

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: University of Kent		
Unit of Assessment: 28: History		
Title of case study: Age of Revolution, 1775-1848: diversifying curricula and engaging schools, pupils, teachers and education practitioners, to bring new approaches into classrooms		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2014-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Ben Marsh	Reader in History	2014-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2017-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p><i>The Age of Revolution, 1775-1848: Making the World Over</i> (2018-2021) is a national educational project, led by Ben Marsh at the University of Kent, and funded by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. The project has positively influenced the design and delivery of history teaching across schools and learning programmes; stimulated changes to pedagogical practices; supported teachers to diversify curricula; and has led to an increased uptake in a subject area which had seen a comparative decline in profile in UK classrooms. Through the design, development and distribution of innovative physical and digital resources, thousands of UK students have developed a deeper and more inclusive understanding of revolutionary and comparative history and its relevance to rights, protests, and identities today. By June 2020, 2,101 educational and cultural organisations had been reached by the project, with 1,421 actively using innovative physical and digital resources generated to support classroom teaching.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>This impact case study describes how Marsh's research into the history and pedagogy of the Age of Revolution has informed the creation and framing of a national educational project. His research has argued that scholars need to be more attentive to comparative developments, and to track the trajectories of individual people and commodities through the Age of Revolution in order to assess the era's personal and transnational dimensions. By putting wider developments into the context of individual lives and episodes, he has brought to light underexamined subjects – such as the pursuit of textile production and new trade systems [R2], and demonstrated that gender, migration, and race [R3, R4] deserve a higher profile in how the subject area is understood. His work has offered what one reviewer described as 'a much-needed counterbalance to triumphalist tales of innovative success' with its emphasis on the 'often concealed importance of marginalized peoples from different cultural backgrounds, including large numbers of women' (Fara). Refreshing the diverse cast list and recognising the priorities of those who lived through the Age of Revolution, Marsh has argued, ought also to underpin how it is taught and understood in UK schools.</p> <p>Marsh's emphasis on inclusive, comparative, and collaborative approaches led to his design and co-editing (in 2017 with Dr Michael Rapport, University of Glasgow) of an innovative volume that investigated and synthesised selected recent international research on the Age of Revolution [R1]. Drawing from the award-winning Series Editors' established methodology, it orientated new research insights specifically towards pedagogy and making breakthroughs in the classroom, supporting the diversification of curricula and enabling teachers to find and incorporate new approaches, insights, and materials. The work argued particularly for the need to 'entice instructors – and through them, new generations of learners – to dwell on some of the people, places, pictures...and concepts' of the period [R1]. It proposed subjects resonant with our current moment of analogous political, constitutional, cultural, and environmental upheaval, and recommended reaching out to 'learners of all ages' through</p>		

connective digital and physical methods. Reviews commended it as 'insightful, timely, and genuinely useful' (Schocket) and affirmed it pushed 'students and instructors alike to wrestle with its massive topics in new and revealing ways' (Duncan). Marsh's own sections in the volume encouraged teachers to pursue the 'personalization of the revolutionary experience' to try to bring students closer to the upheavals of the period.

3. References to the research

[R1] Marsh, Ben and Michael Rapport (2017). *Understanding and Teaching the Age of Revolutions* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2017. [Part of the Harvey Goldberg Series for Understanding and Teaching History] <https://kar.kent.ac.uk/51941/>

[R2] Marsh, Ben (2020). *Unravelling Dreams: Silk and the Atlantic World, 1500-1840*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://kar.kent.ac.uk/51942/>

[R3] Marsh, Ben (2017). 'Visitor from South Carolina: Mrs Eliza Pinckney', in Joanna Marschner, ed. *Enlightened Princesses: Caroline, Augusta, Charlotte, and the Shaping of the Modern World*. New Haven: Yale University Press. <https://kar.kent.ac.uk/62175/>

[R4] Marsh, Ben (2018). *Beyond the Barricade: Is There A World You Long to See?* Studio 3 Gallery. <https://kar.kent.ac.uk/71259/>

[G1] Marsh, Ben. (PI) (2017-21). *The Age of Revolution, 1775-1848: Making the World Over*. Waterloo200 Ltd, funded by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). Value: £172,514.

4. Details of the impact

Informing Waterloo200 Learning Strategy and Age of Revolution national educational initiative.

