent from some pupils' work was that a few were confused by the scaffolding, and unsure what to make of it, something that informed changes to the enquiry the second time I taught it.

12 Lee, P. (2005) *How Students Learn: History in the Classroom*, Washington DC: National Academies Press, pp. 43-44.

13 *ibid.*, p. 44

14 I am almost certain that L's understanding was not well served by having to write an essay about it. However good the scaffolding and differentiation, writing may not suit or motivate all pupils, though clearly motivated in the classroom he made no attempt to use the help provided by the burgers.

15 This contrasted with verbal contributions made in the classroom (such as N's ideas discussed above) and hints at the confidence with which children adopt and propound counter-intuitive positions in their written work, as opposed to what they say in the classroom. This in turn says something about the limits of writing frames – they can guide pupils towards confident self-expression but are not a substitute for it. Children tend not to commit themselves to writing when they can't explain verbally.

16 The main resource was a sheet of words and phrases to use when describing changes. The results of using it were encouraging but it is only since teaching these lessons that I have considered fully the implications of Woodcock's article regarding the impact of new language on children's ability to tackle historical concepts. Woodcock's basic argument is that it is writing itself that leads to thinking, and that the ability to think is something that can be learned through consideration of relevant descriptive and explanatory vocabulary, recalling Wittgenstein's maxim that 'the limits of my language are the limits of my world.' Wittgenstein, L. (1922) *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. Woodcock's article itself is challenging and though the second-order concept he was focusing on was causation, the implications for other areas are clear. Probably the main change I will make to this enquiry next year is to spend more time on creating a resource to describe changes, as well as spending more time discussing the appropriate description for various changes with my pupils. Woodcock, J. (2005) 'Does the linguistic release the conceptual? Helping Year 10 to improve their causal reasoning' in *Teaching History, 119, Language Edition*, pp. 5-14.

17 This seems to be another example of where resources designed to scaffold writing can cloud the issue rather than simplifying it.

18 See Lee (2005) *op. cit.*, pp. 42-44.

19 Woodcock (2005) *op. cit.*

20 Shemilt (2006) *op. cit.*, p. 35.

21 Foster, S. *et al.* (2008) *op. cit.*, p. 11.

22 See http://worldhistoryforusall.sdsu.edu/ for a compelling argument in favour of teaching 'big history' as well as an ever-expanding resource of teaching materials.