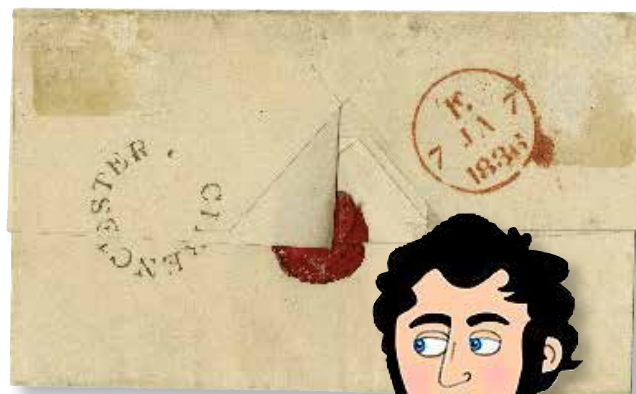# POP IT IN THE POST

How the Penny Black Stamp Changed Our World

KS1, KS2 and KS3 resources

Teacher's notes and activity sheets for pupils can be photocopied.

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Pop it in the Post:
How the Penny Black Stamp Changed Our World

Pop it in the Post has been developed to mark 175 years since the Penny Black, the world's first postage stamp, was introduced. This simple idea that we take for granted today revolutionised the way people communicate by opening up the postal system to ordinary people, who previously couldn't afford to use it.

In this teacher's resource, characters such as Rowland Hill and Victorian letter carriers guide your pupils through four topics to tell the story of the Penny Black:

◆ **ROWLAND HILL AND POSTAL REFORM**
◆ **THE PENNY BLACK**
◆ **SENDING AND DELIVERING!**
◆ **ROWLAND HILL'S LEGACY**

This resource has been developed using original archival material such as letters, photographs, posters, cartoons and stamps held in the Royal Mail Archive cared for by The Postal Museum. Each topic includes teacher's notes, lesson plans and activity sheets for you to photocopy and use as you wish.

PowerPoint presentations are available from
www.postalmuseum.org

Royal Mail Group Ltd

Royal Mail has a long and proud history. The first 'Master of the Posts' was appointed in Tudor times during the reign of Henry VIII. Since it began a number of different names have been used. The name 'Royal Mail' refers back to the Stuart king, Charles I. During his reign he opened his own private mail service for public use. Although today Royal Mail Group and Post Office Ltd are separate companies, they once formed a single organisation. For much of its history the standard organisational name used was 'Post Office'. Post Office buildings existed in almost every town. In the principal cities of London, Edinburgh and Dublin there was a main Post Office building known as the General Post Office (GPO). For many, this became the official name of the organisation. Throughout this learning resource the terms 'Post Office' and 'General Post Office' are used in their historical context.

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ROWLAND HILL AND POSTAL REFORM

READY FOR CHANGE

Before 1840, sending a letter was very expensive, partly because the government used postage as a way to raise taxes. The cost was based on the distance a letter travelled and the number of pages it contained. Unlike today, the person who received the letter usually paid for it.

Before 1840, sending a letter cost 12 times more than a loaf of bread!

An unfair system

Many poor people couldn't afford to receive letters. But MPs and other officials could send and receive a number of letters each day without charge and newspapers could be sent for free. The mixture of paid, unpaid and free items was confusing, and there were additional local charges in other parts of the country. And there were many ways to cheat the system.

ACTIVITY ALERT

Power POINT

©The Postal Museum, E12106

This cartoon by Henry Cole illustrates the confusing charges

Unable to keep in touch

At this time, many people in England were unable to read or write because until 1870 there was no law requiring children to go to school. This was a serious problem because Britain was becoming a major industrialised nation and many people were moving from the countryside to towns and cities to work in factories and mills. It was difficult for families living far apart to communicate with each other, since postage used up a big part of the weekly wage.

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Rowland Hill (1795-1879)

Like many people in Victorian times, Rowland Hill was interested in improving the lives of ordinary people.

In 1837, he wrote a leaflet called Post Office Reform. In it he said that postage should be reduced to one old penny and based on weight not the distance it travelled, and it should be prepaid by the sender.

Rowland thought that if more people could afford to send letters to friends and family, it would greatly improve their lives.

A much loved story

A story tells how Rowland was inspired to improve the postal system when he saw a young woman too poor to pay to receive a letter from her boyfriend.

*P*ortrait of Sir Rowland Hill c.1836

*P*ost Office Reform leaflet

©The Postal Museum, 2001-0154

©Royal Mail Group, 2015, courtesy of The Postal Museum, POST 118/1837

TOP 10 FACTS

Rowland Hill

1 *1795* Born in Kidderminster, one of six children

2 *1807* A student teacher in his father's school in Birmingham

3 *1827* Headmaster of Bruce Castle School, in London

4 *1833 -1839* Secretary of the South Australian Colonization Commission which established a settlement without convicts (now called Adelaide)

5 *1835* Developed a Rotary Printing Press with his brother

6 *1839* Appointed to the Treasury to oversee his reforms to the postal system

7 *1843-46* Director and later Chairman of the London and Brighton Railway

8 *1846* Secretary to the Postmaster General and then Secretary to the Post Office

9 *1860* Knighted by Queen Victoria

10 *1879* Buried in Westminster Abbey.

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Opposition to postal reform

There was a lot of support for Rowland's ideas but not everyone agreed with him. At first, the government was worried about the loss of profits. Some people who had the privilege of free postage were reluctant to pay for it.

Luckily most people agree with me

*T*he profile of Queen Victoria was based on a drawing made when she was 15 and later used for this medal.

Sir Francis Freeling (1764-1836), Secretary to the Post Office, was opposed to cheap postage.

'Cheap Postage! What is this men are talking about? Can it be that all my life I have been in error? ... Is it not within the last six months that the present Chancellor of the Exchequer has charged me not to let the revenue go down? What! You, Freeling, brought up and educated as you have been, are you going to lend yourselves to these extravagant schemes? You with your four-horse mail coaches, too!'

A national competition

In 1839, a law was passed to introduce Rowland's changes to the postal system. Later that year, the government announced a competition for people to suggest the best way to show postage had been paid by the sender.

Good ideas

There were 2,600 competition entries including envelopes, seals and adhesive labels. The government was worried about forgery and losing money. James Chalmers of Dundee suggested the idea of labels that could be cancelled to show payment.

The world's first postage stamp

Rowland decided that self-adhesive labels were the best idea. He thought the labels should be 'as beautiful a specimen of fine art as can be obtained'. It was decided that a portrait of Queen Victoria would be the best design.

*T*he label was called the Penny Black stamp. It was the world's first postage stamp

POSTAGE
ONE PENNY

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ACTIVITY 1: MAKE A SEALED LETTER

Overview of the lesson:

This activity is linked to **D&T**, **History** and **Literacy**. It focuses on how letters were sent before the introduction of the Penny Black stamp in 1840. Pupils write a letter in homemade ink, fold and seal a letter.

©The Postal Museum

*E*arly letters were written on paper, folded and sealed

Before undertaking this activity, pupils are likely to have:

◆ Talked about the postal system pre 1840 (letters usually paid for by recipients; free postage for MPs and officials, cost based on distance letters travelled and number of sheets of paper

◆ Discussed how many people could not read or write (children were not compelled to go to school before the 1870 Education Act)

◆ Discovered how people in England wrote with quills and ink on sheets of paper cut from large pieces, folded and sealed

◆ Thought about how we communicate today (mobile phones, emails, texts, social media).

Extension activities could include:

◆ **D&T:** Looking at other ways to seal a letter/document e.g. by making thumb prints; making paper

◆ **History:** Researching other forms of writing and communication in early/ other cultures (e.g. Egyptian hieroglyphics, Australian 'Dreamtime' paintings, Chinese calligraphy); sending messages by Morse code and pigeon post (see The Postal Museum LAST POST Teacher's Resource www.postalheritage.org.uk/fwwlearning)

◆ **Geography:** Exploring the use of signs and symbols which convey messages without text in everyday life (road signs, traffic lights, sign posts, badges, uniforms)

◆ **Art & Design:** Looking at text in art (e.g. the work of artist David Shrigley; comics and cartoons)

◆ **Literacy:** Finding out about different types of letters e.g. letters of safe conduct, letters of credit; references to letter-writing in speech e.g. red letter days; debating or writing a letter making the case for or against postal reform; writing letters as Rowland Hill expressing ideas for postal reform or as Francis Freeling opposing postal reform.

Success criteria

By the end of the project:
◆ All pupils will know how letters were sent pre 1840
◆ All will know that the postal system changed after 1840
◆ Some will want to find out more about Rowland Hill.

Key terms

◆ Seal
◆ 1870 Education Act
◆ Quill
◆ Communication

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RECIPE FOR INK

You will need:

- A punnet of blackberries (or other berries, but blackberries work best)
- Sieves
- Small bowls/basins
- Something to push berries through the sieve – balls of crumpled foil work well or the back of a teaspoon
- Salt
- White vinegar
- Teaspoons
- Small containers for ink

WRITING A LETTER

You will need:

- A4 sheets of cartridge paper (pre-soaked in weak tea if possible, to make them look old)
- modelling clay or Plasticine

Note: quills were made from goose feathers. The nib, made from the end of the quill, required careful cutting with a sharp 'penknife'. This procedure would be unsuitable for young children so it can be substituted by for writing implements such as:
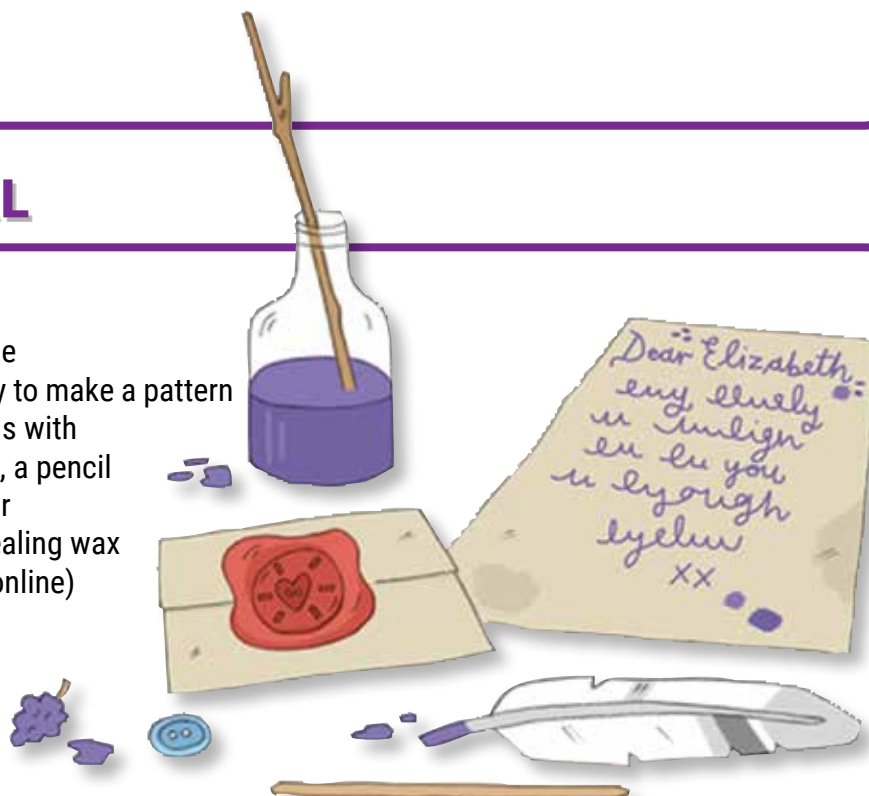
- Twigs
- Feathers
- Kebab sticks.

