

The Tudor Surgeon

Teacher's Guide – Key Stage 3

The Tudor Surgeon would draw upon centuries-old folk remedies as well as cutting-edge new sciences from across the globe. Pupils compare the knowledge in 1545 to modern medicine and investigate how he was influenced by war, superstition, religion, governmental change, and developing medical expertise. Pupils consider how the pace and scale of medical knowledge changed over this time period, and the impact society and culture had on medical progress.

Skills covered:

- Examining historical situations to create relevant, structured and evidentially supported accounts
- Understanding continuity and change
- Exploring cause and consequence

Links to the aims of the National Curriculum for History

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

Links to the subject content of the National Curriculum for History

- 'The English Reformation and Counter Reformation (Henry VIII to Mary I)'.
- 'society, economy and culture across the period'.
- 'a depth study linked to one of the British areas of study listed above'.

Links to other areas of the National Curriculum

Science: ‘the structure and functions of the human skeleton, to include support, protection, movement and making blood cells’.

Science: ‘biomechanics – the interaction between skeleton and muscles, including the measurement of force exerted by different muscles’.

Science: ‘content of a healthy human diet: carbohydrates, lipids (fats and oils), proteins, vitamins, minerals, dietary fibre and water, and why each is needed’.

Science: ‘how organisms...affected by, their environment, including the accumulation of toxic materials’.

Links to the Curriculum Review (November 2025)

- This workshop focuses on a specific aspect of Tudor history, providing depth to a broad subject. It explores multiple sources of evidence and promotes key disciplinary skills such as media literacy.

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...

- Examine some of the treatments in more detail, such as trepanning. Look at them over time, other examples in different cultures, and its impact on modern medicine.
- Explore how ordinary people who couldn't afford to go to a Barber-Surgeon might treat diseases – look at wise women and cunning folk (Tabitha Stanmore's book 'Cunning Folk' is a good source).
- Investigate the effect of these treatments on the body: what would bleeding do to the crew?

- Write a diary entry from the perspective of the surgeon or the patient. What would you feel in their position?