

Fighting Fit

Teacher's Guide - Key Stages 1 & 2

This workshop explores the evidence for the diet and health of the crew onboard the ship. Students critically engage with different forms of historical and scientific evidence, exploring how we learn about the past. They investigate the food on board and compare it to modern ideas about health, nutrition and diet. This is supported by the findings from the human remains in our collection, examining the injuries and illnesses that are present within the crew. It challenges preconceived ideas about the fitness of those in the past and encourages the pupils to make their own judgements.

Skills covered:

- Exploring and comparing different time periods.
- Using scientific method and historical enquiry.
- Identifying characteristic features.

Links to the aims of the National Curriculum for History (KS1&2):

- “know and understand the history of these islands as a coherent, chronological narrative, from the earliest times to the present day: how people’s lives have shaped this nation and how Britain has influenced and been influenced by the wider world”
- “understand the methods of historical enquiry, including how evidence is used rigorously to make historical claims, and discern how and why contrasting arguments and interpretations of the past have been constructed.”
- “gain historical perspective by placing their growing knowledge into different contexts, understanding the connections between local, regional, national and international history; between cultural, economic, military, political, religious and social history; and between short- and long-term timescales.”

Links to the subject content of the National Curriculum for History (KS1&2):

- “events beyond living memory that are significant nationally or globally.” [KS1]
- “significant historical events, people and places in their own locality.” [KS1]
- “a local history study - a study of an aspect of history or a site dating from a period beyond 1066 that is significant in the locality.” [KS2]
- “a study of an aspect or theme in British history that extends pupils’ chronological knowledge beyond 1066.” [KS2]

Links to other areas of the National Curriculum:

Science: ‘describe the importance for humans of exercise, eating the right amounts of different types of food, and hygiene’.

Science: ‘Pupils should be introduced to...the importance of exercise and nutrition for humans’.

Science: ‘identify that animals, including humans, need the right types and amount of nutrition, and that they cannot make their own food; they get nutrition from what they eat’.

Science: ‘recognise the impact of diet, exercise, drugs and lifestyle on the way their bodies function’.

Design & Technology: ‘understand and apply the principles of a healthy and varied diet’.

Links to the Curriculum Review (November 2025)

- This workshop typifies the strong cross-curricular links between History and Science that we can make at the museum.
- It demonstrates the practical nature of scientific knowledge in a real and tangible way that is relevant to pupils’ lives.

Expanding the Learning:

Here at the Mary Rose we understand the importance of making the most of educational trips and giving students experiences and memories to last. We aim to support teachers in giving their students the chance to reflect upon their time here at the museum and relate that to their classroom work to make it more fun, enjoyable and memorable.

The following are some ideas for classroom activities that could aid students in recalling what they have learnt here at the Mary Rose Museum and to solidify that understanding.

Students can...

- Write a diary entry as a cook or member of the Mary Rose crew, discussing the food and activities they do.
- Research some Tudor recipes and cook them – a simple one is making ship's biscuits:
 - Take 450g of wholemeal flour.
 - Mix into a dough by adding water very slowly until it comes together and forms a hard dough.
 - Roll out and cut rounds.
 - Prick with holes on the top – we mark ours with an 'H' for Henry.
 - Let the rounds dry for 1 hour at least.
 - Bake the biscuits at 170 degrees centigrade for 1 – 2 hours, until very hard.
- Invent a Mary Rose obstacle course, using exercises and actions they might have had on board. Climb the rigging, pull the ropes, fetch the cannon balls.
- Design a Mary Rose restaurant – what would they feed people? Who would come to the restaurant?
- Think about differences for rich and poor in society. Would they eat the same food?

If you would like us to highlight a particular aspect of Tudor history during the workshop, such as trade, diversity, or social inequality, please do let us know.