Unit 4.4: We are bloggers
Sharing experiences and opinions

Software: Blogging tool such as WordPress or Blogger (alternative: Seesaw), Audacity, iMovie, Camera app, Snapseed

Hardware: Laptop/desktop computers, digital cameras, audio recorders/tablets

Overview

In this unit, pupils create a media-rich blog, comment on blogs and respond to comments. In:

- **Session 1** they look at class blogs and identify features of good blogs
- **Session 2** they write and edit their own blog
- **Session 3** they comment on blogs
- **Session 4** they add images to blogs
- **Session 5** they add media to blogs
- **Session 6** they 'live blog' an event.

Alternatives

Seesaw is a portfolio tool that has a blogging feature; each piece of work can be added to a blog at the click of a button. This could be used instead of WordPress or Blogger.

Knowledge, skills and concepts

In this unit, pupils will learn to:

- become familiar with blogs as a medium and a genre of writing
- create a sequence of blog posts on a theme
- incorporate additional media
- comment on the posts of others
- develop a critical, reflective view of a range of media, including text.

Progression

In Key Stage 1:

- Pupils use and present media in **Unit 1.2: We are TV chefs, Unit 1.4: We are publishers, Unit 2.3: We are photographers** and **Unit 2.4: We are safe researchers**.

In Key Stage 2:

- Pupils develop content for the web in **Unit 5.4: We are web developers**.
- Pupils create blogs in **Unit 6.4: We are connected** where they focus on developing digital resilience.

Assessment – by the end of the unit:

All pupils can:

- understand how to use blogs safely and responsibly
- understand how the **Internet** makes blogging possible
- write a blog post
- comment on a blog post
- add an image, audio or video to a blog post.

Most pupils can:

- identify the criteria for an effective blog post
- understand that blog posts are stored as **HTML**
- understand how to comment respectfully
- report concerns about posts or comments on blogs
- appreciate what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour when commenting
- add their own original image, audio or video to a blog post.

Some pupils can:

- appreciate the difference between database-driven sites – such as a WordPress blog – and static HTML pages
- appreciate what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in relation to using others' original work
- keep up with an event in a live blog.

Background information

Tim Berners-Lee's invention of the World Wide Web used the infrastructure of the Internet to make it possible for people across the world to access and publish information of all kinds. In the period before publishing content to the web came to be dominated by social media, blogs (short for weblogs) made it easy for users to share written content with a global audience, and blogging remains popular in schools as a way for pupils to share work with an audience far beyond their teacher and classmates.

100wc.net provides a weekly creative writing prompt for primary aged pupils, encouraging children to respond in 100 words.

Key vocabulary

Creative Commons: copyright licensing scheme in which content can be re-used without additional permission, subject to certain specified conditions

Hyperlinks: text or images that, when clicked, opens another page or moves to another part of the document

Hypertext mark-up language (HTML): the predominant language for web pages

Internet: global network connecting computers and local networks using automated switches, routers and fibre optic, copper wire and radio connections

Uniform Resource Locator (URL): a standard for specifying the location on the Internet of certain data files. The URL includes the protocol used to transmit the data, the computer on which it is stored, the file path and the file name of the data

Web server: a service running on a computer (or sometimes the computer itself) that returns HTML data for a web page when it receives a request via the local network or the Internet

Differentiation

See each session (pages 43–48) for ways to increase support and add challenge to this unit.

Pupils for whom spelling, punctuation and grammar are a challenge should make use of proofreading tools. Pupils for whom English is a second language could read or compose blogs in their first language. Google Translate (**www.translate.google.com**) may be used if this is allowed. Pupils who struggle with typing could use speech-to-text tools.

The 5 Sentence Challenge (**www.fivesc.net**) provides simplified creative writing prompts on a regular basis, with pupils responding in a blog post of five sentences. Every year, BBC Radio 2 runs a 500-word children's short story competition, which could be enjoyed as part of this unit.

Pupils wanting more challenge can be encouraged to add links or supporting media to their blog posts, or could even compose their blog posts using an **HTML** editor instead of the default WYSIWYG editor.

Cross-curricular opportunities

English: Pupils plan, draft and evaluate their own (and others') writing in this unit.

History: The blog activity could replace a diary or journal activity, e.g. the blog of an ancient Greek.

Science: The blog could be used to show some of the effects of science experiments, filmed in timelapse and added to the blog.

Maths: Pupils could create explanation videos of reasoning questions, showing the audience how to solve reasoning and problem-solving issues.

Languages and geography: Schools in other countries could link up, sharing what they find out about each other and their cultures.

