

Fachlicher Hintergrund

Was ist „Horrible Histories“?

Horrible Histories ist eine von der BBC produzierte Comedy-Serie, die sich eigentlich an Schulkinder wendet, aber schon seit Jahren großen **Zuspruch in allen Altersklassen** findet und bereits zwei Comedy-Awards abgeräumt hat. Es geht dabei um Geschichte mit den „*nasty bits left in*“. Der **Schwerpunkt** liegt auf der **englischen Geschichte**, aber es finden auch Ausflüge in den Rest Europas und der Welt statt. Von den *Terrible Tudors* über die *Measly Middle Ages* bis hin zu den *Rotten Romans* wird Interessantes und Kurioses aus der Geschichte präsentiert und mit modernen Formaten wie den *Savage Songs*, *Historical Wife Swap*, *Come dine with me* oder der Casting-Show des Todes angereichert.

Die ursprüngliche Serie, deren Sketche auch Inhalt dieser Reihe sind, lief in fünf Staffeln zwischen 2009 und 2013. 2015 wurde die Serie dann mit neuen Schauspielern im neuen Format wieder aufgelegt. Im ursprünglichen Format bestand jede der 30-minütigen **Episoden** aus einer Aneinanderreihung von **Sketchen, Liedern, Quizfragen und Animationen**, deren Themen in keinem inhaltlichen Zusammenhang standen. Meist umfassen die Episoden sieben Themen/Epochen, die jeweils durch eine Animation angekündigt und dann in ein bis drei Beiträgen behandelt werden. Eine vollständige Liste aller Episoden findet man bei Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Horrible_Histories_episodes.

Warum sollte ich „Horrible Histories“ unterrichten?

Als ich mit meinem Geschichtsstudium begann, gab uns ein Professor im Proseminar einen Rat mit auf den Weg: „Wenn Sie sich in ein neues Thema einarbeiten müssen oder wollen, besorgen Sie sich zuerst ein gutes Kinderbuch dazu! Warum? Sie sind auf das Wesentliche reduziert und fassen die Hauptaspekte klar und präzise zusammen. Danach können Sie sich an die Fachliteratur setzen.“ Dieser Rat hat mir in meinem Studium sehr geholfen und ich versuche auch heute, den Schülern den Einstieg in ein Thema auf ebendiese Weise zu erleichtern. Und das ist es auch, was **Horrible Histories** leistet: **Sachverhalte auf das Wesentliche zu reduzieren**. Darüber hinaus ermöglicht die Serie in der Sek II einen interessanten Einblick in die **anglophone Bezugskultur** – schließlich ist der Humor ebenso britisch wie die Auswahl der Themen und die Darstellungsweise.

Welche Problematik der Serie sollte im Unterricht thematisiert werden?

Die große **Stärke** von *Horrible Histories*, nämlich die **Reduktion**, ist **gleichzeitig** auch die **Schwäche** der Reihe. So werden komplexe **Inhalte** zum Teil zu **stark vereinfacht** dargestellt und wichtige Aspekte weggelassen. Es bietet sich daher in jedem Fall an, am Ende der Stunde noch einmal auf den Einstieg zurückzukommen und dies kritisch zu reflektieren.

Angesprochen werden sollte ebenfalls die von den Machern von *Horrible Histories* vorgenommene Themenwahl (z. B. besondere Relevanz des Themas für Großbritannien oder schlicht die Möglichkeit der humoristischen Präsentation).

Didaktisch-methodisches Konzept

Wie ist die Reihe aufgebaut?

Die Reihe besteht aus einem **einleitenden Zeitungsartikel** über die Entstehungsgeschichte der Comedy-Serie, einem **universell einsetzbaren Arbeitsblatt zur Reflexion und fünf Arbeitsblätter zu Sketchen** mit verschiedenen Themen (Gründe für die Französische Revolution, Industrialisierung, soziale Frage, britischer Imperialismus, Auslöser des Ersten Weltkriegs, Appeasement-Politik), die flexibel eingesetzt werden können. Die Auswahl der Sketche enthält ein breites Spektrum an Formaten und Inhalten.

Welche Art der sprachlichen Vorentlastung ist nötig?

Da es sich lediglich um Sketche und Animationen handelt, ist ein explizierter Analysewortschatz nicht notwendig. Vokabelhilfen befinden sich auf den Arbeitsblättern. Teilweise werden **Übungen zur Wortschatzarbeit** als **pre-viewing activity** durchgeführt. Zum besseren Verständnis kann es je nach Lerngruppe sinnvoll sein, die Sketche mit Untertiteln zu zeigen.

Medienhinweise

DVD

Horrible Histories, Series 1–5, 2010–2013.

Die DVDs zur Reihe, einzeln oder auch als Box erhältlich. Eine Anschaffung ist durchaus lohnenswert, nicht nur für die eigene Unterhaltung, sondern auch für den Einsatz in der Sek I bzw. im Englischunterricht.

