

History 5th Class: 7. Medicine Through the Ages

Paired Units: Geography & Science: 9. Good Health for All

Explore how caring for the sick has changed over time, from the superstitions of the prehistoric world and ‘humours’ of ancient Greece to the bizarre remedies of the Middle Ages and the development of vaccinations, germ theory, x-rays and modern medicine. Learn how the development of healthcare has shaped society, including the increase in life expectancy in most parts of the world.

Notes

Due to the nature of this unit it contains medical vocabulary, some of which may be unfamiliar to children and may make reading of the text more challenging. It may be useful to pre-teach vocabulary such as disease, surgery, anatomy, ulcer, cataract, antiseptic, opium, corpse, remedy, hygiene, contaminate, vaccination, microscopic, amputate, limb, infection, sterilise and immunisation. Much of this vocabulary will also appear in the paired Geography & Science unit: 9. Good Health for All.

As with any topic that deals with medical conditions, due sensitivity should be applied in consideration of medical conditions that children in the class, or their close family members and friends, may have had in the past or currently have.

Curriculum Information

History

Strand and Strand Unit

Continuity and change over time: Caring for the sick

- study aspects of social, artistic, technological and scientific developments over long periods
- identify examples of change and continuity in the ‘line of development’
- identify the factors which may have caused or prevented change
- refer to or use appropriate timelines

Skills

Working as a historian

- Time and chronology
- Change and continuity
- Cause and effect
- Using evidence
- Synthesis and communication
- Empathy

Resources

- *Explorers History 5th Class Digital: 7. Medicine Through the Ages: Unit Stimulus*
- *Explorers History 5th Class Student Book: 7. Medicine Through the Ages pp. 38-43*
- If possible, a selection of old and modern medical artefacts such as empty glass medicine bottles, empty plastic medicine bottles or tablet packages, stethoscope, syringe, thermometer, mortar and pestle, gauze, plasters, soap, hand sanitiser or a school first aid kit

Useful Links

Find more information about medicine through the ages with this detailed overview:

<https://www.bbc.com/bitesize/guides/zxg6wxs/revision/1>

Use the interactive charts and maps on this site to explore the change in life expectancy over time (also linked for use in Geography for exploring life expectancy around the world):

<https://ourworldindata.org/life-expectancy>

Watch a TED-Ed video about germ theory:

<https://youtu.be/N9LC-3ZKiok>

Keywords

medicine, surgery, superstition, humours, anatomy, pulse, life expectancy, hygiene, vaccination, germ, amputate, infection, healthcare, immunisation

Lesson Suggestions

- Use the digital Unit Stimulus to introduce the topic by exploring old medical equipment - a bone saw (to cut bones), syringe (to inject substances in or draw substances out of the body), trepan (to drill holes in the skull), mortar and pestle (to grind ingredients for medicine), blade and spiked instrument (for cutting the skin to perform surgery) and a prescription for a medieval toothache.
- Discuss other old remedies that children may know e.g. holy water to get rid of warts.
- If available, examine a selection of medical artefacts - both old and modern. Ask children to sort them chronologically by when they were first used in medicine. Then discuss which are still used and which have evolved or are no longer used and why. Alternatively, examine a school first aid kit with a similar discussion about when each item was first used and what may have been used before it.
- As you read the unit in the Student Book, plot each period discussed on a timeline - The Prehistoric World (prehistory), Ancient Civilisations (ancient period), The Middle Ages (medieval period), New Discoveries (early modern and later modern periods), Modern Medicine (contemporary period). Reference pp. 20-21 of the Student Book for more information on each of the periods.
- Examine change and continuity in each period. What is still used? What has evolved? What is no longer believed or used? Identify the theme of moving from superstitions to science-based facts.
- Explore cause and effect in each time period. Why did people believe what they did? What caused the spread of disease? What impact did new inventions have?
- For the new discoveries section, discuss what life would be like today without each of the discoveries/inventions. Frame this as 'What would the world be like if it weren't for [invention]/[person]?' This could include further research on some of the key figures and/or their discoveries and inventions.
- Examine the representation of suspicion in the artwork showing Edward Jenner vaccinating patients. The artwork shows people turning into animals. Discuss how people may have felt and why they may have been suspicious of medical discoveries and inventions, and why that may still be the case today.
- Put the medical discoveries and practices listed in chronological order as per the 'Working as a Historian: Time and Chronology' activity on p. 43 of the Student Book. Extend this activity by creating a timeline of the discoveries and practices and adding other moments in the line of development from the unit.
- Research and write the remedies as per the 'Working as a Historian: Change and Continuity' activity on p. 43 of the Student Book. Ensure that children use evidence of what they have learned to guide their Middle Age remedies, such as the beliefs and practices discussed in the unit.
- Discuss the future of medicine and what children think may continue and change based on what they have learned about the line of development in caring for the sick.

Linkage and Integration

History: Linked to *Story: Stories from the lives of people in the past* (including Unit 6); *Early people and ancient societies: Greeks, Romans, Asian peoples; Life, society, work and culture in the past: Life in mediaeval towns and countryside in Ireland and Europe, Life in the 18th century, Life in the 19th century, Life in Ireland since the 1950s; Eras of change and conflict: The Renaissance* (Units 2 & 3).

Geography & Science: 9. Good Health for All pp. 50-55.

SPHE: *Myself: Taking care of my body*

Home/Parental Involvement

Children could ask at home about healthcare in the past including what doctors and hospitals were like, old remedies, medicines and medical instruments.