

Teaching Romany Gypsy History within Key Stages 1, 2 and 3

Romany Gypsy History

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The lessons in this unit do not constitute a single "module". Instead they seek to show how aspects of Romany Gypsy life can find a place naturally within existing work at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3. This approach has been adopted as it is in some ways preferable to come across Gypsy Romany culture as part of more general work on British society, rather than to make it the focus of specific, self-contained studies (although each approach has its strengths).

Lesson 1: The Gypsy tinker

Key Stage 1 (can be adapted for Key Stage 2)
Teaching and learning activities

Starter:

Sing / act out the nursery rhyme "Oranges and Lemons" First, use the generally known words. Then show the extra verses. (See resources attached below)

Explain that the rhyme is based on the activities of London's street sellers possibly using the Big Book image in "History through nursery rhymes" (see resources attached below).

Identify street trading activities and talk about why they would be helpful.

Main Activity:

Show the picture of the tinker (see resources). Explain that this is another street trader from about two hundred years ago. He was probably a Gypsy. Explain how Gypsies lived by traveling and doing a variety of jobs. Children use the picture to work out what the Gypsy tinker did and how he was helpful. (The animation on the second slide can be shown to children after or as they identify features).



Visit the website "[Virtual Victorians](https://www.virtualvictorians.com/)" and/or use pictures to think about objects a tinker might mend and how they show similarities / differences to today. Children could mime using objects and how they were broken.

Plenary

Use the rhyme "Tinker, tailor ..." to select children to tell you something they learned from this lesson.

Key Questions and Ideas

What did tinkers do? (Or How could a Gypsy tinker help a Victorian household?)

In answering this main question, children will also consider:

- how homes were different in the past
- why the work tinkers did was helpful

Assessment Opportunities

Assess pupils' use of sources as they investigate the picture of the tinker

Assess pupils' understanding of change and reasons for change as they compare objects from Victorian homes with objects today

Useful Links:

[The Victorians...](#)

Printed resources:

The activities would be enhanced by using "[History through nursery rhymes](#)" (Badger Publishing ISBN 1 84424 223 4) and Teacher Book (ISBN 1 84424 224 2).

Lesson 2: Census day - What mattered to Victorian Gypsies?

Key Stage: 2

Teaching and learning activities

Starter

Use the Powerpoint file showing the Census enumerator at a Gypsy camp. Reveal parts of the picture one at a time asking pupils to make sense of what they see. Gradually reveal that this is a Gypsy camp. Ask pupils to work out why the man is there - they should be able to link this back to work on Victorian census returns (See Additional notes for teachers).

Are they surprised that the census included Gypsies? What might the man be asking?

Main Activity:

Pupils work out from the picture anything they can about how Gypsies lived eg what they made and sold, how they traveled, cooked etc. Who did what when the camp was set up?

Show web pages to help them learn more.

Pupils then use the sheet about 19th century Gypsy life to take on roles as Gypsies in a camp. They mime activities as the teacher arrives in role as the census enumerator. In role "act dumb" and learn from them about their life.

Plenary:

Show Gypsy Smith's memories about changes he had seen. Pupils relate this to earlier work speculate how the changes might affect Gypsies. What would amaze the Gypsy most about life today? What mattered to Victorian Gypsies?

Key Questions and Ideas:

What mattered to Victorian Gypsies?

In answering this main question, children will also consider:

- How Gypsy life in the countryside contrasts with life in the industrial cities

Assessment Opportunities

Assess pupils' use of sources as they investigate the picture of the census enumerator.

Assess pupils' understanding of characteristic features and diversity as they prepare their role play of the Gypsy camp and in the plenary - especially about attitudes and values.

Additional notes for teachers

This lesson would be included after class work on Victorian cities eg using a resource such as the "Focus on the Census" from the [National Archives](#) in the education section on Victorians 1850-1901. These can be used online or downloaded as a PDF file under "Print options".

Useful Links:

[Hampshire Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service \(EMTAS\)](#)
[BBC: Romany Roots...](#)

Lesson 3: The Unknown Warrior and the Forgotten Soldiers

Key Stage: 3

Teaching and learning activities

Starter:

From the Powerpoint file for this lesson, show the three First World War soldiers. Pairs of pupils list what they think they know and what they might want to ask. Then ask them to imagine the world these soldiers left behind in 1914: Home? Family? Friends? Work? Wealth?

Gather their ideas - and then tell them these are three Gypsies: the Penfold brothers from Devon (note flowers in two caps and the riding crop!)

Show their family photo taken in Devon in 1914 while the boys were away. Does this home life match what pupils expected?

