

Discussion 5

Oral History

Objectives: To illustrate how forms of communicating information other than through writing can be problematic. To discuss the relationship between writing and interpretation.

Materials: None

Class set-up: Whole group discussion and small groups

Vocabulary: Oral history, Interpretation.

Discussion: Choose a sentence for the children to play 'Chinese Whispers'. When the final child has spoken the sentence, ask the first child to say the sentence they were given.

Discuss how the final version is different from the original.

What does this tell you about the importance of writing in terms of recording events?

What problems are there with oral history? What problems are there with written history?

How did writing down pieces of information effect a civilization like that of ancient China?

Extension: Show the class a short piece of film and ask them to write down a description of the events. Have different children read out their account and compare different ones.

How do the accounts differ? How might this increase our understanding of written history? How do people's opinions affect their views of history?

Background information:

Xia dynasty, Shang dynasty, Writing and Language.