MAKING A SEAL

You will need:

- Modelling clay or Plasticine
- Items to press into the clay to make a pattern e.g. buttons or to carve initials with e.g. end of a slim paint brush, a pencil
- Glue to attach seal to letter

Note: you may wish to use sealing wax (available from art shops or online) melted over candles.

RECIPE FOR INK

175 years ago, people made their own ink. They wrote with a quill made from a goose feather and used a 'penknife' to cut the nib.

To do:

1 Put a sieve over a bowl

2 Use a ball of crumpled foil to push a few berries through the sieve

3 Add half a teaspoon of salt and half a teaspoon of vinegar to the juice and stir.

4 Pour into a container. This is your ink.

WRITING WITH HOMEMADE INK

Now make your own tool to write with. Using your homemade ink write a letter on paper with as many different tools as you can find.

Try:

1 A twig

2 A feather

**3** A kebab skewer

Dear Elizabeth

7

FOLDING YOUR LETTER

Before the introduction of the Penny Black stamp, people folded letters and sealed them. If the seal was broken they knew someone had read it!

To do:

1 Fold your letter so that no one can see what you have written

2 Write your address on the front and include the words POSTE HASTE (French for 'as fast a possible')

3 Then seal it with your special seal.

*Miss E Jones
The Red House
The Hill
POSTE HASTE*
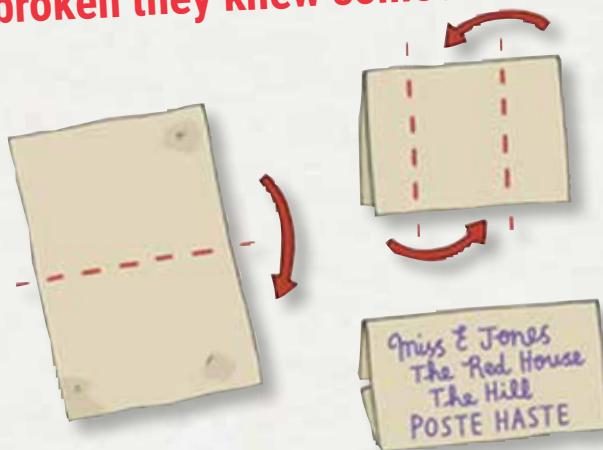
MAKE A SEAL

People have used seals since earliest times.

To do:

1 Make a seal by pulling off a small piece of modelling clay or Plasticine

2 Roll it into a ball and press it flat (but not too flat)

3 Press a button into the clay to make a pattern

4 When it has hardened glue it to your letter so that the letter can't be opened unless the seal is broken.

©The Illustrated London News v.8b (1851.6.21) Reprint (1997)

FOLDING MACHINE.

Did you know?

…that when the cost of sending a letter no longer depended on how many sheets of paper it contained, people wrote longer letters. Envelopes to contain all the pages became very popular.

Rowland Hill's brother Edwin was one of the inventors of a machine to fold envelopes

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ACTIVITY 2: CROSS-WRITTEN LETTERS

Overview of the lesson:

This activity focuses on **Literacy** and looks at cross-written letters.

Some people were too poor to receive a letter and returned it unopened. Others cut down on the number of sheets (additional pages cost more) by using every available space: this is called 'cross-writing'. Some developed codes to write on the front of the letter so that the recipient could find out important news without having to pay for it.

*T*his is a detail from a cross-written letter written in 1824

©The Postal Museum, 2015-0001

Before undertaking this activity, pupils are likely to have:

◆ Looked at a cross-written letter and tried to read it
◆ Discussed the purpose of cross-writing
◆ Thought about the advantages and disadvantages of a cross-written letter.

Extension activities could include:

◆ **History, Literacy:** Researching other forms of writing and communication in early/other cultures (e.g. Egyptian hieroglyphics, Australian 'Dreamtime' paintings, Chinese calligraphy)
◆ **D&T:** Looking at and devising codes to conceal messages (see The Postal Museum LAST POST Teachers' Resource www.postalmuseum.org)
◆ **Literacy:** Looking at the transcript of cross-written letter (page 9) and discussing how language has changed since Victorian times; rewriting the letter for a modern reader.

To do:

You will need: photocopies of a cross-written letter, paper, pens.

Success criteria

By the end of the project:
◆ All pupils will be familiar with the purpose and nature of cross-written letters
◆ Some pupils will want to investigate codes further.

Key terms

◆ Cross-written
◆ Code

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Mount Annan, 14th July 1827

My Dear Anne

I had the pleasure of receiving your long letter yesterday and now take up my pen to answer it. I am sorry that we have so little chance of meeting you but I think you many still cast up at Buxton. We cannot go round by Chester as Papa has promised to pay a visit at Claremont.

Later in the letter, the writer continues:

Does Chester answer your expectations? I suppose you have walked around the City Walls. I mentioned to Tina that you would like to hear from them when they are in Ireland. Poor Herbert Scott died last week — he has had a long illness — his friends are in great distress. Did you see the Brooks at Southampton? I hear they are there just now. As I have several letters to write I think I must bring this to a conclusion.

Papa and Mama write with me an affectionate dear regards to Mrs Robertson and best compliments to your aunt and with love to yourself.

Believe me, my dear Anne,

your affect. friend,

Leonora

Before 1840, it was very expensive to send a letter. The more sheets of paper it contained, the more it cost. So people used every inch of space by cross-writing.
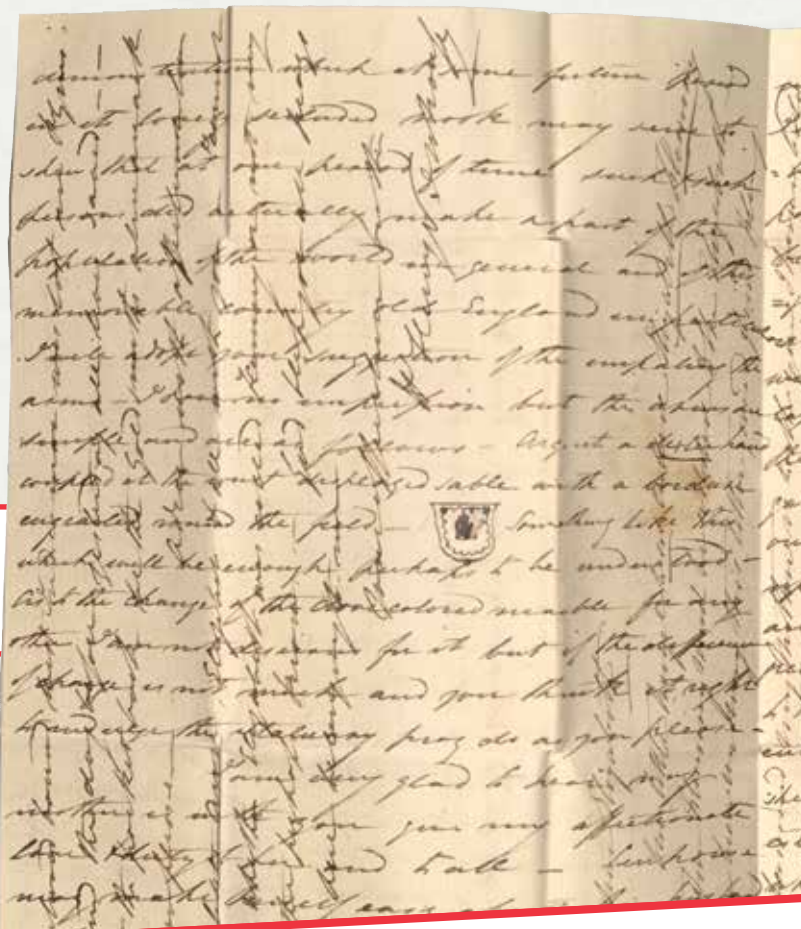
Look carefully at the cross-written letter. Your task is to write a cross-written letter.

Things to think about:
◆ Are you rich or poor?
◆ Where do you live?
◆ What will you write about?
Ideas could include your mum/dad/brother/sister has gone away to work in another town, or a trip to the seaside.

*T*his letter was written in 1824.

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Evaluate
◆ Can your partner read it?

....

◆ Can you think of a better way to save space?

....

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THE PENNY BLACK STAMP

ROYAL APPROVAL

The Penny Black stamp was the world's first postage stamp. Queen Victoria referred to Penny Postage in her speech at the opening of Parliament in January 1840.

I trust that the beneficial effects of this measure will be felt throughout all classes of the community

The Penny Black stamp

Penny Black stamps were printed in sheets of 240. They had to be cut by hand because perforating machines had yet to be invented. There were 12 stamps to a row and 20 rows on each sheet. Each sheet of stamps could be sold for £1.

ACTIVITY ALERT

The Penny Black stamp became official postage on 6 May 1840. It could be used on any letter that weighed less than half an ounce (about 14g)

Each row and column had different letters to help prevent forgery

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©Royal Mail Group Ltd, 2015, courtesy of The Postal Museum, POST 100/1

Rowland kept a diary. The entry for 6 May 1840 reads: 'At work at 7.50. Stamps came into use today'

A Mulready envelope

Power POINT

©The Postal Museum

Mulready envelopes

Illustrated prepaid envelopes designed by William Mulready were developed at the same time as the Penny Black stamp. People felt they were too fancy and made fun of them. They were withdrawn shortly after they were introduced in 1840.

Cheats!