Internetseiten

<http://horrible-histories.co.uk/>

Offizielle Webseite der Reihe.

Materialübersicht

Information und universell einsetzbares Material

- | | | |
|-----|------|--|
| M 1 | (Tx) | Leo Hickman: How "Horrible Histories" became a huge hit |
| M 2 | (Ab) | Is "Horrible Histories" good history? – General considerations |

Material für die Unterrichtsstunden

- | | | |
|-----|------|---|
| M 3 | (Ab) | Fabulous French – Historical Wife Swap |
| M 4 | (Ab) | Vile Victorians – Work, Terrible Work |
| M 5 | (Ab) | Vile Victorians – Victorian Undercover Proprietor |
| M 6 | (Ab) | Vile Victorians – British Empire Report |
| M 7 | (Ab) | Frightful First World War – Causes of WWI |
| M 8 | (Ab) | Woeful Second World War – Chamberlain and the European peace settlement |

Ab: Arbeitsblatt – Tx: Text

M 1 Leo Hickman: How "Horrible Histories" became a huge hit

Read this Guardian article from 17 March 2011 to find out why "Horrible Histories" is popular with kids and grown-ups alike.

The CBBC TV version of Horrible Histories has won yet another award. Now the kids' show, which has become cult daytime viewing, is moving to a primetime slot

The feedback from the BBC was unambiguous¹: "We really like it, but we feel the poo² quotient needs to be higher."

5 Terry Deary, creator of the wildly successful Horrible Histories children's publishing franchise, is recalling the two-year journey to bring his books to the screen. "[...] [T] he BBC, to its credit, was very adventurous and said that it wanted a comedy sketch-based format written by adult
10 sketch-show writers."

It was the right call. Since Horrible Histories first aired in 2009 on CBBC, the BBC's digital channel aimed at six- to 12-years-olds, it has been a huge hit with viewers and has won a slew³ of awards, including a Royal Television Society
15 award for best children's programme earlier this week.

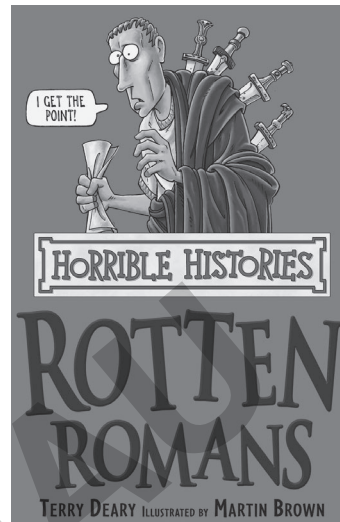
But it isn't just children who have found themselves drawn to the show's Pythonesque⁴ sketches, which skip jauntily⁵ through the books' trademark themes such as the Rotten Romans and Groovy Greeks up to the Terrible Tudors and
20 Vile Victorians. By the time the second series aired last summer, the programme had attracted a loyal audience of grown-ups, too; parents watching with their children at first, but soon followed by students and pensioners as it quickly developed into cult daytime viewing. Some of the most popular sketches and songs from the
25 show have attracted more than half a million hits each on YouTube.

But perhaps the show's break-out moment came in January when it won best sketch at the Comedy Awards, the first children's programme ever to do so. The crossover into a mainstream audience will be completed later this year when BBC1 airs a repackaged version of the show in primetime [...].

30 [...] "The team is excellent," says Deary. "The show's actors were all targeted⁶. They didn't rely on auditioning⁷ unknowns. Yes, there is some ad-libbing⁸ at times, but it is rare because the actors are also involved in the writing. We sit around a table for about eight weeks with the director and a historical adviser and we read the books in a circle. Then someone might say, "That might work as a gameshow" and they go off and write the sketch." As a result, viewers
35 have been treated to an Eminem-inspired pastiche⁹ about Charles II, a Victorian Dragons' Den¹⁰, "Spartan School Musical" and a Jackson 5-style explainer on hieroglyphics.

The show's unique comedy pedigree¹¹ among children's programming has long been acknowledged by those in the business. Jesse Armstrong, co-writer of the Bafta-winning Peep Show and Oscar-nominated In the Loop, admits the show has been his afternoon vice¹² ever
40 since it first aired. "Hit shows are very difficult to achieve. You need to have everything just right – that's what's so terrifying. But Horrible Histories has a great cast and brilliant writers. They're also blessed with great source material. The tone is perfect and it is done in a non-patronising, engaging way. The key for me, though, is that the team has been given leeway¹³ to do the subjects that really interest kids – death, shit, blood and piss."

45 [...] No one seems to question that the show is entertaining, but is it good history? Dan Snow, the TV historian, says it doesn't need to be both and we should celebrate it for what it is: "It's wonderfully exciting to watch. It has such a great sense of the past. It's fun, harmless stuff. [...] It plays to stereotypes, but it's fantastic as entry-level history."



