

Teacher Guide

The Mystery of the Pile of Rubble

Part 1 – Our approach

Citizenship is not just another lesson to fit into an already busy timetable. It is a way of helping children understand the people, places and problems that surround them every day. Because of that, Cherry Court has been designed so that citizenship can become part of English, geography, history, science, design technology, computing and many other subjects whenever the opportunity naturally arises.

Our philosophy is summed up in one simple sentence that runs throughout Cherry Court:

Looking after our corner of the world.

We believe that citizenship begins close to home. Children first learn how families, neighbours, schools and communities work together. From there they begin to understand wider ideas such as democracy, responsibility, financial decision-making, sustainability and caring for the environment.

This local approach also links naturally with local studies. As children begin to notice the people and places around them, they become more observant, more curious and more interested in how their own community works. They begin to ask questions, spot problems and think about solutions.

Cherry Court has therefore been created as a believable town with believable people facing believable problems. The stories are calm, thoughtful and discussion-based rather than fast-moving or game-like. We believe this gives children time to observe carefully, think deeply and contribute their own ideas.

Each story is introduced by Toby, who is only a little older than the intended audience. Rather than acting as an expert, Toby acts as a friendly guide. He notices interesting things, asks sensible questions, sometimes gets things wrong and learns alongside the children. This makes him someone pupils can easily relate to.

Every Cherry Court story begins with a mystery. The mystery encourages children to ask questions, gather information and think carefully before reaching conclusions. The stories always end positively because we want children to leave each lesson believing that ordinary people really can improve their own communities.

Our quizzes simply check understanding and recall. They are not intended as tests of ability. The real learning comes through discussion, reflection and shared problem-solving.

You will also notice that many stories naturally combine several curriculum subjects. A citizenship story may also develop geographical understanding, historical thinking, scientific knowledge, literacy or financial awareness. This means the resources can often support learning in several lessons, helping you make the best use of valuable curriculum time.

Part 2 – Using the resources on this card

1. The video

Each card begins with a Toby story, usually lasting between five and nine minutes. This gives enough time for children to become interested in the characters, understand the problem and follow the thinking that leads towards a solution.

The stories are normally divided into four short sections.

Day 1 introduces the mystery and explores what is really happening.

Days 2, 3 and 4 gradually investigate possible solutions until the problem is resolved.

This structure encourages children to see that worthwhile solutions usually develop through observation, discussion, planning and perseverance rather than instant answers.

2. The book

The accompanying book follows the story closely and acts as both a reading resource and a reference.

It allows teachers to revisit important points, support literacy, encourage discussion, examine vocabulary and use extracts for guided or independent reading.

Because the book mirrors the video, children can move comfortably between visual and written learning.

3. The quiz

The quiz provides a simple opportunity to check understanding of the story.

Questions concentrate on recall and comprehension rather than assessment. They are intended to reinforce learning and encourage discussion rather than judge children's performance.

4. This Teacher Guide

Each Teacher Guide explains both the educational thinking behind Cherry Court and the specific learning opportunities provided by the individual story.

Part 3 – What children learn from this story

At first, this appears to be a mystery about an abandoned piece of waste ground beside the canal. Children see piles of broken bricks, the remains of old buildings and land that most people simply walk past without noticing. Like Toby, they may wonder why anyone would

be interested in such an ordinary-looking place.

The discovery of a single brick stamped **CHERRY COURT COLLIERY** changes everything. Children discover that even the smallest clue can reveal an important story about the past. The mystery introduces historical enquiry in a simple and exciting way. Rather than being given information first, children begin by asking questions, gathering evidence and gradually building a picture of what once stood there.

As the investigation develops, children discover that the empty site was once one of the busiest parts of Cherry Court. Coal was mined, iron was smelted, bricks were made and narrowboats carried goods along the canal. Hundreds of people worked there and the industries helped the town to grow and prosper. The reconstruction helps children understand that places change over time and that today's landscape is often shaped by the work of earlier generations.

The story also introduces an important geographical idea. Landscapes are never fixed. They constantly change as people's needs change. Factories may close, industries move elsewhere and land that was once full of smoke and noise can become quiet open space. Children begin to understand that towns are continually evolving rather than remaining the same.

Perhaps the most important citizenship idea is responsibility. Children discover that councils do much more than empty bins, repair roads and maintain parks. They also make long-term decisions about the places that shape a community's identity. Mrs Taylor explains that councils must decide whether important sites should simply be sold, cleared for redevelopment or protected for future generations. These decisions affect not only people living today but also children who have not yet been born.

The heritage park shows one possible solution. Instead of allowing the site to disappear completely, important remains have been preserved, paths created for visitors, information boards installed and the area made safe and attractive for everyone to enjoy. Children discover that preserving history does not mean freezing it in time. Old places can be adapted so they continue to have a useful purpose within the modern community.

The story also introduces the idea of regeneration. By improving neglected land, communities can create attractive public spaces that encourage visitors, support local businesses and increase pride in the local area. Children begin to understand that looking after the environment is not only about protecting nature. It is also about making thoughtful decisions that improve the places where people live.

Another important idea running throughout the story is stewardship. Every generation inherits its local environment from those who came before and has a responsibility to care for it before passing it on to the next generation. Once historic sites have been destroyed they cannot be replaced. Children therefore begin to appreciate why some places deserve special care, even when they no longer serve their original purpose.

Finally, the story reinforces one of the central ideas that runs throughout Cherry Court: ordinary places often contain extraordinary stories. A pile of bricks, an overgrown wall or a forgotten canal can all become starting points for understanding history, geography and citizenship. By learning to observe carefully and ask thoughtful questions, children begin to see their own town in a completely new way and recognise that looking after our corner of

the world includes protecting the stories that made it what it is today.

Part 4 – Opportunities across the curriculum

Although this is a citizenship resource, it also supports learning across several curriculum areas.

English

Children discuss ideas, explain opinions, ask questions, develop vocabulary and use the accompanying book to strengthen reading and comprehension skills.

Science

The story introduces raw materials and materials processing and some of the implications.

Geography

Children consider how outdoor spaces are planned and used, how local environments can be improved and how communities benefit from attractive, well-maintained places. They can also investigate rocks beneath their feet and transport systems – in this case, canals.

Design and Technology

Planning the garden encourages children to evaluate ideas, solve practical problems and develop creative designs for a real purpose.

Computing

The children use artificial intelligence creatively to generate ideas, showing that digital technology can support planning and problem-solving when used thoughtfully.

Financial Literacy

Children consider priorities, budgeting, making sensible choices and achieving long-term goals with limited resources. They realise that applies to councils, too.

Children discover that local councils have responsibilities that extend beyond day-to-day services. They explore how communities decide whether important places should be preserved, how public money is balanced against community benefit, and why protecting local heritage can strengthen identity, education, tourism and civic pride. The story encourages children to think about stewardship – caring for places today so that future generations can enjoy and learn from them.

A final thought

Cherry Court has been designed around one simple belief:

Looking after our corner of the world.

When children begin to understand the people, places and problems in their own neighbourhood, they develop the confidence to care for something much bigger.

That is why every Cherry Court mystery begins locally.

By helping Gran with her garden, supporting a local shopkeeper, improving a street, protecting wildlife or preserving local history, children discover that citizenship is not an abstract subject. It is something they can practise every day.

We hope these stories encourage children not only to understand their communities, but also to believe that they have the knowledge, imagination and kindness to make those communities even better.