Officials were worried that people would reuse stamps by removing cancellation marks with water or chemicals. So in 1840, shortly after the Penny Black stamp was introduced, the Rainbow Trials took place.
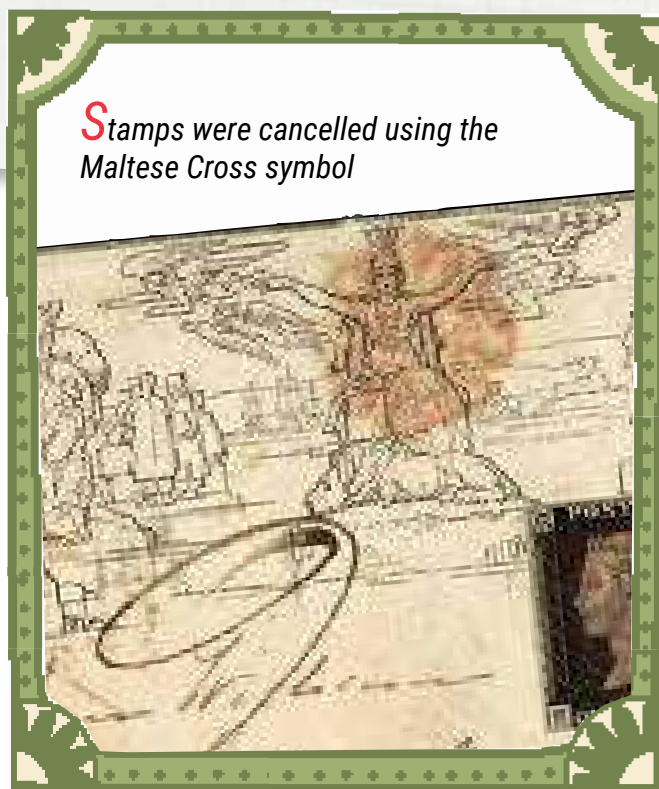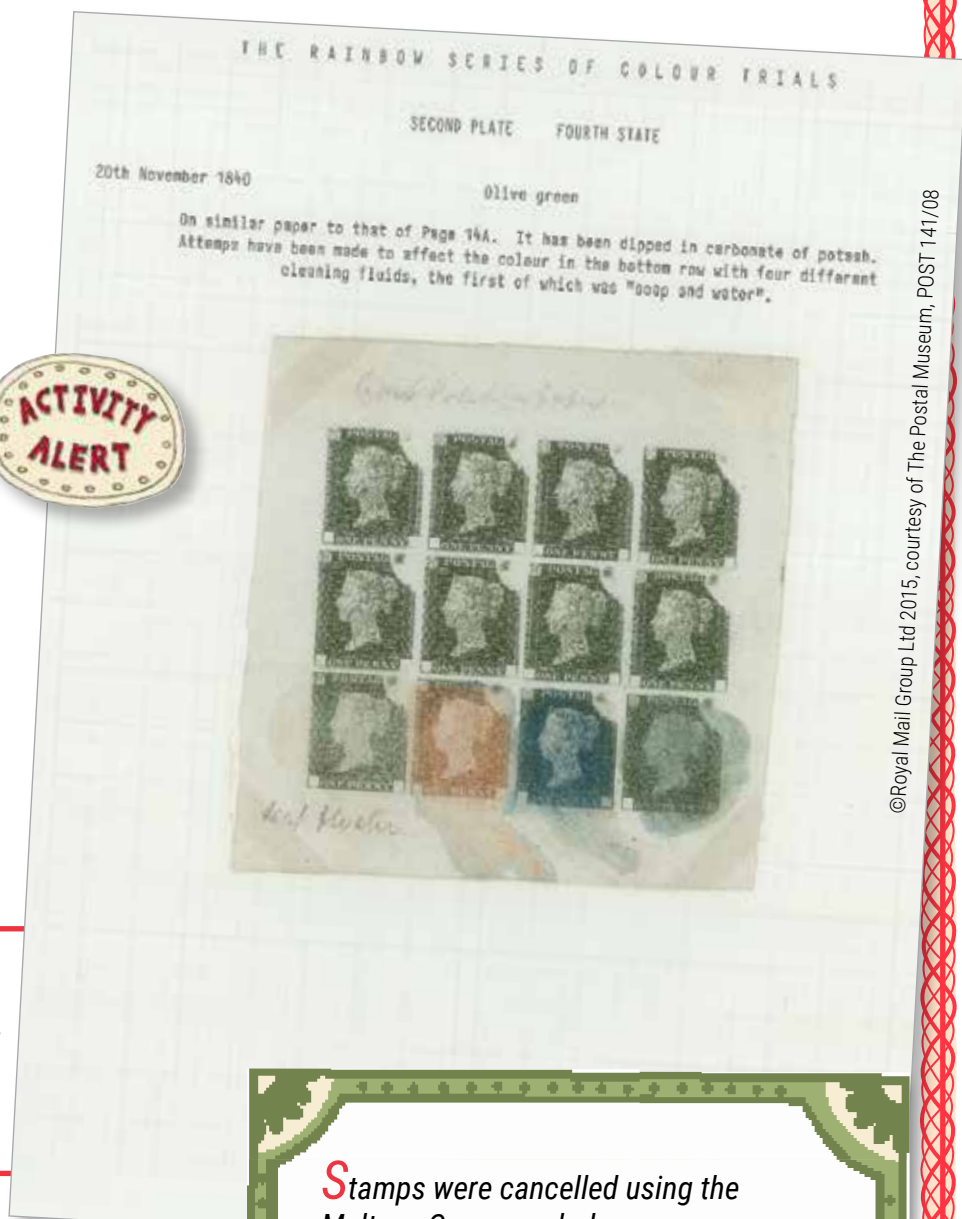
Experiments

Many coloured inks were tried out on the stamp design and cancellation marks (which is why they were called the Rainbow Trials). Scientists were particularly interested in 'fugitive' inks – inks that ran when liquid was applied to them.

This trial on 20 November 1840 uses four different cleaning fluids to change the colour of the ink. The first was soap and water

From black to red

Scientists found that the only ink that couldn't be removed without damaging the stamp was black. So in 1841, the Penny Black stamp was changed to red (the Penny Red stamp). Cancellation marks changed from red to black because black cancellation marks wouldn't show up on black stamps.

The Penny Red stamp

THE RAINBOW SERIES OF COLOUR TRIALS

SECOND PLATE   FOURTH STATE

20th November 1840   Olive green

On similar paper to that of Page 14A. It has been dipped in carbonate of potash. Attempts have been made to affect the colour in the bottom row with four different cleaning fluids, the first of which was "soap and water".

ACTIVITY ALERT

Stamps were cancelled using the Maltese Cross symbol

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Postboxes

Anthony Trollope, a well-known Victorian writer, worked for the General Post Office. He suggested the idea of postboxes so that people wouldn't have to walk too far to post their letters.

From *He Knew He Was Right* by Anthony Trollope, 1869

'Miss Stanbury ... had not the faintest belief that any letter put into one of them (postboxes) *would ever reach its destination'*

Early postboxes were all shapes and sizes

Power POINT
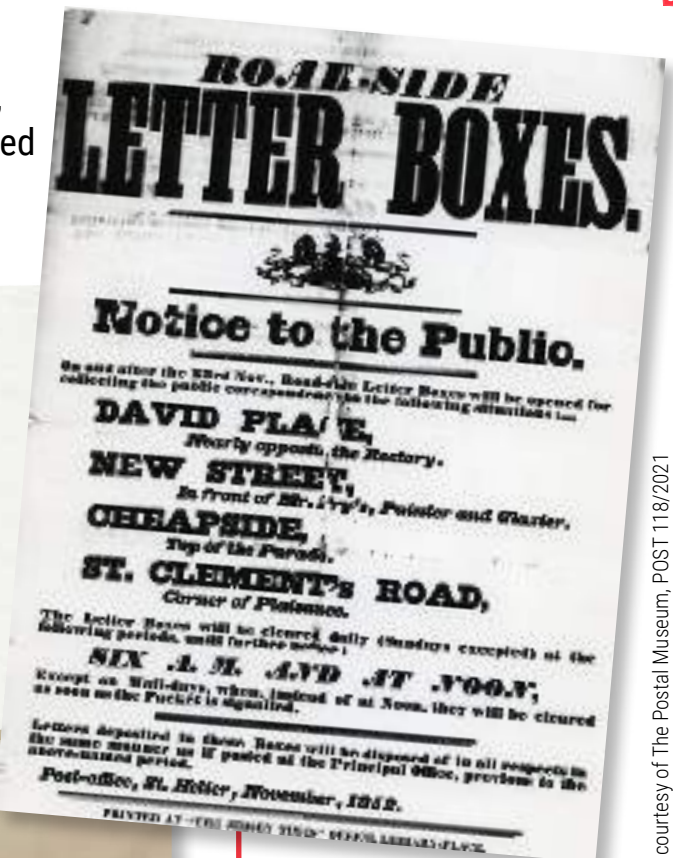
A public notice announcing the first road-side letter boxes in the Channel Islands

ROAD-SIDE LETTER BOXES.

Notice to the Public.

From green to red

The first postboxes could be painted in any colour. People complained that green postboxes were difficult to spot, so in 1874 most were painted bright red — and they have been.

The first postboxes were set up in the Channel Islands in 1852

The first postbox in London was installed in Fleet Street in 1855

WILL'S'S CIGARETTES

FIRST LONDON PILLAR BOX.

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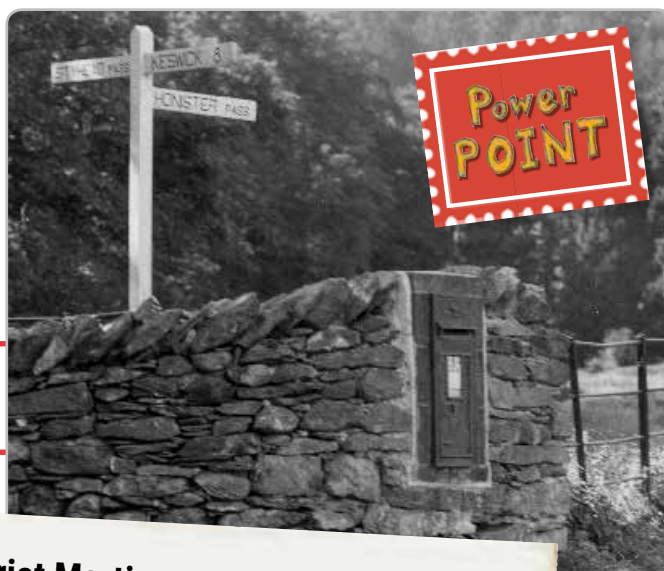heritage lottery fund
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15

Wall letter boxes

Postboxes were expensive. In 1857, the General Post Office designed a small, less expensive letter box that could be built into a wall. The first ones were built in towns and later in country areas as well.

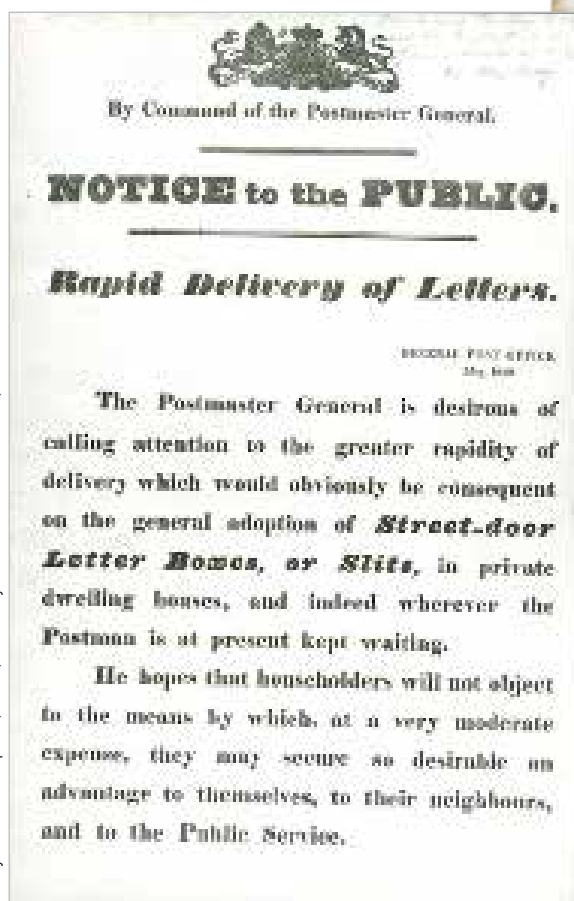*This wall letter box is in Cumbria*

Letter boxes in doors

Letterboxes in doors were invented to make delivering the post more efficient. Some people thought it was a great idea – but others didn't.

Harriet Martineau wrote:
'We are all putting up our letter-boxes on our hall doors with great glee, anticipating the hearing from brothers and sisters – a line or two almost every day'

The Marquis of Londonderry asked:
'...whether the Postmaster-General actually expected that he should cut a slit in his mahogany door'?

By Command of the Postmaster General.

NOTICE to the PUBLIC.

Rapid Delivery of Letters.

The Postmaster General is desirous of calling attention to the greater rapidity of delivery which would obviously be consequent on the general adoption of *Street-door Letter Boxes, or Slits*, in private dwelling houses, and indeed wherever the Postman is at present kept waiting.

He hopes that householders will not object to the means by which, at a very moderate expense, they may secure so desirable an advantage to themselves, to their neighbours, and to the Public Service.