Marsh's research closely informed the framing of the Educational Legacy project implemented by Waterloo200 Ltd, the charitable trust (funded by DCMS) responsible for delivering the commemorative programme for the bicentennial of the Battle of Waterloo in 2015-20, with the target of engaging 2,000 UK schools across the educational spectrum. He was approached by W200 in 2017 because of his research, pedagogical expertise, and experience as Director of Public Engagement with Research for the Faculty of Humanities at Kent. Marsh's research and in particular his emphasis on the importance of up-to-date subject research, best-practice pedagogy and inclusive approaches to historical research and thinking **[R1]** offered a foundation for the national educational initiative, with W200's Learning Strategy (2017) citing his work **[a]**. In January 2018 the project commissioned Marsh to create a 50-page summary document that crystallised recent research findings into a simplified thematic architecture that was accessible to educators at different levels **[b]**.

New resources and objects created by the project were subsequently cross-mapped against this structure and its 'key messages', thereby enabling teachers and museum learning teams to engage selectively at points of intersection with their existing schemata (at different age ranges and across differing UK education systems and streams) **[b]**. Marsh was awarded an R&I Grant (£172,154, 2017-2021) **[G1]**, to develop partnerships and resources to support the initiative, through collaborations with numerous cultural and heritage partners, including the People's History Museum (Manchester), Bowes Museum (Barnard Castle), Old Operating Theatre (London), New Lanark (Glasgow), Regimental Museums (Dover, Winchester, Caernarfon, Bodmin), Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (Belfast), Ironbridge Museums, and others, in step with the DCMS emphasis on reaching all parts of the UK and supporting the digital profile of small and medium-sized heritage sites. The CEO of W200 Ltd. described Marsh as 'pivotal to the success of the Age of Revolution project', having 'brought essential knowledge, up-to-date research and an all-important curatorial steer [...] central to realising its aim of foregrounding 'hidden' histories and embedding multiple perspectives which has proved particularly valuable with the renewed focus across the cultural and heritage sector on 'decolonising' collections, displays and programming' **[i]**. The partnership was described as something that 'will have lasting impact' for Culture24, a non-profit organisation which

supports museums and other arts and heritage organisations to reach and engage with audiences [i].

Enhancing understanding of a significant period in history by designing and delivering innovative, accessible and inclusive learning resources.

The programme was delivered as a mutually reinforcing combination of (A) digital materials and learning resources that were made available open-access on the [Age of Revolution website](#), with its centrepiece a 'Revolutionary Collection' of over 350 high-quality digitised images of historical objects, sounds and songs, educational films, audio interviews, and (B) physical resources, including innovative educational card games and graphic novels, both with learning activities designed for easy adaptation into classrooms.

Already by June 2020, 2,101 educational and cultural organisations had been reached by the project (exceeding the DCMS target), with 1,421 actively using resources generated to support classroom teaching [c]. Though delayed by the impact of COVID-19 in slowing the distribution and shareability of physical resources, the uptake in schools has continued to rise in the second half of 2020. The project has successfully driven teachers to take up the subject area and integrate it into their units of study and pathways of student progression (especially between Key Stage 2-4), in the process influencing new pedagogy [h, j].

(A) Google analytics of the webpages administered by Culture24 captured 106,859 views in the period May 2018-May 2019 [c] more than doubling to 258,977 in November 2019-November 2020 [e], with a total reach of 1,198,773 page views across the length of the project. High average dwell times (over five minutes for many of the object pages) reflect significant learning engagement, while 14,816 pageviews of the Education activities (curated especially for teachers) indicate strong uptake among educators [e]. The extensive digital reach of the project was sampled through a pop-up online survey tool [d] across five months in 2019, showing in that short window at least 154 UK educational institutions, including 99 primary and secondary schools, had used the website, with secondary school users over twice as frequent as primary. A teacher consultation linked to the survey stressed that the object pages and themes in particular met or exceeded expectations, and that they "were impressed by the quality and detail of the historical information" and used the site for bringing students to a new topic, to make lessons more accessible, as a "creative stimulus for a classroom activity" and for extra-curricular enrichment [d]. Original animated [videos](#) produced by the project, focusing on introducing new insights into the histories of medicine and warfare (e.g. on vaccination and surgical instruments), had received over 1,605 views by December 2020 [e], and featured in the @BBCArts initiative #MuseumFromHome [e]. Accessible segmented audio interviews with expert scholars (on subjects such as antislavery and gender politics) had amassed 2,952 views by October 2020 [d]. Materials assembled and cross-mapped on the HA website secured an additional 7,500 views and 3,240 unique podcast plays or downloads [j].

