

How to... investigate a tombstone

Name of resource: Tomb of Walter Frampton

Date of resource: late 1300's

Resource located: Photograph on Architecture Centre website, tomb in St John the Baptist church, Broad Street, Bristol

Curriculum links: History, Art and Design, R.E

Description of resource

The tomb is of Water Frampton who was founder of St John the Baptist church and three times major of Bristol. He died in 1388 and this memorial tomb is located on the north side of the chancel, to the left of the altar. The top of the tomb has a sculpted figure of Frampton, lying horizontally. He has a small moustache and divided beard and is wearing a long tunic, buttoned up at the front and a small, narrow civilian sword. His feet are resting on a hound, which represents courage and his head is on a pillow, supported by two angels. The stone body is lying on a stone plinth which is decorated with several brightly coloured shields.

Why this resource is useful for a local history study

Tombstones can help us to understand how people lived their lives in the past through investigating a range of factors including style, materials available, technological processes, religion, and status. Investigating tombstones from the local area enables us to understand more about the lives of people who lived and died in the past. Tombstones enable us to build up a picture of all aspects of life including social, economic and spiritual.

Techniques for analysing the resource (questions to ask, things to look for, pitfalls etc.)

To engage the interest of the pupils ask them several short questions about the photo of the tomb:

- What do you think it feels like to touch?
- What materials is it made from?
- Is it damaged or well preserved?
- What type of person do you think was buried in this tomb?

Tombstones are very special. Ask the pupils who they think this tombstone was important to and why?

Eg. friends and family of Walter Frampton, Bristolians, members of the church, historians?

Get the children to look at the design of the tomb:

Do they think it was easy to make? Why?

What craftsmen do they think were used to make it?

Do they think it was expensive to make? Why?

By looking at the tomb, do the children think Walter Frampton was an important person? Why? Do they think he was a wealthy person? Why?

Tombstones help us to remember someone when they have died, why is this important? Ask the children how they would like people to remember them?

Walter Framptons' tomb is decorated with a hound and two angels. Ask the children, if they were to design their own tombstone, what would they have carved on it? How would those things represent their character/likes/dislikes.

Walter Frampton was Mayor of Bristol an amazing three times. Discuss the roles of a Mayor of a city. Get the children to imagine they are the Major of Bristol and get them to write a diary extract for one day in their role of major.

If an alien arrived from space, how would they explain what this tombstone was for?

School visits to the St John the Baptist Church and the tomb can be arranged through the Churches Conservation Trust: www.visitchurches.org.uk