A notice dated 1849, encouraging the public to provide letter boxes in their doors

This is a song about the postman's knock at the door

Waiting for an answer

Before letter boxes, letter carriers had to wait for an answer. They knocked twice and handed letters directly to people.

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Letter carriers

Letter carriers worked hard to deliver thousands of letters posted each day in towns, cities and villages. They walked miles in all weathers, but only a few had uniforms to protect them.

Town posties

Since 1793 London letter carriers had worn a free uniform consisting of a bright red coat and a top hat. They had to look smart when delivering letters to people in their homes.

In 1855, letter carriers in towns were issued with new free uniforms including, for the first time, trousers and a waterproof cape.

We could be suspended from duty if we were found not wearing our complete uniform

W Bokenham, Controller, 8 May 1855 *'Letter Carriers, when delivering Letters are acting as Guards to Post Office Carriages, must appear in their complete official uniforms (Capes when necessary), and be at all times neat and clean in their persons and clothing.'*

Country posties

Country letter carriers didn't receive a free uniform until 1891. They had to walk further and work for longer hours for smaller wages than letter carriers employed in towns. Extra duties included selling stamps and taking letters for posting. But unlike letter carriers in towns, country letter carriers were allowed to take their hats and jackets off if necessary.

©The Postal Museum, 2011-0463/08

A London letter carrier in uniform carrying letters and rolled-up poster. He announced his arrival with a bell

WILLS'S CIGARETTES

ENGLISH RURAL DISTRICT POSTMAN.

A country postman who announced his arrival with a whistle

©The Postal Museum, 2010-0383/24

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Overview of the lesson:

This **Science** activity focuses on the Rainbow Trials and whether black was the best colour to use for the first stamp.

*T*his trial shows stamps printed on various type of paper

Before undertaking this activity, pupils are likely to have:

◆ Discovered that General Post Office officials were worried about the reuse of stamps because of the loss of revenue
◆ Found out about the 'Rainbow Trials'.

Extension activities could include:

◆ **Science, D&T:** Trying the same experiment with a modern postage stamps
◆ **Citizenship:** Discussing the fact that Britain is the only country in the world not to show the name of the country on its stamps (obligatory for all other countries); should British stamps still have the head of the reigning monarch on them today? And if not, how could the country be represented?
◆ **Literacy:** Writing letters from 'scientists' to General Post Office officials about the experiments and offering recommendations.

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Did you know?

... The Twopenny Blue stamp was issued for heavier letters

POSTAGE
TWO PENCE

To do:

You will need: tubes of 'Smarties'; coffee filter paper/ blotting paper/thick kitchen paper; straws; plates; water

Success criteria

By the end of the project:
◆ All pupils will know how and why the Penny Black stamp was changed to the Penny Red stamp
◆ Most pupils will understand the meaning of fugitive inks

Key terms
◆ Revenue ◆ The Rainbow Trials ◆ Fugitive inks

Imagine you are a Victorian scientist. Your task is to find out if black was the best colour to use for the world's first postage stamp.

Try this:
1 Put the filter paper on a plate
2 Put a 'Smartie' in the centre of the paper
3 Using a straw, put drops of water on the 'Smartie' until the patch of water is about 5cm across
**4** Now repeat the same test with another colour

A fair test
◆ Check that you use exactly the same amount of water for each test

Result
◆ Which colour runs the most?
◆ Which colour runs the least?

What happens?
◆ This experiment works because different dyes in Smarties travel at different speeds and become separated.
◆ The speeds vary because of the different sizes and shapes of the colour particles that are used to make up the dye. The heaviest dye particles travel less than the lightest dye particles.
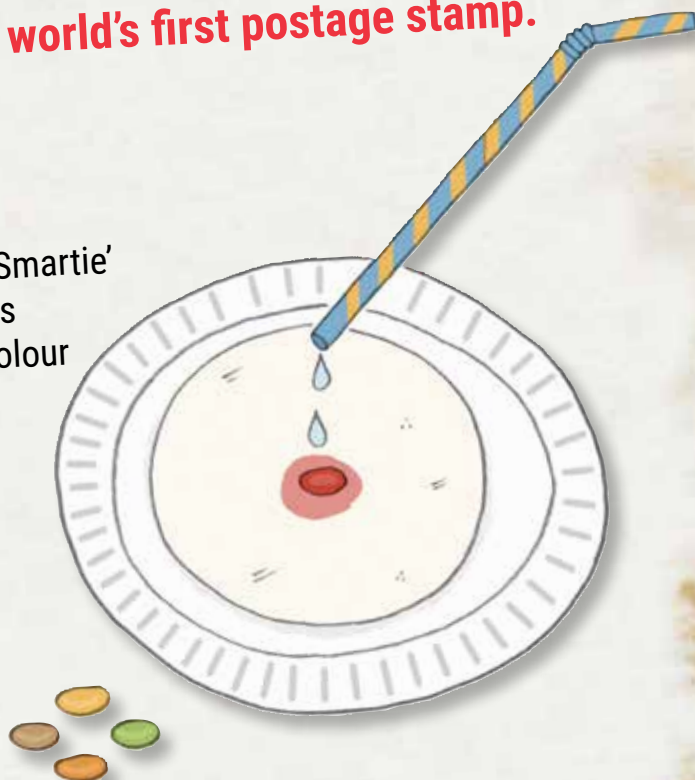
Evaluate

Are you sure your test was fair? . . . .
. . . .

Could you improve on the experiment? . . . .
. . . .

Would it work as well or better with felt-tips? . . . .
. . . .

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ACTIVITY 4: HOW MANY PENNIES?

Overview of the lesson:
This activity is linked to **Maths** and **Citizenship** and compares the cost of sending a letter in Victorian times with today.

*P*eople bought letter scales so that they could check the weight of their letters

©The Postal Museum, OB1996.251

Before undertaking this activity, pupils are likely to have:
◆ Talked about old and decimal currency. Pre decimalisation in 1971, money was divided into pounds, shillings and pence; there were 20 shillings in £1, 12 pennies in a shilling, 240 pennies in £1
◆ Discussed what one (new) penny could buy today
◆ Found out what one (old) penny could buy in Victorian times
◆ Researched how a postman sorts his deliveries today and compared it to a Victorian postman whose duties included taking letters for posting and selling stamps
◆ Discovered that people bought domestic letter scales to weigh their letters.

©The Postal Museum

*L*etter sorting in Victorian times

Extension activities could include:
◆ **D&T:** Design a simple balance suitable for weighing a letter
◆ **Citizenship:** Researching postal rates today; debating the way we communicate today and the up- and downsides of social media
◆ **History:** Visit a local sorting office to see how letters are sorted and delivered today; invite a local postman into school and interview him/her on his/her day

Success criteria
By the end of the project:
◆ All will be aware of the cost of sending a letter in Victorian times relative to the value today
◆ All will be familiar with the differences between pre-decimal and decimal currency
◆ Some may want to find out more about the cost of living in Victorian times.

Key terms
◆ Decimalisation
◆ Letter scales

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LOTTERY FUNDED

When the Penny Back stamp was introduced, the cost of sending a letter cost one old penny. Do you know how much it costs to send a letter today? Let's find out!

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Name	Date

1 Use the internet to find out how much it costs to send a first class letter in the UK.

It costs . . . .

Does it cost the same to send a letter many miles away as it does locally?

Yes/No

3 Does the cost of postage depend on the size of the envelope?

I found out that . . . .

. . . .

. . . .

. . . .

. . . .

. . . .

2 What is the difference between first class and second class postage?

The difference is . . . .

. . . .

Did you know?

... Victorian thieves put sticky tar onto the end of string and fished for letters through the slot in letterboxes!

4 Imagine that you are going to send a letter to a friend who lives in another country.

First of all choose a country.
Then find out how you would send a letter.

My friend lives in . . . .

It costs . . . . to send a letter there

It will take . . . . days to get there

The Postal Museum

Royal Mail

heritage lottery fund
LOTTERY FUNDED

SENDING AND DELIVERING

MORE MAIL

The introduction of the Penny Postage saw a huge increase in the amount of mail sent in the 1800s. In 1870 postcards were introduced. They became very popular and further increased the amount of mail being sent.

Year	Mail sent
1839	76 million
1840	169 million
1850	347 million
1860	564 million
1870	863 million
1880	1,293 million
1890	1,940 million
1900	2,740 million

Big benefits

Penny Postage brought many new opportunities for everyone - from bakers to bankers. Trade grew, people such as scientists, writers and artists wrote large numbers of letters about their work, community and religious societies grew larger and the British Empire was united through the worldwide postal system.

Power POINT

*S*t Martin's Le Grand, the headquarters of the General Post Office in London and the first purpose built Post Office in Britain

©Royal Mail Group Ltd, 2015, courtesy of The Postal Museum, POST 118/5646

Money, money, money!

In 1881, the Post Office Savings Bank was introduced to encourage people to save money – especially poorer people. Postal orders were launched to enable people to send small amounts of money through the post.

The Book Post

Rowland, once a headmaster, persuaded the government to allow a Book Post to encourage people to educate themselves.

*I*nside a Post Office offering several different services such as postal orders, postage stamps and letters registered to customers

FAMILIAR SCENES FOR OBJECT LESSONS
A POST OFFICE

©Royal Mail Group Ltd 2015, courtesy of The Postal Museum, POST 2009_0057

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Keeping in touch

Cheap postage meant more people learnt to read and write. Sending messages by post became very popular and greetings cards were produced with words to help people express their feelings.

©The Postal Museum, OB1997.8

*T*his picture by J.P. Hall was painted in 1859. The expressions on the young ladies' faces show how important the post was in people's lives

ACTIVITY ALERT

©The Postal Museum, 2006-0285/4

*I*n this letter, a father uses pictures and words to send a Christmas message to his son

ACTIVITY ALERT

*H*enry Cole, a great supporter of postal reform, sent the world's first commercially printed Christmas card in 1843

©The Postal Museum, 2003-0476

Power POINT

Delivering the post

In 1850, ten years after the introduction of the Penny Black stamp, British people sent 347 million letters. Postboxes were emptied up to ten times a day. Just one hour after posting, letters were collected for sorting, so that they were received on the same day!

But people living in isolated places still had to walk miles to collect their post. It was not until 1897, the year of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, that everyone was entitled to a postal delivery to their house – a service we still have today.

©The Postal Museum, E10432

*T*his plate showing collection times is from one of the first London postboxes

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Mail coaches

Until the arrival of the railways in the 1830s, letters were carried by mail coach, horse or on foot. The guard was the only General Post Office employee on the coach. He sat at the back on top of the letters and was heavily armed with two pistols in case of attack by robbers!

©The Postal Museum, OB1994.225.1

The average speed for mail coaches was 7/8mph in summer and 5mph in winter

The sorting carriage on the North Eastern Railway, 1881

©Royal Mail Group Ltd 2015, courtesy of The Postal Museum, POST 118/0792

Delivered by train

In 1830, letters were carried by rail for the first time, between Manchester and Liverpool, less than two months after that railway had opened. Trains sped up the delivery of mail. Letters that had taken three months to reach far off places in the British Empire, such as India, now took just 35 days.

There were often complaints about late arrivals and breakdowns but despite delays, mail by train was far faster than mail coach. The last mail coach service from London ran in 1846.

