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Supporting the Professional  
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# History

Developing students' critical thinking skills

Case study: *The Jarrow March, October 1936*

October, 2023

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**Note:** Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the historical data contained herein.  
Any inadvertent errors are regretted.

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## Developing students' critical thinking skills: *The Jarrow March, October 1936*

In exploring the case study, *The Jarrow March, October 1936*, students are following a narrative of events. They are not concerned, however, merely with what happened but also with why it happened, and what its historical significance is. In exploring issues of causation and significance with students, we have a great opportunity to develop their ability to think critically, which is one of the stated objectives of the syllabus, and an increasingly cherished aim of senior cycle education.

At previous history in-service sessions, it has been argued that some of the best ways in which students' critical thinking can be generated include:

- the use of the enquiry-focused approach
- the use of 'critical skills' exercises that involve group discussion and judgement forming

Both approaches are drawn on in the following exploration of the case study. **The enquiry-focused approach**

The enquiry-focused approach involves organising a set of lessons around an enquiry question on which the teaching and learning activities are focused. It aims to give a clear focus to a series of lessons, to clarify for all concerned what the learning purposes are and to ensure that the sequence of lessons is leading to improved understanding on the part of the students.

In her book, *The Twentieth Century World* (The Historical Association, 1997), Christine Counsell outlines the rationale behind the approach. The following is an edited extract:

Choosing a sequence of interesting historical enquiries gives a clear focus to any scheme of work. This approach has a number of advantages:

- i. It prevents a superficial run through the content and leads pupils into deeper levels of historical understanding.
- ii. It allows students to engage in real historical debate. Historians usually begin with a question.
- iii. It motivates students by giving a clear focus to their work. Identifying key questions is a powerful way of 'sharing clarity with learners'. Teachers are thus reinforcing that the whole point of a sequence of lessons or activities is to build towards some attempt at answering the question. Some teachers who use this approach will refer to such a question in every single lesson. Pupils are constantly reminded of what they are trying to do and why.
- iv. Key questions can shape and limit an otherwise sprawling content.
- v. It encourages pupils to produce more substantial and significant outcomes at the end of a section of work. (pp.30-31)

## Linking your work on the case study to the National Literacy Strategy

The following quote comes from *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life: The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People* (Department of Education and Skills, 2011, p.8)

Traditionally we have thought about **literacy** as the skills of reading and writing; but today our understanding of literacy encompasses much more than that. **Literacy includes the capacity to read, understand and critically appreciate various forms of communication including spoken language, printed text, broadcast media, and digital media.** Throughout this document, when we refer to “literacy” we mean this broader understanding of the skill, including speaking and listening, as well as communication using not only traditional writing and print but also digital media.

The student activities set down in this resource are designed to improve students’ “capacity to read, understand and critically appreciate various forms of communication including spoken language, printed text, broadcast media, and digital media.”

As the literacy strategy makes clear, a key element in developing literacy is promoting students’ listening, talking, reading and writing skills, as well as their ability to critically assess visual images and other broadcast material. Some of the ways in which material from this booklet can be used to achieve this objective are as follows:

- The worksheet on the film clip encourages students to watch and listen carefully, and it includes questions designed to develop their ability to think critically.
- The questions/points for discussion that follow the sources are intended to form the basis for purposeful discussion among students and educative interaction between teacher and students. As well as promoting literacy, the teaching and learning conversation which this type of interaction underlies is a key component of all strategies for promoting assessment for learning in the classroom.
- The enquiry approach exemplified in this resource is designed to keep the learning outcomes constantly in the forefront of students’ minds. This is important in all strategies to improve literacy and is a key component of strategies for assessment for learning.
- The critical skills exercise is a type of card sorting exercise which helps to develop students listening skills and oral skills, as well as their ability to think critically.
- The importance of consolidating learning through carefully designed written tasks is fundamental to student learning. The enquiry approach exemplified here concludes with an activity for students: “Your conclusions on the enquiry”. Also, some of the “Questions and points for discussion” set down for each step of the enquiry can be used as the basis for written task as deemed appropriate by the teacher.

### ***The Jarrow March, October 1936: a contextual overview of the case study***

In October 1936, a group of 200 men from the town of Jarrow in the north-east of England marched to London to present a petition to the Parliament at Westminster. The town had been badly affected by the economic depression of the 1930s (the 'Great Depression' which followed the 'Wall Street Crash'), with high levels of unemployment (70% or so) and widespread poverty. The marchers wanted the government to take action to bring back employment to Jarrow: specifically, they asked that a steelworks be constructed to give employment to men left jobless by the closure of Palmer's shipyard the previous year. The marchers were supported by their local Labour MP, Ellen Wilkinson, who marched with them for much of the way. Along the way, the marchers were generally well-received, and they arrived in London at the end of October. A rally in Hyde Park on 1<sup>st</sup> November drew relatively small numbers and when Ellen Wilkinson presented the men's petition to parliament on 4<sup>th</sup> November, no specific proposals were adopted in response to address the employment needs of Jarrow. The Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, declined a request to meet the men, saying that he was too busy.

In the 1930s, Britain suffered from the world-wide economic depression and areas of heavy industry such as Jarrow were particularly badly hit. In response, from 1932, the National Unemployed Workers' Movement (NUMW) organised a series of so-called 'hunger marches' to protest at the lack of government action. In the case of Jarrow, the local councillors did not want the NUMW to organise the march as many of its members had links to the Communist Party. They themselves took charge of the arrangements to try to win cross-party appeal for the marchers and their petition. On 20<sup>th</sup> July, Jarrow Borough Council adopted a proposal to present a petition to Parliament which would be presented by unemployed men from Jarrow who had walked the 300 miles to London. The planned action was described as a 'crusade': one of the reasons for this was to differentiate it from the 'hunger marches' which some councillors saw as communist-inspired. A religious service was held on the eve of departure: as well as praying for the success of the 'crusade', this was intended to set the tone for the conduct of the marchers.

