UNIT 5 · TERM 2 · WEEKS 13–15

Memory

"Events stand in an order, and dates are measures laid on it. A claim about who wrote what is checked against that order."

The kind of answer: dated · Memory on the map

In a child's words. First put events in order, then lay the dates on them. When someone says who wrote something, check it against the order.

The Institute habit

Memory taken away: the Helpers whose memories were swept, the inspector who insists he has always worked there, and Mr. Curtain's press releases, written in advance and dated for days that had not yet come.

The book

The Extraordinary Education of Nicholas Benedict, the prequel: Nicholas, nine years old, arrives at the orphanage at Rothschild's End and starts a treasure hunt.

Week 1 · the kind of answer

One timeline for Mr. Benedict's whole life, from the prequel through the first book: put the events in order first, then lay on the dates you can find. Monday puzzle: anagrams, the kind Nicholas uses.

Week 2 · the essay

Half of Nothing, in the register of St Jerome. Retell the banquet, and the paragraph after it, in your own words, and read the rest aloud with a map. Then put its events in order, from Herod the Great to Rome's fall to Alaric, before dating any of them. Ask: why is it so hard to take something back in front of other people?

Week 3 · the case

A forged letter. A letter in an old collection is said to be by a pope who died about the year 160, yet it quotes a council held in 325. The attribution fails on the dates alone: a dead man does not quote a later

council. (The case is modelled on the False Decretals, which were exposed in 1628.) Keep two questions apart: who wrote a text, and whether it binds. A text in a collection the Church promulgated binds from that promulgation, whoever wrote it; a private collection gives it no force of its own. Then the game: the parent writes three "old letters", one with something in it that could not have been known yet, and the child finds it.

The workshop · suggested

For a child taking the workshop strand, Project 3, memory. The flip-flop, registers and memory. A flip-flop gives out now what it was given one tick ago. It is the first part of the machine with a before and an after, and the clock is what dates it. The unit's rule holds here too: first the order of the ticks, then the values.

The end first

Ideas have families too. Draw a family of thinkers from Thomas to Kant, with an arrow from each to those who learned from him, and mark which kinds of "for" each one still keeps. It is not a tree: Locke has four parents. On one reading of each, Bacon dropped ends in nature, Hobbes kept ends only as desire, and Leibniz took ends in nature back.

Fridays

Spot the Whisperer: a news story or advertisement that dates something it could not know yet.

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