©The Postal Museum, POST 118/0489

Power POINT

The Travelling Post Office

The Travelling Post Office (TPO) was introduced in 1838 to speed up delivery. Letters were cancelled and sorted in the sorting carriage while the train was on the move. The TPO had a net on the side of the sorting carriage to scoop up mail bags from the side of the railway track.

The Travelling Post Office used on the London & Birmingham Railway, 1839
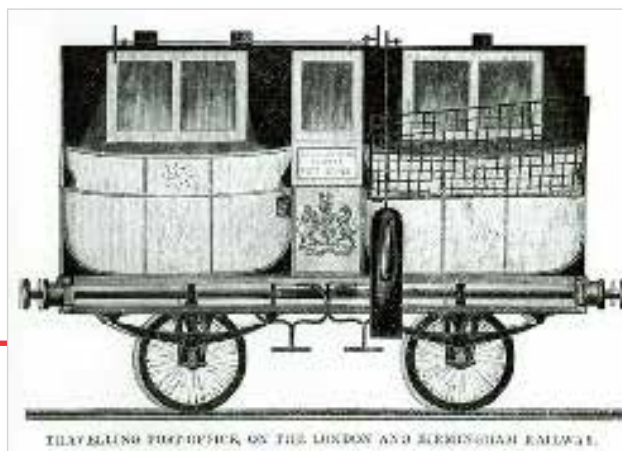
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The Pneumatic Railway

In 1855, Rowland wrote to the Postmaster General about ideas for moving mail more quickly, underground. The London Pneumatic Despatch Company built a railway with carriages that could be sucked through narrow underground tunnels using massive fans attached to powerful engines at either end.

*T*he opening of the pneumatic tunnel at Holborn, London
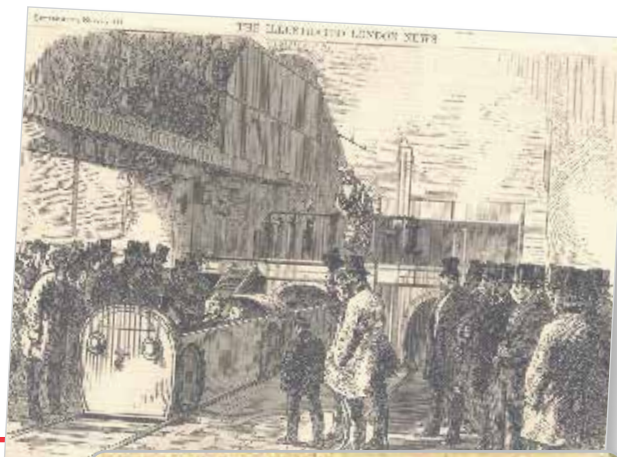
*I*t was only supposed to be used for mail, but people loved to climb aboard the pneumatic railway before being blown through the tunnel at 30mph!

*T*his map shows the network of tunnels planned for the pneumatic railway. The tunnels were never finished

Was it a success?

In 1863, trials began to move mail between Euston railway station and sorting offices in central London using this system. But the pneumatic railway didn't reduce delivery times and in 1874 it closed.

The Mail Rail

Many years later in 1927, another method of moving mail underground opened. It operated successfully until 2003 when it closed. It was known as the Mail Rail and used driverless electric cars to move mail under London's streets. At its peak, over four million letters were carried in this way, every day.

*A*ccelerator carriages introduced in 1829 were designed for postmen to jump off without stopping. They carried letter carriers from the General Post Office to the start of their delivery route in London

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On your bike!

Bicycles became popular during the 1860s and postmen used them to deliver mail. In country areas, postmen had to supply their own but they were paid an allowance to keep their bikes in good order.

This 1898 advert in The Postman's Gazette encourages postmen to buy good, strong bicycles

Tricycles

Tricycles were first trialled in Coventry in 1880. They were often used to carry heavier loads.
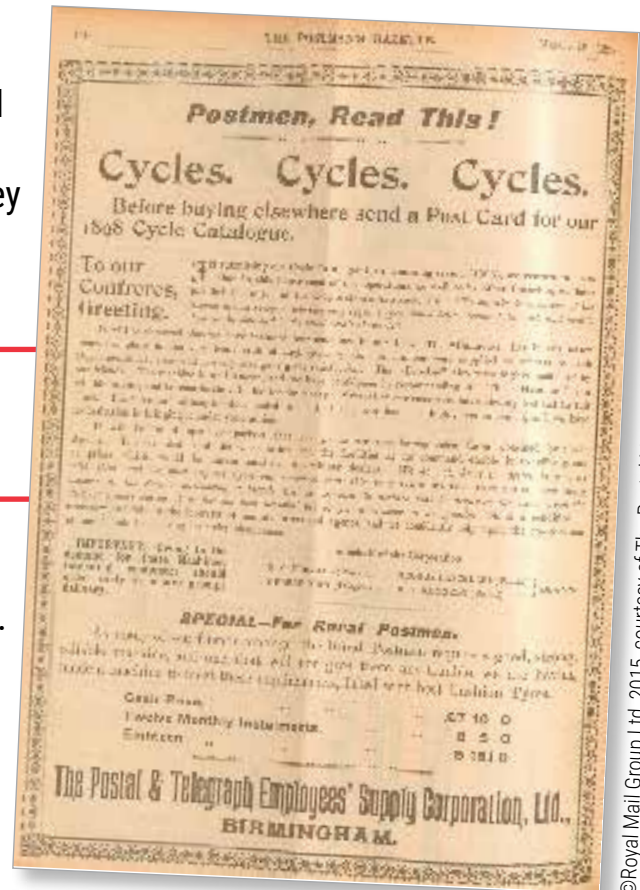
Power POINT

A tricycle with a big basket for heavier loads

'Hen and Chicks'

In 1882 the General Post Office experimented with five-wheeled machines known as Centre Cycles or 'Hen and Chicks'.

'Hen and Chicks' had large, heavy baskets, proved too difficult to steer and wore out postmen's trousers! They had one large wheel (the hen) and four smaller wheels (the chicks)

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Delivered by sea

Before 1815, letters were sent abroad on packet boats (small cargo boats). By 1840, many big commercial shipping lines such as Cunard and the P&O had contracts with the General Post Office.

Daily packet lists recorded all the journeys on a particular day

Power POINT

The Great Western

In 1837, the first steam ship, the Great Western, built by Isambard Kingdom Brunel, was launched carrying mail to America.

This letter was sent from Bristol to Baltimore, USA on the Great Western on 15 November 1839

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PS Great Western 1838

The Great Western steam ship

Ocean Penny Postage

Sending a letter by sea was expensive. Some people said this made it hard for poor people who had emigrated to the British colonies to stay in touch with their relatives in Britain. So in 1879, the Ocean Penny Postage was introduced.

Unloading mail from America at Mount Pleasant sorting office in central London

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Overview of the lesson:

This activity tasks pupils to make a pop-up greetings card, a postcard or another type of card. It focuses primarily on **D&T**.

Before undertaking this activity, pupils are likely to have:

◆ Talked about how the Penny Black stamp generated a huge amount of social mail in the 19th century
◆ Researched the online archives examples of Victorian cards
◆ Thought about different types of social mail e.g. postcards, birthday, Valentine, anniversary, mourning, New Year and Christmas cards
◆ Discussed different formats such as novelty shaped cards and pop-ups
◆ Thought about words to put on the card.

©The Postal Museum

'**M**y School' painting, 1987. This competition was judged by Roald Dahl. It was entered by over 19,500 primary school children. The winning entry was considered for a special stamp design in 1989.

Extension activities could include:

◆ **History, Literacy:** Researching The Postal Museum collections to find social mail and related resources from other periods e.g. the First World War
◆ **Maths, Citizenship:** Weighing the card to find out how much it would cost to send today
◆ **Geography:** Using maps to explore ways to send cards from, say, your school to Australia
◆ **ICT, Music:** Develop animated/musical cards inspired by The Postal Museum collections using computer programmes such as Scratch

To do:

◆ Print off examples of various types of cards. For more greetings cards see Sending and Delivering Powerpoint
◆ Assemble art materials such as thin coloured card, rulers, white paper, scissors, collage materials, felt-tips, glue, etc.

Key terms

◆ Penny Post
◆ Social mail

Success criteria

◆ All pupils will know that postal reform generated a huge amount of social mail
◆ All pupils will be aware of different types of social mail introduced in Victorian times
◆ Some pupils will want to explore and design other types of social mail.

The Postal Museum
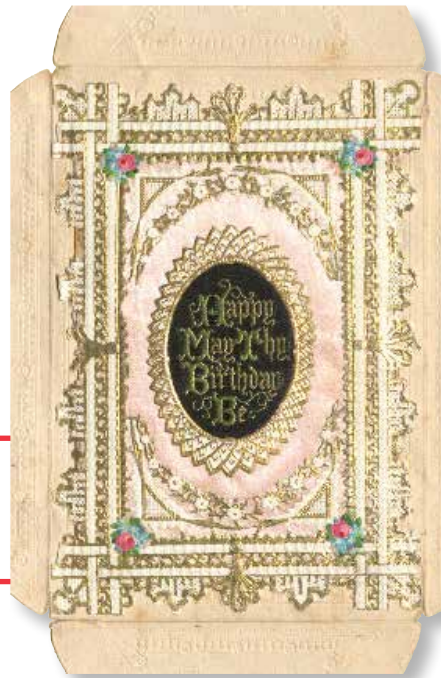
Royal Mail

heritage lottery fund
LOTTERY FUNDED

When the Penny Postage was introduced, cheap postage meant that everyone could send a letter. More people learnt to read and write. Many new ways of sending messages, such as greetings cards, became popular. Cards with pictures of postmen and postboxes were especially fashionable!

Victorian card with child postman, c1860-1890

©The Postal Museum, 0B2006.0885/7

Post box shaped Christmas card, printed in Berlin c1869-1890

Happy Birthday card made from scraps of fabric, c1870

©The Postal Museum, OB1995.162/57

FOUND NEAR
ST MARTIN'S-LE-GRAND.

©The Postal Museum, 2006-0285/5

Did you know?

... that people often gave gifts and tips to their postman at Christmas

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POP UP

Your task is to design a POP-UP greetings card

Things to think about
◆ The type of greetings card you want to make e.g. a birthday or Christmas card, or a postcard
◆ Who you will send it to
◆ What shape you want to 'pop up'
◆ How you will make the card
◆ The materials you will need to make your card
◆ The words you will use on your card

To make
1 Cut out a two rectangles of card, one coloured and one white. Fold the coloured one in half
2 Design and cut out a shape from the sheet of white card
3 Glue half of your shape to one side of your folded coloured card so that when the card is open your design pops up above the top of your card
4 Write your message

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ACTIVITY 6: 'THE COUNTRY LETTER CARRIER'
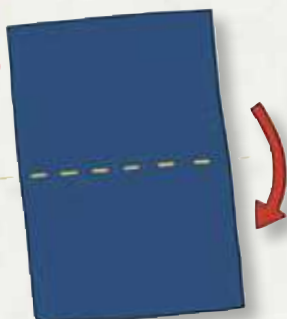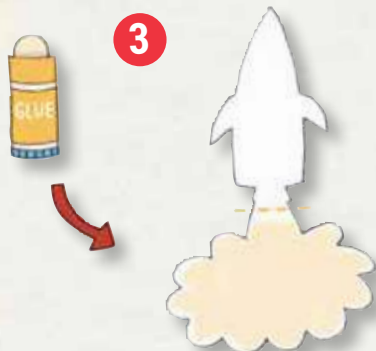
Overview of the lesson:

Paintings that told stories (narrative paintings) were very popular in Victorian times. The Postal Museum collection has several that were inspired by the General Post Office (see Sending and Delivering Powerpoint for more examples). This activity uses *The Country Letter Carrier*, painted in 1859 by J.P. Hall, linking primarily to **Literacy and History**.