Preparing for teaching the unit

Things to do

- Decide which software/tools are most accessible and appropriate for use with your class.
- Download your chosen software/tools (see *Useful links*) and spend some time familiarising yourself with them.
- If using WordPress (or a similar platform), arrange for it to be installed on your school's web server, ensuring any necessary safety features are in place. If possible, create an account for each pupil.
- If pupils' work is to be accessible on the open web, brief parents and carers on the project and obtain their consent, if necessary.
- Read pages 40–41 to get an overview of the unit.
- Read the steps in the unit sessions (pages 43–48) and look at the associated online resources, printing out worksheets as required.
- Watch the video walkthroughs for this unit (see *Online resources*).
- Watch the CPD videos (see *Additional resources*).
- Work through the unit yourself so you know what is expected of the pupils.
- Ensure you have sufficient computers/laptops/tablets and other equipment booked in advance.
- Identify a few relevant blogs for the class to view.

Resources needed

- **Software:** Blogging tool (such as WordPress, Blogger or Seesaw), Audacity, iMovie, Camera app, Snapseed
- **Hardware:** Laptop/desktop computers, digital cameras, audio recorders/tablets

Online resources provided

Session resources

- Worksheet 4.4a: End-of-unit quiz
- Worksheet 4.4b: Pupil self-assessment
- Teaching slides 4.4a–4.4f
- Walkthrough videos 4.4a–4.4d
- Interactive end-of-unit quiz 4.4

Additional resources

- CPD video: Understanding how a blog works
- CPD video: Writing a good blog post

Online safety

- If your learning platform has a blogging tool, it is likely to prevent access for external readers.
- Allowing class access only to individual blogs is safest: one approach is to use a class blog to share (anonymously) some or all of the work from pupils' individual blogs.
- If you or your class maintain a publicly readable blog, ensure no personal identifying details are made public, and that you moderate comments.
- This unit provides an opportunity to discuss 'digital footprints' and what sort of information is safe to post beyond the school community.

Collaboration

The planning here is based on pairs and groups working together to communicate ideas on the blog, suggest improvements using comments and even share work with other schools. Using blogs, pupils in other schools and even other countries could collaborate on a project and share work.

Useful links

Software and tools

- See your learning platform provider's homepage for details of their blog service, if available.
- WordPress is an open-source blogging platform. It may be installed on a school web server.
- Hosting for WordPress blogs: **www.creativeblogs.net www.primaryblogger.co.uk**
- Seesaw is an online portfolio but there is also the facility to publish this to a class blog page which can be made public or private.
- Blogger is free, but pupils need Google accounts as part of G Suite for Education.

Online tutorials

- WordPress: **www.wordpress.com/go/**
- Blogger: **www.blogger.com/features**

Information and ideas

- Example of an educational blog: **www.100wc.net/category/special-showcase/**
- 5 Sentence Challenge: **www.fivesc.net**
- 'Getting a buzz out of blogging' course: **www.open.edu/openlearnworks/course/view. php?id=29%3f**
- Creative Commons search: **search.creativecommons.org**
- Video on copyright and licenses: **www.commoncraft.com/video/copyright-and-creative-commons**
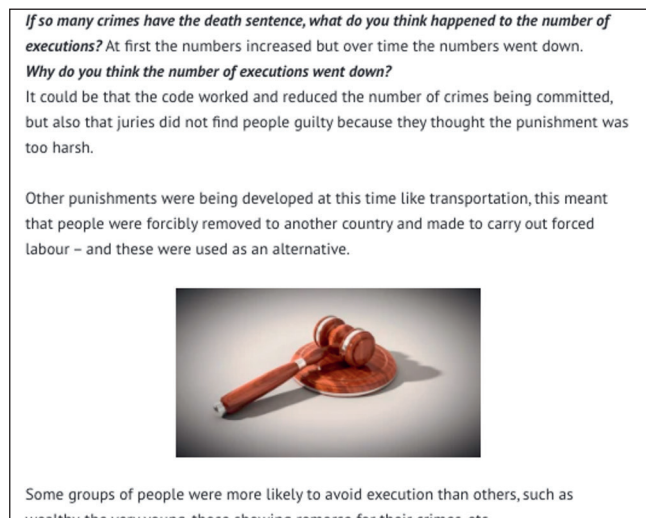
Unit outcomes