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Model for the children's TV series are the books of Terry Deary, illustrated by Martin Brown

M 2 Is "Horrible Histories" good history? – General considerations

Is "Horrible Histories" good history? Form an opinion.

Topic and format of the "Horrible Histories" sketch:



Pre-viewing

Take notes on the following questions:

1. What do you expect from the sketch you are about to watch?
2. Do you think it is appropriate to deal with this historical issue as part of a comedy show? Give reasons.

Post-viewing

Take notes on the following questions:

1. Would you consider the sketch funny? Explain.
2. "Horrible Histories" has been called edutainment. How would you rate the educational factor?
3. Was relevant information missing?
4. Which aspect of the issue does the show make fun of?
5. Explain whether or not you think this was appropriate.
6. Prepare for a discussion: Should "Horrible Histories" be shown at school?

M 5 Vile Victorians – Victorian Undercover Proprietor

Watch this episode of *Victorian Undercover Proprietor* to find out why some Victorian factory owners wanted to improve the lives of their workers.

Pre-viewing task: Match the following words with their definitions.

appalling • proprietor • to disguise so. as sth. • lavatory • humble • disgusting • fluff • daft • hardships

1. _____ : a room with a toilet and sink¹
2. _____ : small balls or pieces of thread², fibre, or dust
3. _____ : not thinking of yourself as better than other people
4. _____ : strange often in a way that is funny
5. _____ : very bad in a way that causes fear, shock, or disgust
6. _____ : things that cause pain, suffering, or loss
7. _____ : to change the usual appearance of someone so that people will not recognise that person
8. _____ : so unpleasant to see, smell, taste etc., that you feel sick
9. _____ : a person who owns a business or property

While-viewing task: Answer the questions.

1. What is it like to work in Salt's factory?
2. What is Salt looking for in vain at his "coworker's" house?
3. What is Salt's new village supposed to be like?
4. Why does Salt want to build it?

Post-viewing task: Think of more reasons why building a new village might also pay off for Sir Titus and other factory owners.

Annotations

1 **sink:** Waschbecken – 2 **thread:** Faden



Town and factory of Saltaire in Yorkshire, founded by Sir Titus Salt in 1851

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M 6 Vile Victorians – British Empire Report

How did Britain manage to rule so many parts of the world? Watch this episode to find out.

Pre-viewing task: Roughly colour all the countries/areas that were ever part of the British Empire.



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While-viewing task: Put the following events into the correct order.

- ___ Australia, Canada and Egypt demand to be recognised as equal countries.
- ___ Humphrey Gilbert claims Newfoundland for England.
- ___ Britain wins the Napoleonic Wars against the French Empire.
- ___ India declares independence.
- ___ England claims Canada, the Caribbean and the east coast of what is now the USA.
- ___ The East India Company starts to take over entire countries in Asia.
- ___ Britain is broke and can't afford to have an empire any longer.
- ___ The American colonies declare independence.
- ___ A third of the planet is run by Britain.
- ___ One by one, the colonies leave the Empire.
- ___ Captain Cook discovers Australia.
- ___ Queen Victoria is crowned Empress of India.
- ___ Britain fights the Boer Wars¹.
- ___ There is a rebellion in India, which is crushed by the British army.

Post-viewing task: List motives for Britain's desire to create a British Empire.

Annotation

¹ Boer Wars: Burenkriege

M 8 Woeful Second World War – Chamberlain and the European peace settlement

Does Chamberlain get only praise for his appeasement policy? Find out!

Pre-viewing task: Match the following words with their definitions.

moustache • dishonour • to avert • to budge up • canny • to be involved

1. _____ : to prevent (sth. negative) from happening
2. _____ : hair growing on a man's upper lip
3. _____ : actively participating in sth.
4. _____ : damage to your reputation and loss of respect from other people
5. _____ : very clever and able to make intelligent decisions
6. _____ : to move so that there is space for someone else



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The face of appeasement policy: Neville Chamberlain

While-viewing task: Are the statements right or wrong? Tick the correct box.

- | | right | wrong |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Chamberlain has just come back from Paris. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Churchill wants to congratulate him. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Hitler says nobody wants another world war. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Italy has formed an alliance with France. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Russia is not getting involved. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Hitler has invaded Poland. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Chamberlain declares war. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Churchill becomes President. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Post-viewing task: Put these events into the correct order and match them with the dates. There are more dates than you need.

- _____ : Nazi-Soviet Pact
- _____ : Munich Agreement
- _____ : Pact of steel between Italy and Germany
- _____ : *Anschluss* of Austria
- _____ : Nazi-Germany takes over the Sudetenland
- _____ : Hitler invades Czechoslovakia
- _____ : Hitler invades Poland – Britain and France declare war on Germany

- 11–13 March 1938

29 September 1938

30 September 1938

30 January 1939

15 March 1939

22 May 1939

7 July 1939

23 August 1939

1 September 1939