(B) Marsh co-designed and authored two physical resources that secured extensive reach throughout UK schools and have significantly influenced the delivery of curriculum and syllabi in schools. The first resource was a twenty-page graphic novel (co-authored with a Manchester-based artist, 'Polyp'), *Peterloo: Imagine a World* (Age of Revolution, 2019) that offered a vivid account of the 1819 Peterloo Massacre, with a female character at its centre. It referenced primary sources, objects, and linkages across the Age of Revolution, with questions and reflections specially adapted for classroom use. 508 schools had ordered physical copies of the graphic novel and integrated it into classroom delivery by December 2020 (excluding a significant number using open-access online versions) [c], with social media feedback describing it as a 'fabulous' asset, a 'brilliant free resource' and an 'absolutely amazing resource' for deepening teaching of the period and its connections [g]. The second innovative output was the release and distribution from January 2020 of a pack of Top Trumps titled *Great Figures of the Age of Revolution* featuring [30 revolutionary historical figures](#) designed by Marsh with the official licensor *Winning Moves*, whose pre-existing commercial heritage-related packs contained no black figures. The selection of thirty diverse people (including Toussaint Louverture, Olympe de Gouges, and Uthman dan Fodio) involved an international survey of over 4,000 participants, and the resource followed Marsh's emphasis [R1] on integrating play and pedagogy to render the period and its figures more accessible.

12,000 packs had been printed and made available to schools (esp. 9-16 ages) by December 2020 [c]. The packs were supported by [additional learning activities](#) and the inclusion of posters and blank labels so that teachers or students could research and assign criteria or add figures, with a view to enhancing cultural understanding and knowledge bases.

Feedback collated from teachers in November 2020 [g] attested to the rich ways in which these research-based resources have influenced pedagogy and understanding. The graphic novel had provided 'a powerful and engaging way of communicating' the topic, made students 'keen to learn more about the revolutions and the thinking which underpinned them', and helped because it 'added another layer of learning for differentiation'. Teachers reported that the Top Trumps had become the centrepiece of student activities, stimulated new Schemes of Work (SOW) on topics around the Age of Revolution, and 'most definitely it has highlighted the important role played by significant women and black leaders'. The cards had successfully been used not just to improve awareness and knowledge recall, but to encourage students to pursue independent research and deepen their awareness of the chronology, comparative radicalism, and international reach of revolutions ('students were able to connect countries and continents together'), especially for industrial revolution, political, and imperial modules. In spite of the fact that the physical dimensions of the cards had made them difficult to use as intended because of COVID in 2020, teachers had enthusiastically adapted them into learning programmes through plenary activities, extension tasks for both higher and lower ability students ('the previously disengaged have become more interested'), revision tasks, home schooling ('during lockdown, students requested lessons on the American and French Revolutions as they'd been reading about some of the key figures on the cards/posters'), and to support accessible learning ('used as a standalone activity with our SEN pupils').

One respondent summarised the resources' impact as having 'certainly influenced what we teach as the year 8 curriculum has been changed to reflect the 4 different strands of the Age of Revolution' and another teacher affirmed that 'the resources have enabled me to teach a more diverse curriculum as they have introduced me to key figures I did not know about previously, who now feature in my Schemes of Work'. [g]. Besides schools, the cards have been used in workshops by museum learning teams, and a copy requested as a permanent acquisition by the National Portrait Gallery.

Boosting the skills and knowledge base of teachers and teacher trainers by providing rigorous professional development opportunities

In the summer term of 2017, [a survey of experienced history teachers](#) working in 287 different schools in England (76% non-selective) reported on changes to English GCSE and A level specifications, in which teachers expressed particular concern over 'curriculum changes' (87%), lack of 'new resources' (73%) and an absence of CPD opportunities (54%) because 'relevant kinds of courses or support were simply not being offered'. The Age of Revolution project has alleviated these issues through collaborative work with the Historical Association, leading research-centred CPD events and directly supporting teacher training programmes. As a result, teachers and trainee teachers have built networks and collaborative resources to support innovative teaching, and created independent educational resources that reflect a heightened knowledge base.

