

MAGNIFICENT MINSTER MARVELS

The people who shaped the Minster

TEACHERS GUIDE

This resource covers the period of history that relates well to the KS2 curriculum, but the activities and skills can easily be adapted for use with KS3.

KS2 History

Study of an aspect of history or a site dating from a period beyond 1066 that is significant in the locality.

Devise historically valid questions about change, cause, similarity and difference, and significance.

KS3 History

The development of Church, state and society in Medieval Britain 1066-1509 and 1509-1745.

Understand historical concepts such as continuity and change, cause and consequence, similarity, difference and significance, and use them to make connections, draw contrasts, analyse trends, frame historically-valid questions and create their own structured accounts, including written narratives and analyses.

Aims

The aim of this resource is to introduce pupils to some of the key characters in the history of the Minster and to place them in chronological order. Pupils will be History Detectives; they will discover why each person was significant and make a judgement about who might have been the most important person, or 'Minster Marvel'. This will encourage questioning skills where pupils can justify their views with evidence. They can work in small groups to develop teamwork and there will be opportunities for them to present their ideas to each other in a discussion/debating forum. This will encourage speaking and listening skills and provide an opportunity for pupils to express their own ideas; to agree, disagree or change their mind based on the evidence presented.

Background information

York Minster is both a Cathedral and a Minster. Minster is the Anglo-Saxon word for a Mission Church (as opposed to a Monastery), and it is also a Cathedral because it houses the Cathedra, the seat of the Bishop which in York, is the Archbishop.

The history of the Minster goes back to 71 AD with the arrival of the Romans in York. Remains of the Roman Principia have been found beneath the Minster when the foundations were excavated in the late 1960's. Constantine was declared Emperor here in 306 AD York and his conversion to Christianity enabled the religion to



spread throughout the Roman Empire when he issued the Edict of Milan in 313 AD. The first York Minster was a wooden Anglo-Saxon Church and although we don't have the remains, we think it was built close to the site of the current Cathedral. It was constructed to house a baptismal font for King Edwin of Northumbria who had converted to Christianity after marrying the Christian Princess Ethelburga of Kent. Edwin then became the first Christian King in the North of England. The Church was re-built in stone by King Edwin and his successor King Oswald and it was dedicated to St Peter. Saint Wilfrid later renovated the building in 670 AD but it was then damaged by fire, wars and Viking invaders meaning it had to be re-built a number of times.

Between 1080 and 1100 the Archbishop Thomas of Bayeux set about building a new Norman cathedral on the present site after the Anglo Saxon Minster was destroyed by fire. It was then extended by Archbishop Roger of Pont l'Eveque. In 1225 the Archbishop Walter de Grey, Chancellor to King John, set about extending and expanding the Minster into the Gothic building we have today. This was to create an even more impressive cathedral than those he had seen in England and Europe, and to house the shrine of St William of York who was canonised in 1226 AD. The Minster was consecrated in 1472 AD.

Since then, the Minster has survived a collapse of the central tower in 1407, the Reformation, the English Civil War, two world wars and at least three major fires.

Resources

The information in the table below has been collated into a set of resource cards that have a picture on one side and the information on the reverse. These can be downloaded from the website alongside this document and printed out double sided.

The first three characters are arguably in a different category to the rest, but they are included to create discussion among the pupils. As a teacher you can choose which of the cards you wish to include in the activity.

Minster Marvel	Explanation
Jesus	Jesus was born around 0 AD, and without him, Christianity wouldn't exist. It was belief in Jesus that inspired this magnificent building to be created. There are many symbols of Jesus on the cross throughout the Minster and the whole building is designed in the shape of a cross to remind Christians of his sacrifice to save the world. In early Medieval times and throughout the Minster, Jesus was represented by a lamb because in the Bible he is called the 'Lamb of God'.
Mary	Mary was the mother of Jesus who was born around 0 AD. The Great West Window and many images in the Minster show the important events in her life. The Lady Chapel at the East End of the Minster is dedicated to Mary and the Chapter House has a statue of Mary at the entrance as well as a window dedicated to her life. It is thought that the carved flowers and plants in the Chapter House also represent Mary and remind people of her importance.



St Peter

York Minster is dedicated to St Peter who was one of Jesus' disciples and leader of the early Christian Church after Jesus died. There is a large image of St Peter in the Pilgrim Window and many statues and pictures of him throughout the Minster. He can be found on the inside of the Great West doors and is also seated outside at the top of the East End of the Minster. Images of St Peter's keys can be found in windows, bosses, pictures and floor tiles. The keys to Heaven are a symbol of the authority that Jesus gave to St Peter.

