**Reflection Lesson 26th June 2013:**

Once again, the lesson was much calmer and had a better sense of purpose. The class are now comfortable with the ICT, and moved straight to their seats, logging on and starting the process without much instruction. They had spent some time previously reading and marking my exemplar essay, and as such had a much clearer idea of what was expected.

They began to construct their plans, using the print outs from the previous session as a reminder. By the end of the lesson, I was satisfied that they had all participated to a good degree, and that each could have explained the process and the task they were undertaking to anyone who asked.

Unfortunately, towards the end the computers began to crash, and some of the work was lost, although they showed in the lesson that followed the next morning that they had retained enough knowledge and understanding to compensate for this.

Another problem I think was in my delivery of the ‘amendment’ to the lesson plan. We desired them to write a persuasive text, so we re-framed the question to include an element of competition. The ‘proposal’ was now in the form of a competition entry, and I revised the features of persuasive writing with them beforehand. It was a bit ‘last minute’, and having started to read their draft essays, I think this may have ‘got in the way’ of their writing. Some have seized upon the persuasive aspect, but others have still set about writing an explanation/evaluation of Greek Culture, linking the themes to the task with less success. For example, one student who showed terrific understanding and progress seemed to suggest that a feature of the display should be ‘sexism’. On reflection, I think it may be worth coming up with an alternative ‘main question’ for this mystery, or at least set out to make the answer persuasive from the beginning, in order to avoid confusion.

24 hours later, the class had reassembled and we began to type up our proposals. These are half completed, and they are finishing them for homework. However, they e mailed the work done so far, and it makes fascinating reading. On the one hand, some of their expression is clumsy and un-focussed. I ascribe this to their age and lack of sophistication in writing, and to the confusion over the actual task. However, I’m delighted by the level of understanding they have shown, and the grouping and evaluation of the evidence. Some have addressed some really sophisticated concepts, especially relating to gender and power relationships. (The influence of the work done on “ A Midsummer Night’s Dream” is evident here: Even though they struggled with that mystery to begin with, they’ve taken hold of its themes of inequality and the inversion of power relationships really well, and this has helped them to question the concept of authority and what that really means, especially in relationships. (This could say something about the impact of the strategy in the longer term?)

I would like to think that the plans – when they are printed out – could be more ‘user friendly’. I’m having trouble making the link between their grouping and sequencing of the evidence and the sheets that are actually printed out. I think it has a lot to do with the way they collate the material; often there is a connective, then a couple of evidence slips, and nothing else. It seems to me that it would be a daunting task to translate these into a 500 word essay. Having said that, the students have been successfully doing just that over the last couple of days, so I dare say this is a concern that nobody else shares with me!

I would say that my main observation is still the distinction between ‘reading’ and ‘writing’, as the curriculum is divided along these lines. We teach reading by means of the annotation and evaluation of texts, analysis and ‘PEEL’ paragraphs, while writing is approached by instruction in the planning and construction of texts, key skills in e.g. punctuation, proof reading, paragraphing and vocabulary. In my experience, it’s usually sensible to select reading OR writing as the focus of each lesson, especially in Key Stage 3. While it is intended that both sets of skills are developed simultaneously, and the ideal we aim for is that students have an equally strong grasp of both, in practical terms we have to be clear about the objectives and focus of each task. The use of mysteries clearly helps with both assessment objectives, but the delivery has to be structured in such a way that the students have ownership of what they are doing, and a clear sense of the expected learning outcomes.