

## Johnson's Dictionary and Language Change

Dr Johnson's House workshop outline

<b>Subject:</b> English Language	<b>Key Stage:</b> 5	<b>No. pupils:</b> Max. 30	<b>Max. staff ratio:</b> 1:20	<b>Duration:</b> 75 minutes	Teaching resources available
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### Overview of workshop:

This workshop has two main aims. 1) To put Johnson, his *Dictionary* and the language of the period into context for students, particularly those with no prior knowledge of the 18th-century, and bring the topic to life. 2) To introduce students to Johnson's *Dictionary*, its predecessors and its long-term impact.

The curator-led workshop is structured around a tour of Johnson's former home which is interspersed with language activities. By using the building and collection to illustrate Johnson's life and times, his importance in literary London and his personality, we aim to give students enough background knowledge to better understand 18th-century English and the nature of the *Dictionary*. During the tour, the students will also be introduced to earlier English dictionaries as a point of comparison in the development of lexicography, and have the chance to look through an 18th-century edition of Johnson's 1755 *Dictionary* when discussing his work. When the students are more familiar with the context, the curator will discuss the more technical elements of *Dictionary*, focussing on the following aspects:

- The practicalities of the work: the commission, Johnson's methodology and working habits.
- Why the *Dictionary* was commissioned at that time, looking at the wider national and international situation.
- The content and structure of the *Dictionary*.
- Johnson's theories on lexicography and language change, and how these changed over time.
- The impact of the *Dictionary* on the English language.

Once the workshop is complete, the group are welcome to explore the house further, look at a copy of the *Dictionary* in more depth, or even have a go at dressing up in 18th-century costumes!

***This workshop can be adapted to different learning aims that suit your syllabus. Please let us know if you have any specific requirements when booking.***

<b>Syllabus Links:</b> Unit 3 of A-level English Language, focusing on Language Change.	<b>Suggested preparatory work:</b> This workshop is suitable as an introduction to the topic or as a development to prior study. Please let us know what level you think is suitable when booking.	<b>Suggested follow-up work</b> The accompanying teacher's pack contains further information and activities that can be used in the classroom or as revision materials.
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