**Emperor
Constantine**

Constantine was declared Emperor in York in 306 AD. He converted to Christianity after seeing the Chi-Rho symbol that represents the name of Christ in a dream and hearing the words 'By this sign conquer'. Constantine had the sign painted on the shields of his soldiers before an important battle which he then won. This helped convince him that the message of Christianity was true, and he allowed Christianity to spread throughout the western world and the Roman Empire. His statue stands outside of the Minster.

King Edwin

King Edwin of Northumbria converted to Christianity after marrying the Christian Princess, Ethelburga of Kent and became the first Christian King in the North of England. He was baptised in 627 AD here in York and built a small wooden Anglo Saxon church to house the baptism font. The church was then re-built in stone, and it became the first York Minster. Without Edwin, we might not have a cathedral here at all.

Queen Ethelburga

Ethelburga was a princess from Kent. Edwin wanted to marry her, but she was a Christian and he was a Pagan. She agreed to marry him so long as she could continue to practise her religion. Ethelburga moved up to York and Edwin also became a Christian and was baptised in York in 627 AD. Without Ethelburga, Edwin might not have converted to Christianity or built the first Minster in York.

Thomas of Bayeux

After the Norman Conquest, William the Conqueror sent Thomas of Bayeux to become the first Norman Archbishop of York. He was responsible for building the first Norman Cathedral on this site between 1080 and 1100. The Minster we have today was built around his original plans. Without him, we might not have had such a big, awesome building built on this spot.



Saint William

Archbishop William fitzHerbert, known as St William, is the Patron Saint of York. He was the Archbishop of York twice and it is said that his first miracle was to save many villagers from drowning in the river Ouse when the bridge collapsed. William died after possibly being poisoned by one of his enemies in the Minster. He is buried here in the crypt and when he died in 1154, a massive shrine was built which attracted many pilgrims to York Minster. Many miracles were said to have taken place at his shrine and two of our great windows are dedicated to him.

Walter de Grey

Walter de Grey was the Archbishop of York for 40 years, between 1215 and 1255 AD and he provided a period of stability for the Minster. Walter was responsible for rebuilding the Norman Cathedral into the awesome Gothic building we have today. He had been a chancellor to King John and was very wealthy which helped to pay for the building project. Walter started with the South Transept in 1225 and it is here that you can see his great monument. Walter de Grey also campaigned successfully for Archbishop William fitzHerbert to be canonised (made a Saint).

John Thornton

John Thornton was the artist and glazier who created the Great East Window which is now one of the most beautiful parts of York Minster. He was chiefly responsible for drawing out (cartooning) all 311 panels and he made sure the window was completed in 3 years, between 1405 and 1408. The window represents the beginning and end of all things and has images from the first book of the Bible, Genesis and the last book of the Bible, Revelation. It is also thought John Thornton was the artist who created the stunning St William's window and people come from around the world to see his work.

Frances Matthew

Frances Matthew was an important Protestant Christian. She was known for her sewing skills and she created a magnificent set of bed covers for Queen Elizabeth I. When her husband died in 1628, she gave his collection of 3000 books to the Minster which transformed the Minster Library into the largest and most important cathedral library in the whole of England at that time. Frances Matthew died a year later in 1629 and her memorial statue can be found under the Great East Window.

The Fairfax family

Ferdinando and his son Thomas Fairfax were Generals in Oliver Cromwell's army during the English Civil War of 1644. During that time many big churches and cathedrals were damaged or destroyed. However, because they were a York family, Thomas and Ferdinando made sure that York Minster was protected from too much damage. Without them we might have lost far more of our precious medieval stained glass.



Dean Duncombe Augustus Duncombe was Dean of York for 22 years from 1858 until his death in 1880. He is responsible for introducing services in the Nave which meant that ordinary people could come to the Minster to take part in services for the first time. To do this Duncombe brought in benches, lighting and heating. He also paid for a lot of the restoration and upkeep of the Minster from his own pocket. The impressive monument to remember Dean Duncombe can be found in the South Transept.

John Browne John Browne was an artist and historian and lived between 1793 and 1877. John wrote books about the Minster and created many illustrations of the building, windows and bosses. He has helped us to understand and view in more detail things that you can't see from the floor. His illustrations were very important in 1840 when the nave roof was destroyed in a fire. It meant we could reproduce the roof bosses accurately from his drawings.