(Further work could be done here on Gypsy life using resources mentioned in the [Teacher Guidance Page](#)).

Main Activity:

Show / issue the poem. Pupils read it and summarise its message and tone, supported by extracts. How can they tell if it was written during the war?

To test the poem's interpretation of the war, use the next slides in the Powerpoint to look at the war experiences of some Devon Gypsies. Which parts of the poem do they support or challenge?

Another Gypsy who died in the war was Walter Pateman, about whom a more detailed book has been written. See the BBC weblink. (Local Gypsy families may be prepared to share their own stories of soldiers from the First World War).

Plenary:

Show the Cenotaph picture and explain the ceremony held each year on 11/11. Discuss whether, one year, it would be appropriate at the ceremony to include a reading of the poem they have just studied.

**Key Questions and Ideas:**

Does the poet have a point?

(i.e. Using knowledge to evaluate an interpretation of the first World War set out in a little-known poem).

Assessment Opportunities

The starter activity would support assessment of students' ability to use contextual knowledge of British society c.1914 to make sensible speculations about the life the soldiers may have left behind in Britain.

The main assessment would focus on the way students use the evidence from the stories of Devon Gypsy soldiers to evaluate the poem.

Additional Notes for Teachers

This is probably not a full lesson. The intention is simply that Gypsies should find a place in the study of the Great War.

Support, guidance and weblinks on Romany Gypsies

Support, guidance and weblinks for teachers developing work on Romany Gypsies

Romany Gypsies have formed part of British society for about five hundred years. Over the centuries, while they have maintained strong cultural traits that are often reflected in language, customs and occupations, and have often chosen to live at the margins of society, Gypsies have also contributed to that society and are woven into its fabric.

This is a story that schools should explore as part of their work on aspects of diversity. This will have the double benefits of allowing Gypsies within our schools to recognise that their own culture is recognised and reflected within the curriculum and of helping to dispel some of the myths and stereotypical images of Gypsy life from the minds of others.

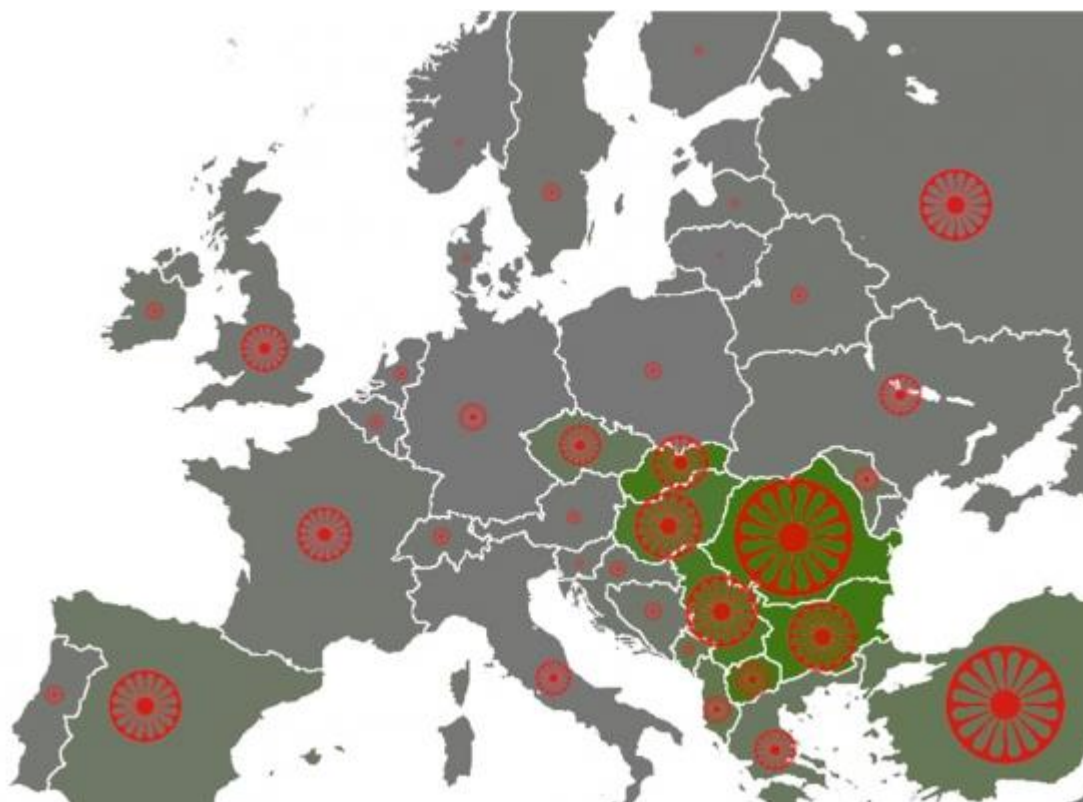
The approach that is encouraged in most of these resources is to integrate examples of Gypsy life into other work at each Key Stage. For this reason, it has been decided to offer generic advice and guidance on this page and to show three examples of how Gypsies can naturally be included in work as follows:

