

# Adapted unit: Why do we remember Isambard Kingdom Brunel?

HISTORY  
YEAR 2

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## About the unit

This unit looks at the life of Isambard Kingdom Brunel. It explains his work as an engineer and asks children to consider the effects of his work on people's everyday lives. The approach could also suit the study of other significant people, *eg George Stephenson, Rosa Parks, Mary Seacole, Emily Pankhurst*.

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## Where the unit fits in

This unit builds on units 1–3 by focusing on the life and work of a significant person who lived at a time before living memory. It could contribute to cross-curricular work on 'people who help us'.

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## Expectations

### At the end of this unit

**most children will:** know some of the main events in Brunel's life and be able to sequence them correctly; explain how his work as an engineer changed people's lives; use pictures, books, interviews or videos to find out about him; be able to set his life in the context of the Victorian period

**some children will not have made so much progress and will:** be able to sequence correctly some of the events in Brunel's life; know that pictures, books, interviews or videos can tell about his life; recount episodes from his life; know that he lived in the past

**some children will have progressed further and will:** provide a detailed account of the life and work of Brunel; explain how his work as an engineer changed people's lives in several ways; understand how we know about him from the evidence available; use a wider range of sources, *eg CD-ROMs, children's encyclopedias*, to find out about his life; use ICT to make their own interpretations of his life; be able to set his life in the context of Victorian period and identify features of this time.

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## Prior learning

### It is helpful if the children have:

- ordered events in time and used everyday terms about the passing of time
- answered questions about people/events in the past using pictures and written sources
- recounted episodes from stories about the past
- looked for similarities and differences between today and the past.

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## Language for learning

### Through the activities in this unit children will be able to understand, use and spell correctly:

- words associated with the passing of time, *eg Victorian, a very long time ago, before, after, when*
- words associated with different forms of transport, *eg steam engine, ships, sails, propeller*
- words associated with the railways, *eg stations, signals, tunnels, embankments, track, sleepers*.

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## Resources

### Resources include:

- storybooks or a video about the life of Brunel
- pictures depicting scenes of everyday life in Victorian times
- pictures illustrating different forms of transport
- pictures of Isambard Kingdom Brunel
- maps to locate London, Bristol and New York
- videos/films with clips of steam trains
- a class timeline
- pictures of the SS Great Britain
- sets of cards with sentences on them describing aspects of Brunel's work
- school texts and picture packs could be used to provide picture and reference collections
- CD-ROM encyclopedias.

## Section 1: Who was Isambard Kingdom Brunel?

Learning objectives	Possible teaching activities	Learning outcomes	Points to note
<p><b>Children should learn:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to identify people from the present and past who are famous</li> <li>to identify why people became famous</li> <li>to infer information from pictures of the past</li> <li>to recognise similarities and differences between the present and the past</li> </ul>	<p>Encourage the children to think about what the word 'famous' means. Ask them to think about well-known people and their contribution to people's ways of life. <i>Can they name famous people? Why are they famous? What contribution have they made to people's ways of life? Has it been an important contribution? Why? What famous people do children know from the past? How can they find out about famous people in the past?</i></p> <p>Tell the children they are going to learn about Isambard Kingdom Brunel. Give groups of children a picture of Brunel. <i>What can they find out about him from this picture? Are his clothes like the clothes that men wear today? How are they different? How can we tell that this person lived a long time ago? What sort of person do you think he is?</i></p> <p>Ask the children to think of some questions that they would like to ask Brunel. Collect some pictures of scenes from the first half of the nineteenth century. The pictures might illustrate different forms of transport, clothing, housing and street features. <i>What things have stayed the same? What things have changed?</i> Provide children with two different coloured pencils. Give children copies of different pictures and ask them to shade features in the picture that have remained the same in one colour and those features that have changed in another colour.</p> <p>Encourage the children to discuss why things might have changed/remained the same. Explain to the children that the pictures show what life was like when Isambard Kingdom Brunel was alive. Tell them that he lived in Victorian times and help them place him correctly on a timeline.</p>	<p><b>Children:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identify present and past people who are famous, and explain how they have affected people's lives</li> <li>describe different features of people's lives in the past and identify similarities and differences between then and the present</li> <li>become familiar with language used to describe the past.</li> </ul>	<p>Reading information books or using a CD-ROM encyclopedia to research famous people would provide children with opportunities to extend their ideas about the significant contributions which famous people have made to people's ways of life.</p> <p>Teachers could encourage the children to talk about different features of present day streets, before introducing them to street scenes of the past.</p> <p>Children would benefit from discussing their existing understanding of the work that engineers do. Teachers may find it useful to draw attention to the different sorts of work that engineers do.</p> <p>Children could be encouraged to make detailed observations of Brunel and to draw their own pictures of him.</p> <p>Teachers could scribe the different questions that children would like to ask Brunel. Questions may be mounted on the wall and used as a stimulus for further investigations.</p> <p>This activity can encourage children to appreciate that while many things have changed, there are also some continuous links with the past.</p>