Helen Little Helen Little helped raise money to restore the famous Five Sisters' Window in the Minster and dedicate it to women who had died in the First World War. Helen thought that there were many memorials to men, but women seemed to have been forgotten. Helen's vision was 'The Sisters' window for the sisters' and it is the only memorial in the country dedicated to all the women of the British Empire who died in the First World War. It was unveiled in 1925 by The Duchess of York who would later become Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother.

Question prompts to help pupils engage with the resource.

- Who was the person?
- Why is the person important/significant?
- Is this reason or evidence convincing?
- What sources might support this view?
- What might be an opposite view?
- What role did they have in the history of the Minster?
- Is the person important for religious or historical or architectural reasons?
- Is the religious, historical or architectural aspect the most important to think about?
- Could the Minster have existed/survived without this person?
- If this person hadn't existed, would the Minster have been built?
- Are there any who might be an 'odd one out'?
- Which five people might you leave out to create a 'Top Ten' Minster Marvels.



Activities

- Pupils/teacher can read out the information on the reverse of the resource cards and pupils can work together as a group to put them in chronological order. This could be done by laying out the cards on the floor or giving them to the pupils to hold so they can physically move around.
- For an additional challenge, pupils could try to put the cards in chronological order by only using the picture and the name before knowing the details. They could then see how accurate they have been by reading the information on the reverse.
- Pupils can then work in pairs to discuss which person they think is the most important.
- Pupils can re-arrange the cards on the floor, selecting who they think is the most important person and placing them in order of significance.
- Pupils could work out which five people they might leave out to end up with a top ten list of Marvels.
- A discussion or formal debate can take place where pupils justify their choices and can change their mind after hearing other views.
- Alternatively, pupils could be given a card and present that person to the group as the most important person using persuasive language. This would work best if they were given time to research their person in more detail first. Teachers may need to choose the characters in advance to ensure they can be researched in reasonable detail.
- The Minster Marvels could be put in categories, such as: importance for the Minster, importance for history and importance for Christianity.
- There could be a class vote on the top Minster Marvel.
- The activity can finish with a piece of writing where pupils can explain who they would select as their Minster Marvel, giving reasons and evidence for their choice.

Suggested writing frame:

There are many important people in the history of York Minster, for example ...

Some people think ... is the most important person because ...

However, other people think ... because

In my view, ... is the most important person because ... Evidence to support this is ...



Extended Activities

- True/False statements work well as an introductory activity or plenary.
 - o The Minster is a Cathedral (true, it is both a Minster and a Cathedral).
 - o The current Minster is Anglo Saxon (false).
 - o The current Minster is Gothic (true).
 - o The Minster sits on Roman remains (true).
 - o King Edward was baptised in York in 627AD (false, it was King Edwin).
 - o The Minster is dedicated to St Edwin (false, it is dedicated to St Peter).
 - o Henry VIII destroyed York Minster (false. York Minster wasn't a monastery and sustained limited damage during the reformation).
 - o York Minster has very little medieval glass (false, it has the largest collection of medieval stained glass in the UK).
- Research one of the characters in more detail. Create a fact file of information and include illustrations.
- Create a set of top trumps for their top ten Minster Marvels.
- Create a press campaign with adverts and text to convince the public of the importance of one of the characters.
- Hold a balloon debate where pupils justify which character they wish to keep.
- Create an animation or cartoon to explain who the Minster Marvel is and why they were so important.
- Act out an election campaign where two pupils present their manifesto and convince the class of their importance.

Ideas for further research

- Find out more about the 9th Roman Legion who made their way to York but later disappeared.
- The Horn of Ulf: a Viking artifact at the Minster that was part of a contract and exchange for land on which the Minster was built. Find out more about this transaction and create a drawing of the horn.
- The Harrying of the North: what happened around 1066 in this area? Find out how badly affected the North was from the Norman invasion.
- Architecture: Find out the difference between Norman and Gothic architecture. Then research the three features of Gothic architecture that you can see in the Minster (Early English, Decorated and Perpendicular) and create a guide using illustrations and labels.
- What was the effect of the Reformation or the English Civil War on the Minster?
- Jonathan Martin is an infamous character who had a huge effect on the Minster because he set fire to it in 1829. Investigate the causes and consequences of his actions.

Outcomes

Please feel free to email learning@yorkminster.org with examples of creative work that are inspired by this resource.