- **Key Stage 1** - "The Gypsy tinker - What did tinkers do?" (Suitable for inclusion in work on homes long ago)
- **Key Stage 2** - "Census day - What mattered to Victorian Gypsies?" (For inclusion in work on Victorian life)

- **Key Stage 3** - "The Unknown Warrior and the Forgotten soldiers - Does the poet have a point?" (For inclusion in work on the First World War)

The term "Travellers" covers many different groups in Britain. Some of these, such as "Showmen" or "New Travellers" are included through their occupation or lifestyle. A helpful summary of different Traveller groups that addresses some of the sensitivities about what groups prefer to be called can be found by downloading the FAQ PDF file from [The Travellers Times Online](#). This is the website of Travellers' Times which is supported by DCSF and provides insights into Travellers' perceptions of current issues in Gypsy and Traveller life. This same FAQ PDF file helpfully addresses many other issues that may concern teachers new to this topic. Teachers will need to use resources such as this to prepare themselves for work about Gypsies as some people who would now resist any tendency to show prejudice on the grounds of colour or sexual orientation, feel more free to generalise about Gypsies and Travellers in a negative way.

The resources included with this guidance have a specific focus on Romany Gypsies in England, an ethnic group whose cultural roots in Britain go back to the sixteenth century. Where the term "Gypsy" is used it refers to members of that ethnic group.



Distribution of the **Romani people** in Europe (2007 Council of Europe "average estimates", totalling 9.8 million)

* The size of the wheel symbols reflects absolute population size

* The gradient reflects the percent in the country's population:

Since 2008, June has been marked as "Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month". The [GRTHM website](#) provides contact details for national and regional support as well as sections on Local Stories, The Bigger Picture, Myths and Truths and History and Culture. The magazines produced for the events in 2008 and 2009 [can be accessed here](#). These will suggest useful prompts for learning activities as well as listing useful resources.

Teachers who are interested in reflecting Gypsy history and culture within the classroom will find that Local Authority teams may well be able to give specific support both with resources and with understanding how to handle sensitive issues. Links to Local Authority support for Gypsy and Traveller education can be found at the website of the [National Association of Teachers of Travellers](#). In some cases, assuming any personal sensitivities will be suitably managed, the LA may be able to put teachers in touch with Gypsy families who are willing to share their own family history as a way in to helping pupils to understand Gypsy life in the past and present.

A strong oral tradition and close family life mean that some Gypsy families keep stories and photographs tracing back to the nineteenth century. This was the basis for the work done in Devon that underpins the generic advice being offered here. It led to a CD resource that follows the history of a Devon Gypsy family and has pictures text and teaching activities that could be used at Key Stages 1, 2 or 3. It could be used in any part of the country or might serve as a template for localised work along similar lines. The [CD called "Following the trail"](#), costs £9.99 (at the time of writing) and can be purchased from Devon Traveller Achievement Service, Redworth House, Ashburton Road, Totnes, TQ9 5JZ. (Telephone 01392 386811 or email caroline.annett@devon.gov.uk).

The General Teacher Council has a comprehensive list of relevant links and resources in a file called "Resource file for supporting Gypsy, Roma, Travellers of Irish heritage and other Traveller pupils". [This can be downloaded here...](#)

Some [Local Authority websites](#) have resources that may be helpful to teachers from further afield. Two that may be of particular interest are:

- [Hampshire's "Living Album" project](#)
- [Leeds "Gypsy Roma Traveller" site](#)

Teachers searching for starting points about Gypsy life in their locality would do well to visit the [Romany Genes website](#). This site is filled with a wealth of stories, photographs, census data and other valuable information about Gypsy families from all over Britain. It has a search facility that should help teachers find information that relates to their own area or chosen theme. Please note the information given on the website about copyright. The University of Liverpool has a [collection of photographs](#) that may be useful (subject to meeting relevant copyright requirements).

[BBC Romay Roots](#) - has useful information and images

The Gordon Boswell Romany Museum in Spalding, Lincolnshire has a website that shows how it seeks to reflect [Gypsy Romany culture](#).