## Section 2: How did Brunel construct the Great Western Railway?

Learning objectives	Possible teaching activities	Learning outcomes	Points to note
<p><b>Children should learn:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to identify and explain similarities and differences between travel now and in the past</li> <li>to use different sources of information as evidence for different ways of life in the past</li> <li>to learn about the life of a famous person and to place him within the wider context of the time in which he lived.</li> <li>to locate the site of a historical event on a map.</li> </ul>	<p>Collect pictures of different forms of transport including ships, trains and road transport from the nineteenth century and the present. Ask the children to place the different forms of transport in pairs, <i>eg a steam train with a modern high-speed train.</i></p> <p>Encourage the children to compare and contrast the pictures in their different pairs. <i>What things are the same in these picture pairs? What things are different? How was this form of transport powered?</i></p> <p>Ask the children to think what it would have been like to travel in the different forms of transport. <i>Would it have been comfortable? Would you have travelled quickly?</i></p> <p>Begin to develop a transport word bank with the names of different vehicles and words used to describe them.</p> <p>Tell the children that Brunel built the Great Western Railway from London to Bristol. <i>Can they find London and Bristol on a map? What other towns did the railway go through?</i></p> <p>Show the children a video or film clip of steam trains. Focus their attention on how a steam train is powered and the need for coal and water. Ask them to look carefully at the railway track. <i>What is the track made of? How is the track held down on the ground?</i></p> <p>Talk to the children about building a railway. Consider some of the difficulties that Brunel might have in building railway lines and think of some possible solutions. <i>What solutions did engineers have for going around hills, crossing rivers and building railways on marshy ground?</i></p>	<p><b>Children:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>acquire information about different forms of transport in the nineteenth century</li> <li>learn about some of the achievements of Brunel as an engineer.</li> </ul>	<p>Teachers may choose to introduce this topic by discussing with children journeys that they make today. <i>What sort of journeys do they make and why?</i></p> <p>Encourage children to consider both long and short journeys. <i>What sort of transport do they use to make their journeys?</i> Teachers may need to be sensitive to the different reasons children may have for travelling.</p> <p>A visit to a museum with a transport collection would enrich children's understanding of different forms of transport.</p> <p>As an extension activity, teachers could show children a map of nineteenth century Britain, showing the railways.</p> <p>Children could count the number of railway lines and locate where they live on the map. <i>Where is the nearest railway line to where they live? Is there still a railway where they live?</i></p> <p>Children could design their own floor maps with different railway lines. Encourage them to include different landscapes and railway features to re-enforce their learning about building railways.</p>