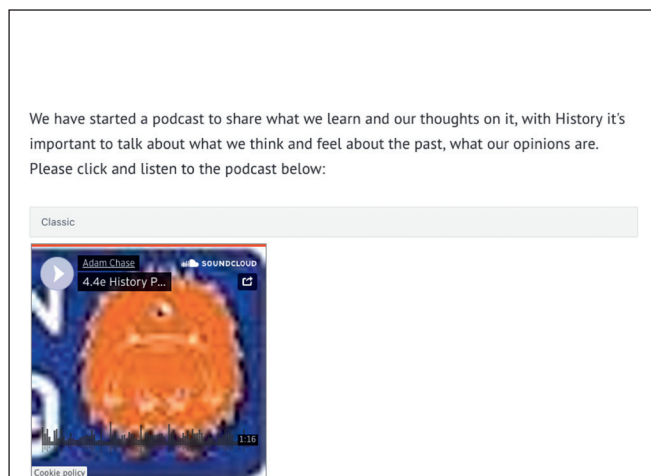Below are some examples of the outcomes you could expect from this unit.
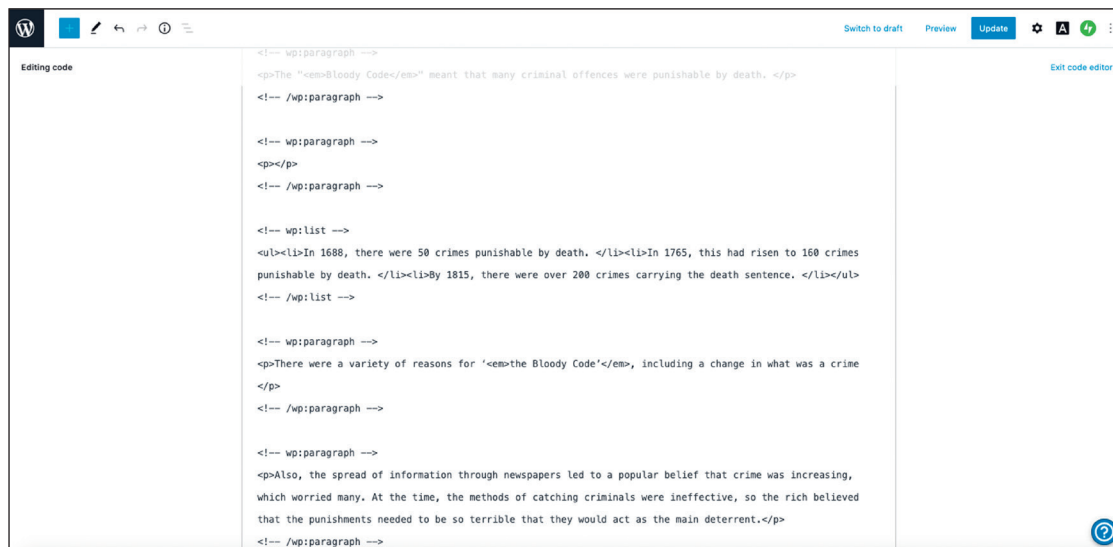
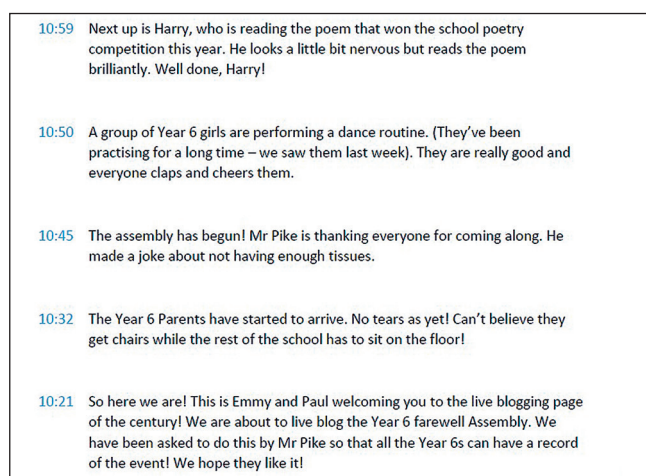**Sessions 1 and 2:** Planning and creating a blog post in WordPress
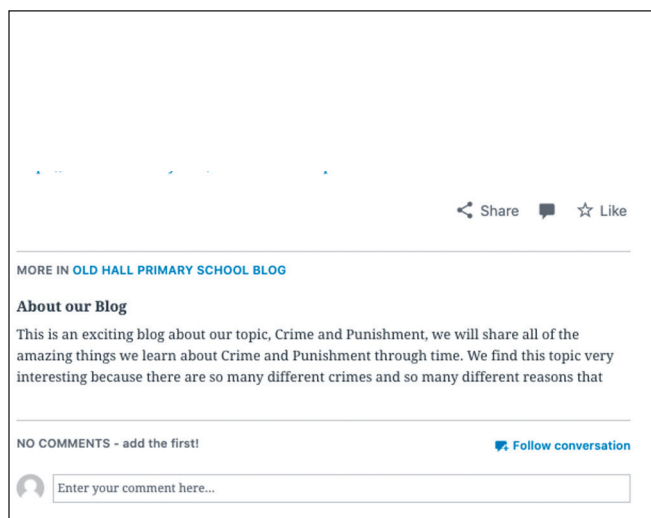
Session 3: Adding comments to a blog post

Session 4: Adding images to a blog post

Session 5: Adding a podcast to the blog

Session 6: Writing a live blog at an event