In collaboration with the Historical Association in February 2018, Marsh and colleagues from the University of Kent (Bowman, Caiani) along with Prof. Arthur Burns (KCL) co-delivered a residential Teacher Fellowship Programme (TFP) at Waterloo (Belgium). The programme offered research orientation, training, and co-developed resources and activities for 30 Teacher Fellows (10 primary and 20 secondary), supported by the HA's experienced Teacher Leaders and drawing on the expertise of historians – with Marsh's book [R1] the centrepiece of proceedings (a copy provided to each participant at the outset) [f]. TFP participants reported that the programme 'enabled me to put together a practical resource base for the school and to establish an effective curriculum development programme' and 'definitely' influenced work within school history departments – with others reporting it had 'revitalised my teaching and appetite for the subject', brought confidence to teachers to engage the subject at KS2 and KS3, and constituted 'quite the most powerful experience in terms of training I have received in my near 20 year career'. [j]. The TFP demonstrably enhanced understanding, stimulated

new curriculum uptake, set in motion new classroom practices and new resources, and culminated in improvements to teaching and coverage of the Age of Revolution subject area. HA Teacher Fellows created and published multiple follow-up resources, and the HA commended the TFP as pathbreaking and ‘unique for several reasons’ [j], including its inclusion of Primary School participants, its scale (incorporating international teachers, University PGCE tutors, and heritage learning officers), and its ‘broadening the scope of those students who were impacted by the project’ [j]. The HA summarised that ‘the breadth of impact has been vast, encompassing specific learning and development within school as well as professional motivation and personal development’. As their report affirms, several participants have become active leaders within the HA and delivered highly acclaimed CPD and learning dissemination events [f, j].

The Age of Revolution project has also fostered greater professional networking and resource sharing among key History educators, supporting development work with teachers, teacher trainers, and museum learning teams. These have included initiatives such as those spearheaded by TFP participants Will Bailey-Watson “used by countless teachers across the country” (Lecturer in Education, Reading Institute of Education) [h] and Katie Hall (whose Age of Revolution activities were described as ‘really useful and link brilliantly to our GCSE topic’ [g]), and the resources and multiple lesson enquiry scheme on historical interpretation co-authored by Arthur Chapman (Prof. in History Education, UCL Institute of Education), centred around the [Peterloo graphic novel](#). Age of Revolution resources have been embedded in History PGCE programmes at Universities with programme leads commenting that they had contributed to ‘problematizing ideas of “Empire” and “colonization” in history teaching’ and helped PGCE cohorts to ‘access and learn about key “types” of history resource’, to improve their practice and pedagogy, and adapt to the lockdown demands of online learning [h]. Tutors valued in particular the project’s contribution to ‘What makes inclusive teaching?’ elements, including encouraging trainee teachers to address race and gender through creative resources. Overall, the project has therefore generated a step change in attention to this field in history classrooms, as reflected in the most successful [HA ‘Great Debate’](#) in UK and Ireland to date in March 2019, with 70 schools participating in over 21 regional heats and the final [adjudicated at Windsor Castle](#). Moreover, it has significantly influenced practice in the sector, with partners emphasising how the research project ‘bridge[s] the gap between school and academic history [h]’, ‘has been a massive asset to my teaching and practice’ [h], and has generated ‘impact that will continue to be felt, as blended learning becomes increasingly integral to the cultural sector’s education offer’ [i].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- [a] Report: Waterloo 200 Learning Strategy (2017).
- [b] Theme Summaries & Key Messages: Report by Ben March for Waterloo 200 (2018).
- [c] Waterloo200 Educational Legacy Plan (2020) and Top Trumps Invoices.
- [d] Age of Revolution: Audience Agency Evaluation, Interim Report.
- [e] Data and analytics for Age of Revolution website, blogs and video channels.
- [f] Historical Association: Feedback from HA residential, training, & CPD
- [g] Teacher Testimony B: Using Physical Resources in Schools.
- [h] Letters from Teacher Educators (Universities of Reading and Canterbury Christ Church).
- [i] Joint Letter from Partnerships Director, Culture24 and CEO, Waterloo200 Ltd.
- [j] End of Project Report from Historical Association (March 2021).