Before undertaking this activity, pupils are likely to have:

◆ Discovered that Victorian narrative paintings were the television soap stories of their day, illustrating everyday tales of city or country life
◆ Examined the painting, discussed the story the artist is illustrating in the painting
◆ Described details such as the role of the rural letter carrier, (rural letter carriers often had to walk further, work longer hours for smaller wages than town letter carriers), and whether this letter carrier reflects these facts
◆ Thought about the relationship between the figures and used the internet to find out whether their clothes are suitable for country people
◆ Compared the scene with historic images of country villages in Victorian times and the rural postman on page 17 to think about whether the scene is realistic or not.

Extension activities could include:

◆ **Literacy, History:** Looking at how the General Post Office was described in 19th-century literature e.g. Charles Dickens, Anthony Trollop, William Makepeace Thackeray or Jane Austen
◆ **Literacy:** Sourcing contemporary children's books e.g. *The Jolly Postman* by Allan and Janet Ahlberg (see page 48)
◆ **Art & Design, History:** Using other Victorian narrative paintings in the collection for storytelling and historical evidence (see page xx for further details); creating examples of other types of artwork e.g. illustrations for posters and cards.

To do:

◆ Download good-quality A4 colour copies of *The Country Letter Carrier* for each carousel group
◆ Assemble art materials
◆ Source a simple animation programme such as Scratch or Kodu

Key terms

◆ Narrative painting
◆ Letter carrier
◆ Realism

Success criteria

By the end of the project:
◆ All pupils will be familiar with the term 'narrative paintings'
◆ All pupils will know that the General Post Office was a source of inspiration for artists and writers

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The Country Letter Carrier is a story painting by J.P. Hall. It shows a letter carrier delivering a letter to three girls. Receiving a letter was very exciting in Victorian times, as this painting shows.

YOUR TASK
We don't know anything about the real story. Your task is to invent one!

Did you know?

... On 1 August 1883, Miss Geraldine Maine of 2 Belsize Park Gardens, London, received the first Post Office parcel

Things to think about
◆ Do you think the people in the painting are rich or poor? Why do you think this?
◆ To whom do you think the letter carrier is trying to deliver the letter?
◆ What are the two girls on the left trying to do?
◆ What do you think the girl on the right is thinking?
◆ Who do you think the letter is from? Why do you think this?
◆ What do you think woman sitting at the table is thinking?
◆ And finally... what do you think happened next?

To make
Use one of the templates to describe your story in any way you want e.g.
◆ A cartoon
◆ A written story
◆ A stop-start animation
◆ A painting

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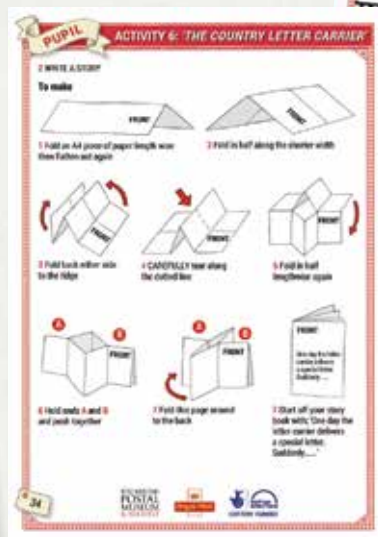
1 DRAW A CARTOON

One day the letter carrier delivers a special letter. Suddenly......

2 WRITE A STORY

To make

1 Fold an A4 piece of paper lengthwise then flatten out again
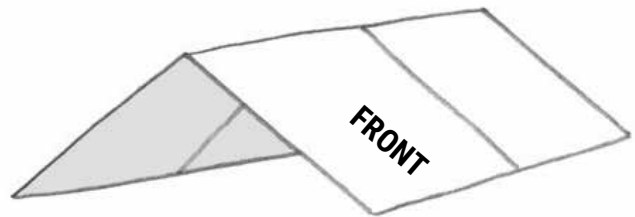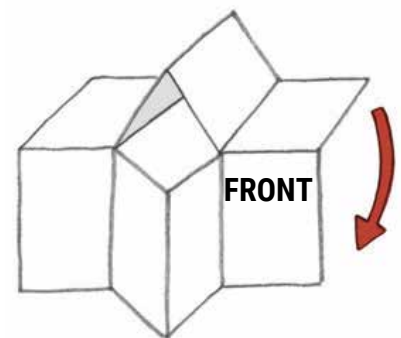

2 Fold in half along the shorter width
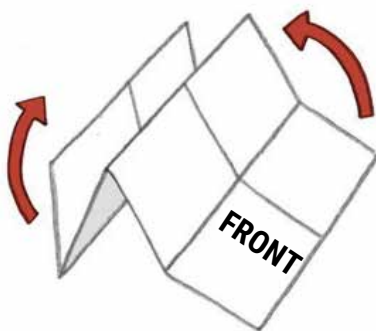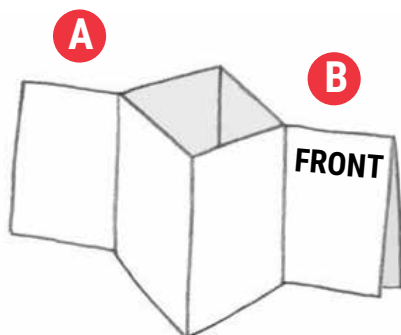

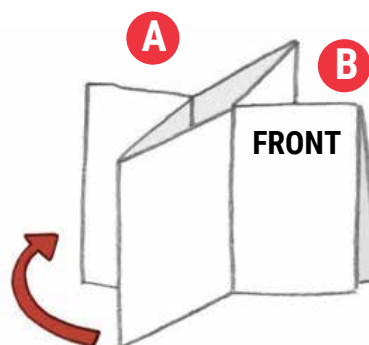**3** Fold back either side to the ridge
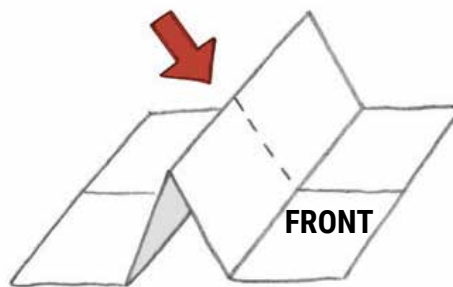
4 CAREFULLY tear along the dotted line

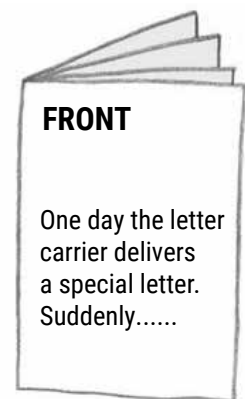**5** Fold in half lengthwise again

6 Hold ends **A** and **B** and push together


7 Fold this page around to the back

One day the letter carrier delivers a special letter. Suddenly......

7 Start off your story book with; 'One day the letter carrier delivers a special letter. Suddenly......'

3 MAKE AN ANIMATION

FRAME 1

'One day the letter carrier delivers a special letter. Suddenly......'

FRAME 2

FRAME 3

FRAME 4

FRAME 5

FRAME 6

FRAME 7

FRAME 8

FRAME 9

FRAME 10

FRAME 11

FRAME 12

3 PAINT A PICTURE

This painting is called

by
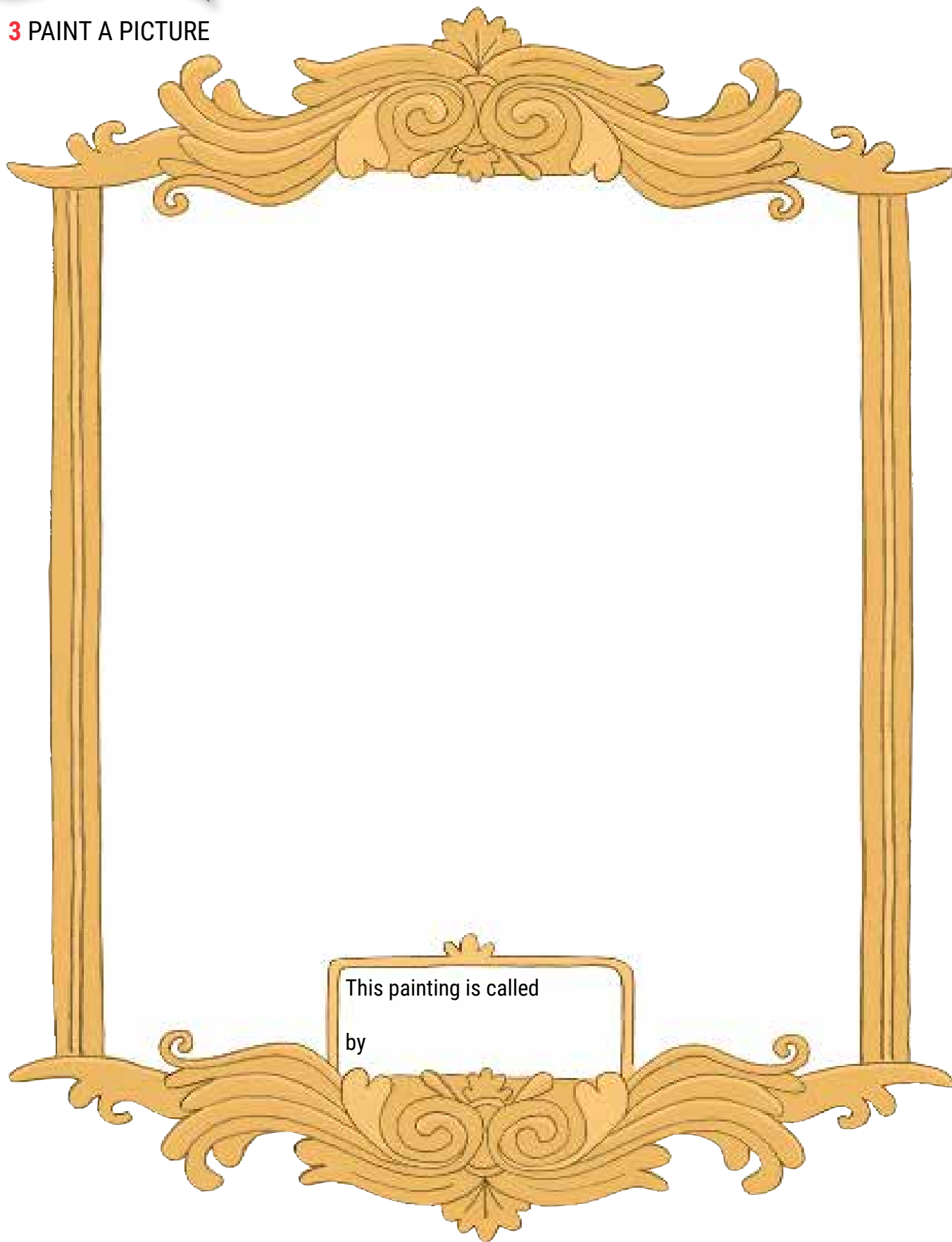
ROWLAND HILL'S LEGACY

AN IDEA THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

Rowland's postal reforms were enormously important because they changed the way people communicated with each other. It was as world-changing as the arrival of the internet in the late 20th century.