### Section 3: What can we learn from the SS Great Britain about Brunel's skills as an engineer?

Learning objectives	Possible teaching activities	Learning outcomes	Points to note
<p><b>Children should learn:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to describe different ships and place them on a timeline</li> <li>to use visual sources and stories as sources of information about the SS Great Britain.</li> </ul>	<p>Ask the children to find out about different ships. Make a collection of pictures and facts about different ships. <i>What are the ships made of? How were they powered?</i></p> <p>Sequence the ships on a timeline. Show the children a poster of the SS Great Britain. Ask them what they can see in the picture and encourage them to compare the SS Great Britain with earlier ships on their timeline.</p> <p>Identify the new features that Brunel incorporated in his design, <i>eg made of iron, size, screw propeller</i>. Ask them to complete, 'I can see' statements and to employ a range of vocabulary to describe the ship. Add these words to the word bank.</p> <p>Locate the Atlantic ocean on a map of the world. Show the route that the SS Great Britain travelled from Liverpool to New York.</p> <p>Read a story dealing with a voyage on the SS Great Britain. Try to include details about the different sorts of passengers who travelled on the ship and the range of accommodation onboard.</p> <p>Ask the children to make their own log about a voyage on the SS Great Britain, using simple sentences and/or pictures.</p>	<p><b>Children:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>acquire information about different ships</li> <li>explain the new features which Brunel incorporated in his design of the SS Great Britain</li> <li>talk and write about travelling on the SS Great Britain</li> </ul>	<p>Children could use this information to create a simple database to record different ships.</p> <p>Teachers should emphasise the new features that Brunel incorporated within his design for the SS Great Britain which illustrate his skill as an engineer.</p> <p>Teachers could draw attention to the different classes of people who travelled on the ship and their motives for travelling. People's search for better life opportunities can be contrasted with the movements of people today.</p>

#### Section 4: What can we learn from an interview with Brunel?

Learning objectives	Possible teaching activities	Learning outcomes	Points to note
<p><b>Children should learn:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• to ask questions and find answers about Brunel's life through conducting an interview</li><li>• to identify some reasons for Brunel's actions.</li></ul>	<p>Explain to the children that they are going to meet Brunel. Remind the children of the questions that they identified at the beginning of the unit and encourage them to think of others.</p> <p>Teachers may choose to take on the role of Brunel themselves or might encourage another adult to do so. In role, Brunel could provide children with other information about his life and his achievements.</p> <p>Encourage the children to ask Brunel questions about his life and why he acted as he did. They could ask him why his achievements were important and how they affected people's lives.</p>	<p><b>Children:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ask questions and find information about Brunel from an interview</li><li>• begin to develop an understanding of how Brunel's achievements affected people's lives.</li></ul>	<p>Children can be encouraged to prepare their questions before meeting Brunel. Video or audio recordings may be made of the interview with Brunel. Children may return to the audio or videotapes, after the interview, to check up on some of the facts.</p>

## Section 5: Why was Brunel important and how did he affect people's lives?

Learning objectives	Possible teaching activities	Learning outcomes	Points to note
<p><b>Children should learn:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to sequence events related to the life of a person</li> <li>why Brunel is important and the affect his work has had on people's lives.</li> </ul>	<p>Give the children a very simple version of the story of Brunel. This should be divided into separate chapters. Ask the children to put the chapters into sequence.</p> <p>Work with the children to make the chapters more interesting by using their own ideas and information, which they would like to add. Ask them to give each chapter a title.</p> <p>With the children's help, create the final chapter of his story called 'Why we remember Isambard Kingdom Brunel'.</p>	<p><b>Children:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>order the events in Brunel's life correctly</li> <li>identify at least one reason why Brunel is remembered today.</li> </ul>	<p>The children can draw together what they have learned from different sources of information and communicate their learning in a different way.</p> <p>For example, if children word-process the story, this activity can be linked to unit 2a 'Writing stories: communicating information using text' in the QCA information technology scheme of work.</p> <p>This activity can be used to develop children's writing skills. Children could be asked to create their own stories about Brunel on the computer using a word bank to improve their account.</p> <p>The story could be made into a book and be the basis of a class assembly or a school display.</p> <p>This activity could be extended by asking the children to use a CD-ROM, encyclopedia or other reference source to find additional information about Brunel.</p>