

# My Favourite... History Lesson

Find out what goes on in Lois Gough's classroom, Teaching Award winner 2009...



## A bit about Lois...

### WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO BECOME A TEACHER?

**Lois Gough:** Originally my degree was in psychology and I quite fancied the idea of becoming an educational psychologist. At the time, one of the requirements was that you had to become a teacher for a couple of years. But once I'd started teaching I didn't really want to leave.

### WE HEAR YOU'VE BEEN STUDYING FOR A MASTERS DEGREE. HOW'S IT GOING?

**LG:** I teach part time and I've been studying over the last three years; I only have my dissertation left to complete now. It's a Masters in education and I've been doing it for my own personal and professional development. Everything I am learning has direct links to the classroom. It's a modular course and one of the modules I chose to do was on grammar. As someone who went through my entire schooling without addressing grammar, apart from in French lessons, I had to learn while I was teaching.

### What's good?

Winning a regional Teaching Award was amazing. It was really touching to be nominated and recognised in that way. So often you're under such pressure and this was a real celebration. Going on to London was a lovely weekend and I really, really appreciated it. I was very honoured to be nominated and winning was the icing on the cake.

### What's tough?

As I teach these children for 3-4 years, the leavers assembly can get quite emotional. You build up such a relationship with pupils and it's sad to see them go. However, at our school the children do sometimes visit, which is nice. If they have an INSET day at their secondary they'll come back to help out with sports and other events.

## The lesson

### TP: WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE HISTORY LESSON?

**LG:** Within every unit of work we always have an 'immersion day', which involves dressing up and spending the entire time in role. Before the day arrives, I talk to the children and find out what they might like to learn about. For instance, when we had our Aztec day the children wanted to find out more about the origin of chocolate and so we decided to make Aztec-style drinks. We provided cocoa, herbs and spices and pupils had to devise their own recipe based on what the Aztecs might have had. Some of the drinks were disgusting, but others were quite nice!

### TP: WHAT ELSE DID YOU GET UP TO ON YOUR AZTEC DAY?

**LG:** We learnt about human sacrifices. We held a 'sacrificial ceremony' where different groups of pupils took on different roles. The children love that sort of stuff – and we had clear health and safety guidelines! One group took on the role of priests and they had to come up with prayers that might have been said at a ceremony. They really had to think about why the Aztecs had sacrifices. I think a lot of the children are open to new ideas, even when they might appear difficult for young people to comprehend. Children don't have particularly fixed views and while they might not believe in an idea themselves, they will take it on board and run with it.

### TP: WHAT WAS THE STARTING POINT?

**LG:** We started off with a Mexican festival theme, which meant decorating the classroom and making costumes and banners. We also developed a dance to please the gods, so all in all we covered objectives for art, history and PE. The outfits were possibly the worst part of the day. Dressing up as an Aztec in the middle of winter isn't very warm! But the children really got into it, and we started planning weeks ahead of the event. In literacy they wrote information leaflets about what the Aztecs would have worn and took these back to their parents who helped them to make their costumes.

### TP: WHAT'S THE BENEFIT OF AN IMMERSION DAY?

**LG:** It gives children the opportunity to learn in a different way. It certainly builds stronger memories. Children will often refer to the immersion days when they leave. I really enjoy them as well.