Prime Minister William Gladstone, September 1879
'...(Hill's) great plan had run like wildfire through the civilised world: never perhaps was a local invention and improvement applied in the lifetime of its author to the advantages of such vast multitudes of his fellow creatures'

A hero

Rowland Hill received many honours for his work. He was made a knight in 1860. He died in 1879 and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Power POINT

From a ceremony to honour Rowland Hill with the Freedom of the City of London, 1879
*'May your remaining days be consoled by the thought that your name and services can never been forgotten'*

This statue of Rowland Hill stands outside the former General Post Office headquarters in London

H.W. Hill (Rowland Hill's grandson)
'His name... (is) among the very foremost... who made the greatest contribution to the development of science, literature, and commerce whilst ... vastly increasing the sum of happiness of the poorest of the poor'
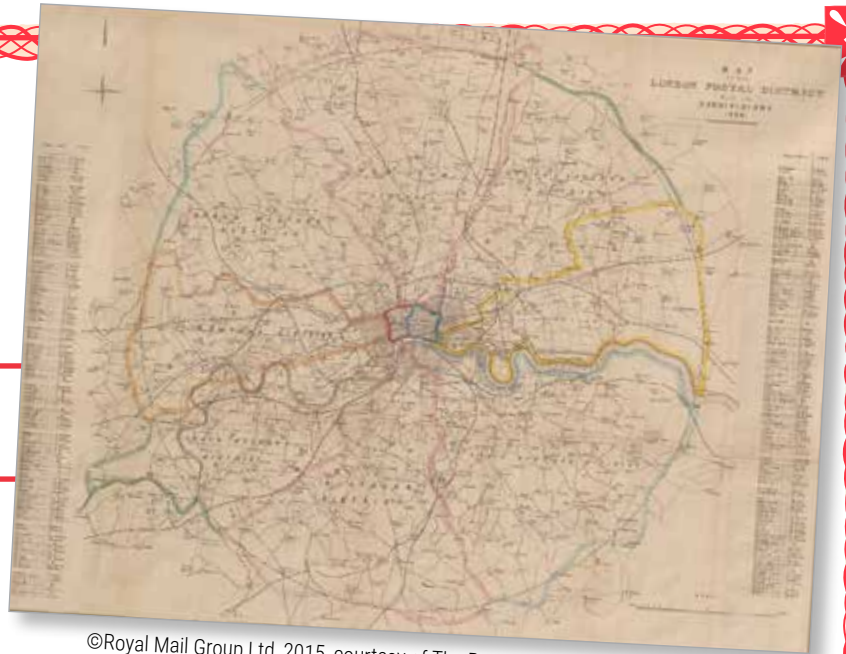
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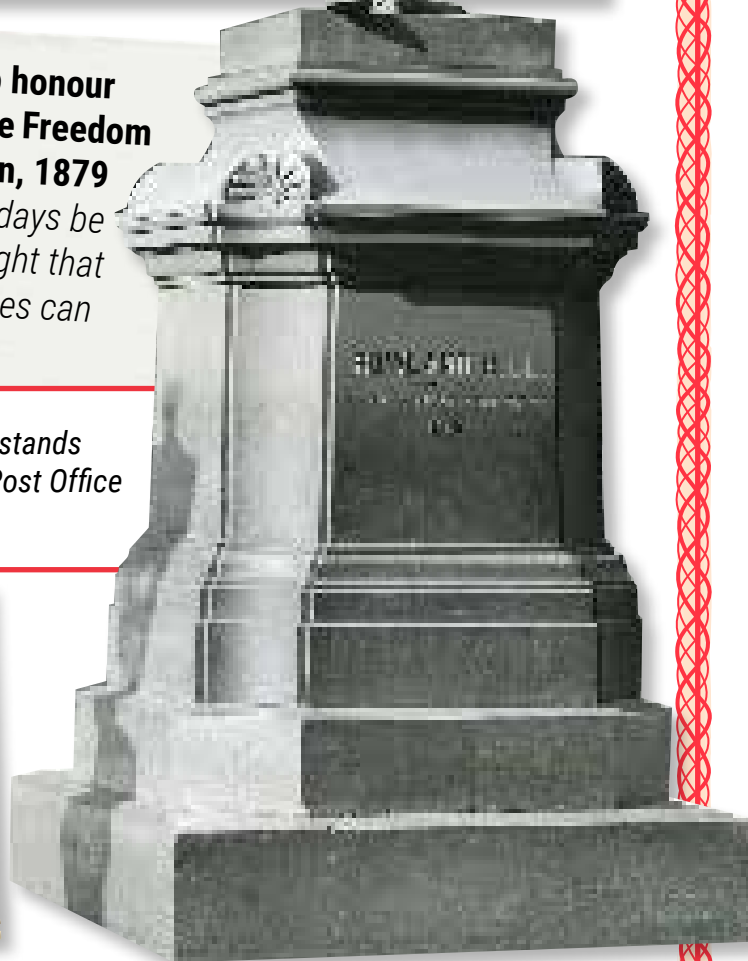
Long-lasting ideas

Besides the introduction of postage stamps, Rowland introduced many other ideas familiar to us today.

*M*ap of London postal districts, 1856

Postcodes

When Rowland became Secretary to the Post Office in 1854, he introduced postcodes to London. Rowland's plan was to divide London into 10 postal districts with letter carriers based at new District Offices. Other big cities were divided into postal regions in the 1860s, but elsewhere postcodes were not introduced until after the Second World War.

The parcel post

In 1883, the General Post Office started delivering parcels. Parcels weighing up to 1lb (under 500g) cost 3d (old pennies).

*T*his cartoon of the first parcel post in The Illustrated London News shows the extra work involved in delivering parcels
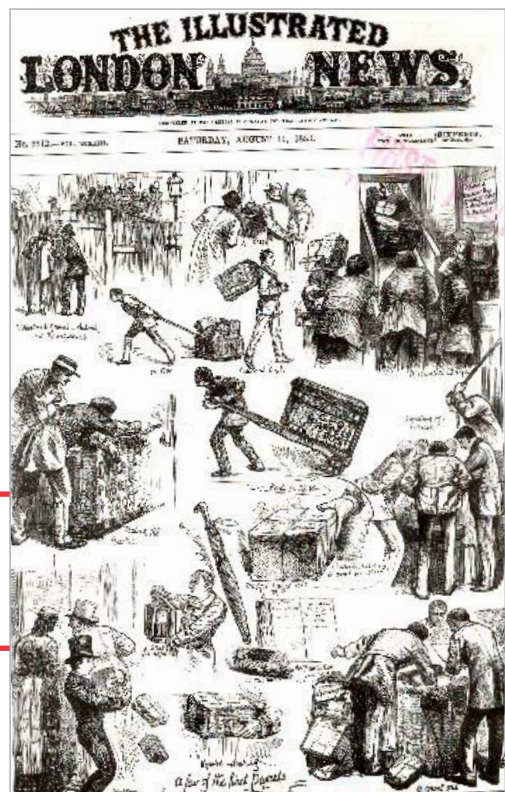
*W*angford Post Office. c1900 with horse-drawn van outside

Horse-drawn vans

In towns and rural areas, horse-drawn vans were used for delivering the mail. In big towns a typical day would begin with drivers using a large van on a morning round, a midday run with a smaller delivery van, and an evening round with a one-horse letter cart.

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Post Offices

By 1875, over a billion letters were sent each year. Many new Post Offices were needed and by 1900 there were 21,940 in the UK. Post Offices were places where people met to drop off and collect letters and to swap news and gossip.

Cardiff Post Office built in 1886. Post Offices were often very grand buildings

Power POINT

©Royal Mail Group Ltd, 2015 courtesy of The Postal Museum

©Royal Mail Group Ltd, 2015, courtesy of The Postal Museum

Post Offices were opened in very remote places. This is Loch Ranza Post Office, Isle of Arran c1900

Postboxes

The number of postboxes grew too. The cipher on the postbox shows which king or queen was on the throne when it was installed.

ACTIVITY ALERT

©The Postal Museum, OB1994.45

The cipher of Edward VIII is very rare because he was king for less than a year in 1936

Post women

Until the First World War, most postal work was done by men, but some women were employed as letter carriers and post mistresses. In 1908, Mrs Elizabeth Dickson retired as a country post woman after more than 30 years service. It was said that she had never once been late for duty and had only taken off 14 days for illness.

©Royal Mail Group Ltd, 2015, courtesy of The Postal Museum, St Martin's Le Grand, 1909, POST 92

Elizabeth Dickson walked thirteen and a half miles each day - a distance equal to more than five times round the world!

The **Postal** Museum

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Stamps around the world

Since the Penny Black stamp was introduced, stamps have spread around the world. But Britain is the only country that doesn't display its name on stamps.

An early Canadian stamp, 1898

British stamps today

There are two types of British stamps. Standard stamps are called 'definitives' and show an image of the head of the reigning king or queen. 'Commemorative' stamps mark important events or achievements.

ACTIVITY ALERT

This plaster head of Queen Elizabeth II was made by Arnold Machin and is used on definitive stamps today

The first commemorative stamp was issued in 1924 to mark the British Empire exhibition

Rowland Hill and his postal reforms have been celebrated on several commemorative postage stamps

Queen Victoria dies

By the time of Queen Victoria's death in 1901, new inventions such as electricity and photography had changed the way people in Britain lived. Some people think that one of the most important inventions was the Penny Black stamp because for the first time, everyone could afford to communicate with each other.

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ACTIVITY 7: THE ROUTE TO THE POSTBOX

Overview of the lesson:

This activity relates to **Geography** and **Citizenship**. Pupils are given the task of making a map of the route to the nearest postbox.

Before undertaking this activity, pupils are likely to have:

◆ Talked about maps for different purposes (physical, tourist and political); terminology (scale, grids, coordinates)
◆ Learnt how to use compasses, coordinates and measuring equipment
◆ Found out about different types of postboxes e.g. wall mounted, free-standing
◆ Thought about why postboxes were introduced and when
◆ Looked at the design of postboxes and the information included on them including ciphers.

Extension activities could include:

◆ **Literacy:** Looking at the Post Office in literature (see pages 15, 16 and 50); invite an older person to talk about writing letters e.g. in the Second World War; writing a letter describing the route to the postbox as in the letter on page 11)
◆ **Local History:** Used the internet to research early postboxes in your area; linking this with the historical development and growth of your local area.

To do:

◆ Locate the nearest postbox and plan a visit to it
◆ Assemble equipment e.g. compasses and measuring devices; download copies of a large-scale map to include area to the postbox; source paper and drawing materials.

Success criteria

By the end of the project:
◆ All will be aware of different types of maps and their functions
◆ All will be aware of the purpose and location of the nearest postbox to the school
◆ Some may want look for other types of postboxes in the area.

Key terms

◆ Location
◆ Cipher
◆ Postbox
◆ Letter box
◆ Free-standing

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Your granny has just moved to be nearer to you. She likes writing letters to her old friends. She doesn't know the route to the postbox so you must make a map for her to use.

Did you know?

… In 2012, some postboxes were painted gold to commemorate gold medal Olympians and Paralympians

©Royal Mail Group Ltd, 2015

1 Start at your school. Note down things **YOU** think might help her to find the way to the postbox. For example:

- A post office
- Shops
- Trees
- Brightly painted front doors
- Railings
- Lamp posts
- Street signs
- Bus stops
- Public seats
- Names of streets

This map should help me find the nearest postbox

2 At school, mark things on your map which will help your granny to find the postbox. Remember to note down details e.g. the colour of a front door and where you saw it, numbers on a bus stop, the names of shops.

