

‘The History and Future of Road Safety’

Learning Outcomes

- Pupils will be able to describe how the road infrastructure, safety features and our modes of transport have developed over the last 400 years.
- Pupils will be able to discuss the future of transportation and road safety based on acquired and sound knowledge but with a creative edge.
- Pupils will have developed more confidence in their researching, debating and presentation skills.

Background Information

This lesson is based on the philosophy that the more you know and understand about the environment in which you live, the safer you will be in it. By researching for themselves, information about important ‘landmark’ developments and inventions to do with our road environment, the students will begin to understand why our road infrastructure is as it is. Safety features such as zebra crossings, cat’s eyes and the MOT test, have all been invented or developed to solve a problem – usually a road casualty problem.

After delving into the history of our roads and transportation, they will be able to look at current developments such as new vehicle technology, speed cameras, satellite navigation systems etc as part of this continuing process of balancing the need for travel from one place to another, often as swiftly as possible, with the need for keeping alive, uninjured and safe!

This in turn will hopefully inspire an interest, and inform their opinions on future developments, as we try to marry our continued need for mobility with sustainability and safe forms of transport, despite ever diminishing resources.



Part 1: History of Roads and Road Safety and Part 2: Find Out About.....

Both activities can be as large or as small a project as you and your students have the time and interest for. In Part 1 students select their own project from the ‘time-line’ list of historical events provided. Part 2 is a little more focussed – you can select from this list or share the whole list amongst the class. We have provided the dates to make starting the search a little easier.

Students usually enjoy the investigative nature of this exercise – the more they find out, the more they want to know. It is a good exercise for students of varying ability and learning styles. It caters for the scientific and the creative. A variety of presentation skills, including art, craft, IT and speaking in front of an audience, can be used to share their findings with others. The same topic may be researched, and the findings presented in completely different ways.

‘The History and Future of Road Safety’

Part 3: Road Safety NOW

This background information will hopefully help you to steer the discussions and debate in Part 3.

- The numbers of people killed or seriously injured (KSIs) on our roads has been going down for a few years now, though there are still far too many.
- You could ask the question “Why don’t road deaths and injuries make more than just the local news?”
- Most road ‘accidents’ could easily be avoided by road-users sticking to the rules, being alert to potential hazards and tolerant and considerate to other road-users.
- For the last few years road safety professionals have been working together in partnerships and have set targets for reductions in road casualties. This targeted and partnership approach seems to be working.
- But it is hard to measure what is working – e.g. in one residential area where there had been a large number of collisions involving young drivers and where speed was a contributory factor, a huge educational drive was launched at the local tertiary college – 3 years later the young driver involvement in collisions was down 30% - but was it the young driver education alone? Or because the police targeted the area more frequently? Or because the local highways department introduced a 20mph traffic-calmed zone?
- Education? Engineering? Enforcement? Or all three? Does it matter?
- With spending reviews and efficiency savings across the board, and diminishing resources, will the statistics go back up if we drop any of the three ‘E’s’?
- Remember, each road death is estimated to cost the economy £1.4million – so if we cut KSIs substantially we could also make substantial savings. BUT if we cut the budget for any of the three ‘E’s’ KSIs could rise again and that would increase the costs to the economy.
- Should we be talking about financial costs at all, when we should be talking about people’s lives and emotions, and the devastating effects on family and friends when a loved one is killed or injured? Is talking about it in financial terms anti-social?
- If your debate is successful it could be staged to the whole school! Or you could ask your local MP to attend and answer the student’s questions e.g. “Do you think that cutbacks in road safety will influence road casualty rates, and therefore cost the economy?” Prompted by the debate, ask the students to think of some questions that they would like to ask their local councillors or politicians.

**Part 4: Roads, Travel and Road Safety in the FUTURE**

Draw, write or say – this can be a ‘no holds barred’ session – let the students be creative, imaginative, scientific. Their ideas for the future though should be based on what they have found out about the past and the present, and circumvent the problems we know we will be facing in the future? E.g. What will happen if we run out of fuel/energy?

Aim for this session to be a lively and fun, but meaningful end to the topic!