AIR MAIL

Did you know?

… In 1919, the first public overseas airmail service was launched between London and Paris. Airmail postboxes were painted blue.

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Now you must collect information about the postbox.

THE POSTBOX

Name	Date

1 The postbox is located ...
(write the name of the street or road)

．．．．．．．．．．．．．．．．．．．．．．．．．．．．． ．

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3 Which king or queen was on the throne when the postbox was placed here?

Queen Victoria (1837-1901)
King Edward VII (1901-1910)
King George V (1910-1936)
King Edward VIII (1936)
King George VI (1936-1952)
Queen Elizabeth II (1952-)

I know this because ...

．．．．．．．．．．．．．．．．．．．．．．．．．．．．．．．．．．．．． ．

2 Is it free-standing or set into a wall?
It is ...

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4 What other information can you find out from the postbox?

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THE POSTBOX

5 Draw the postbox here

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Overview of the lesson:

The design of the Penny Black stamp was based on an engraving of Victoria when she was 15. Stamps to commemorate the 175th anniversary of the stamp retained the same image enlarged, with a smaller profile of Queen Elizabeth II. This activity, linked to **D&T** and **Science**, shows pupils how to make a silhouette to create the same effect.

Before undertaking this activity, pupils are likely to have:

◆ Looked the features of the Penny Black stamp including borders, background and value
◆ Found out about concerns surrounding forgery and the elements that were introduced to prevent it (see page 14)
◆ Discussed Queen Victoria's reaction to the design (see page 13)
◆ Talked about silhouettes (the art of cutting paper profiles)
◆ Discovered that silhouettes were very popular before photography became affordable in the 1850s
◆ Thought about how profiles/shadows might be created.

Extension activities could include:

◆ **Art & Design:** Comparing the elements of the Penny Black stamp with contemporary British stamp design (the Penny Black does not state the country of origin because it was the first postage stamp, a tradition which still exists today; all British stamps since have had the profile of the reigning king or queen)
◆ **Art & Design:** Designing stamps to commemorate the 175th anniversary of the Penny Black stamp
◆ **Art & Design:** Researching artists who have designed modern commemorative British stamps e.g. David Gentleman, David Hockney, Andy Goldsworthy – and school children who designed Christmas stamps in 1998
◆ **History:** Researching The Postal Museum collections to look at the design of stamps from the other countries which introduced stamps shortly after the Penny Black
◆ **Literacy:** Using the web and other sources to find out the origin of the word 'silhouette'.

To do:

◆ Assemble equipment: large sheets of white paper; sheets of black paper; thin white card; sticky tape, soft pencils, scissors, glue, a strong light source e.g. a desk lamp
◆ Divide the class into pairs.

Success criteria

By the end of the project:
◆ All pupils will be familiar with the design elements of the Penny Black stamp
◆ All pupils will be familiar with the way in which the Penny Black was conceived
◆ Some pupils may wish to create a silhouette using photographs and Photoshop.

Key terms

◆ Silhouette
◆ Profile
◆ Light source
◆ Value

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ACTIVITY 8: DESIGN A STAMP

The design of the Penny Black stamp was based on a profile of Queen Victoria's head made when she was just 15 years old.

The same profile was used on stamps until I died aged 81!

**YOUR TASK is to design a stamp based on a silhouette of YOUR head.**

Things to think about
◆ Ways in which you could make an accurate drawing of your profile
◆ What you should add to your silhouette to complete the design of the stamp e.g. borders, colours, value
◆ How you can tell the value at a glance e.g. size and shape

To make a silhouette
1 Tape a large sheet of white paper on to a wall
2 Ask your partner to sit sideways on a stool so that their profile creates a shadow on the paper
3 Using a soft pencil trace the outline of the shadow on to the paper
4 Remove the paper from the wall
5 Cut round the profile to make a template for the silhouette
6 Trace round the template on to black paper to make a silhouette
7 Stick it on to thin white card
8 Now add colour, borders, value and background to complete your stamp.

ONE PENNY
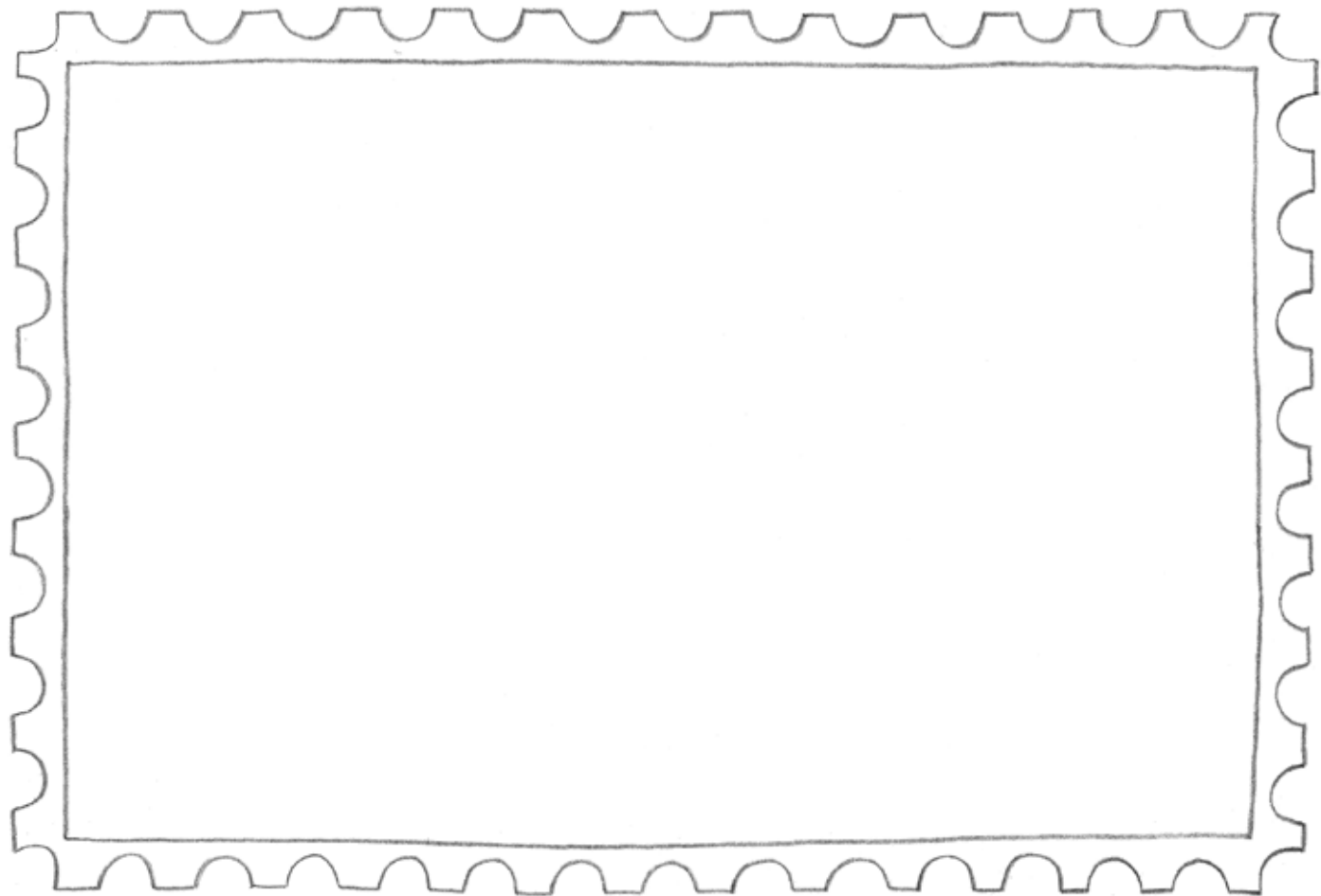
Evaluate

Is the silhouette an accurate profile of your partner's face?

....

Does your stamp include a border and value?

....

Could you improve on the design?

....

Today, Queen Elizabeth II approves all new stamp designs, just as Queen Victoria did

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TIMELINE

1795
Rowland Hill born

1837
Rowland Hill publishes leaflet about postal reform

1838
Steamship *SS Great Western* sails to New York carrying mail

1839
Postal reform introduced

1840
Penny Postage introduced

The Rainbow Trials take place

1843
First Christmas card sent

1800

1830
First letters carried by train

1837
Victoria becomes queen
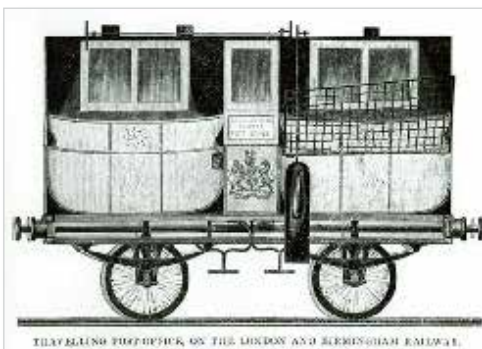
1836
Travelling Post Office set up

TRAVELLING POST OFFICE, ON THE LONDON AND BIRMINGHAM RAILWAY.

1841
Penny Black becomes Penny Red

1846
Last mail coach journey

1852
Letter boxes in doors introduced

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1855
Postboxes installed in London

Town letter carriers issued with a new uniform

Pneumatic railway built

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1870
Postcards introduced

1873
Country letter carriers receive free uniform

1874
All postboxes painted red

©The Postal Museum, OB1994.32

1881
Postal orders introduced

1883
Parcel post introduced

1900

1914 -1918
First World War. Many postwomen recruited to take the place of postmen fighting in the war

BLACK CAT CIGARETTES
POSTWOMAN
©The Postal Museum, OB2-2010-0535

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1860s
Bicycles invented and used to deliver mail

1861
Post Office Savings Bank set up

1870
Education becomes compulsory for all children

1879
Sir Rowland Hill dies

Ocean Penny Postage introduced

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1901
Queen Victoria dies

1919
First airmail introduced

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FURTHER INFORMATION
The Postal Museum resources

The Last Post:
the Postal Service in the First World War

This resource focuses on how mail and messages were sent during the First World War. It is available for free download in the classroom. **www.postalmuseum.org**

How the Penny Black changed the world

The story of Rowland Hill and the Penny Black stamp explained though a fun interactive game. Available for free download in the classroom. **www.postalmuseum.org**

Rowland Hill's Big Idea

A short film in which pupils meet Sir Rowland Hill, who explains how his big idea changed the way we communicate. Available for free download in the classroom. **www.postalmuseum.org**

Ahlberg, J. & A. *The Jolly Postman;*
The Jolly Postman's Christmas

There are real letters to open and read in these picture books for young children. The Postal Museum is developing free classroom resources to support these award-winning books.

PAINTINGS OF POSTAL SCENES in The Postal Museum

◆ **Mail Coach in a Snow Storm** by Samuel Henry Alken (Jnr)
(ref. The Postal Museum 1994225_1)
◆ **The Village Post Office** by William Frederick Witherington, 1853
(ref. LNE The Postal Museum_2002_0978 (1))
◆ **A Country Post Office** by Edward Villiers Rippingille, 1837
(ref. LNE The Postal Museum_2004_ 0150_1)
◆ **A Halted Mail Coach** by Samuel Henry Alken (Jnr)
(ref. LNE The Postal Museum_OB1996_324)

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S · ONE PENNY · C

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Royal Mail have issued a special series of stamps, collectibles and gifts to celebrate the 175th anniversary of the Penny Black stamp.

Visit www.royalmail.com for more information

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www.postalmuseum.org

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