At the time of the Jarrow March, Britain had a National Government whose members and policies were mainly Conservative. Despite its lack of response to the Jarrow marchers and their petition, its protectionist policies did eventually bring about an improvement in the economy as domestic demand improved. In Jarrow, a ship-breaking works and engineering works were established in 1938 and, in 1939, the Consett steel company started a steelworks. However, unemployment remained high in Jarrow until the outbreak of war in 1939 when the rearmament programme boosted demand for industrial output and for heavy industry in particular.

Clearly, in terms of realising its key objectives, the march was a failure. The marchers returned to Jarrow by train with no prospect of government action to address the unemployment crisis in their town. Furthermore, because they had not been available for work during the period of the march, the marchers had their dole payments reduced by officials of the Unemployment Assistance Board. However, the marchers did achieve the objectives of raising public awareness of the hardship they were suffering and sympathy for their cause. Newsreel film of the marchers (produced by companies such as British Pathé), as well as newspaper photographs, made the men and their cause known to a wider public.

In the decade that followed, the post-war Labour government undertook a programme of reconstruction and reform that was informed by the suffering and struggles of the 1930s: this included improved unemployment provision, a commitment to full employment and the new National Health Service (NHS). Ellen Wilkinson was a member of that Government.

## **Glossary of important terms: develop your historical literacy skills**

### **British Pathé**

This was a company that produced short newsreel films covering important world events in the pre-television era. These films were shown in cinemas to keep cinemagoers updated on current world events. Charles Pathé and his brothers began producing films in France in 1896 and their activities spread to many countries including Britain. As time went on, the company produced feature films and short advertising 'commercials' as well as widening the scope of their newsreel coverage. In 1933 British International Pictures purchased the Pathé newsreel and feature film brand. Associated British-Pathé was born and soon the Pathé brand was enjoying something of a golden age in the United Kingdom.

For more information, see <https://www.britishpathe.com/about/>

### **Cooperative societies**

A cooperative society is a type of business enterprise which is owned collectively by a group of people, so that mass purchases can be made to reduce individual costs and produce can be sold at fair prices directly to customers through cooperative society shops. Many cooperative societies gave financial support to the Jarrow marchers.

### **Dole payments**

These are social welfare payments paid by the state to people who are unemployed. In Britain, the Unemployment Insurance Act, 1920, created the dole system of payment for unemployed workers. The system was reformed on a number of occasions. The Unemployment Act of 1934 introduced a more centralized system with a new government body, the Unemployment Assistance Board, established to oversee the administration of the scheme.

### **Great Depression**

This is the popular term for a world economic crisis from 1929 to 1933. The crisis was triggered by a collapse in trading on the New York stock market in Wall Street. (This is known as the 'Wall Street Crash'.) As a result, US banks began to call in international loans. Amongst the countries worst affected was Germany which had been receiving loans from the US to help with reparations and industrial development. Unemployment soared: in the US to 14 million, in Germany to 6 million and in Britain to 3 million.

### **(March) marshal**

One who leads a group of marchers and keeps them in order. On the Jarrow march, the marshal was David Riley. In 1978, the English group, Lindesfarne, recorded a song about the Jarrow march called, "Marshal Riley's Army". National Government The term is used to describe coalition governments in Britain between 1931 and 1940. In August 1931, during a time of financial crisis, the Labour government of the split when nine members resigned rather than accept cuts in unemployment benefits. It was the Liberal leader, Herbert Samuel, who

suggested to the prime minister, Ramsay MacDonald that he create a 'government of national salvation' by inviting leading Conservatives and Liberals to join the government. When MacDonald resigned in 1935, Stanley Baldwin, the Conservative leader who had been chancellor of the exchequer, succeeded him as prime minister. Although MacDonald remained a government member, the National Government led by Baldwin until 1937, was predominantly Conservative.

### **Protectionist (policies)**

Protectionist policies are based on a belief that a country's products need to be 'protected' from competition from foreign imports through the imposition of tariffs on the imported goods. A tariff in this sense is a tax on imports.

### **Unemployment Assistance**

Board This was a government body, set up under the Unemployment Act of 1934. The Board investigated applications for unemployment assistance and made decisions on who was eligible for payment.



## Biographical notes

### Stanley Baldwin (1867-1947)



<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Stanley-Baldwin> accessed 6-11-23

British Conservative politician, Prime Minister for much of the period from 1923 to 1937, his periods in office alternating with those of Ramsay MacDonald, the first leader of the Labour Party to be appointed Prime Minister. Following the collapse of MacDonald's National Government, 1931-1935, Baldwin became Prime Minister in June 1935 and held the position until his resignation in May 1937. Baldwin called an election for November 1935 which saw the National Government returned to power with a comfortable majority, 429 MPs (of whom 387 were conservatives) to Labour's 154 MPs. Much of Baldwin's attention was focused on the international situation and he used the election campaign to secure a mandate for increased rearmament. However, his government's response to Italy's invasion of Abyssinia in 1935 and Hitler's remilitarisation of the Rhineland in 1936 led to increasing criticism of Baldwin's handling of foreign and defence policies and the personal strain led to a period of enforced rest in the second half of 1936. Baldwin returned to Downing Street on 12th October, just weeks before the Jarrow marchers arrived in London.

Following the death of King George VI in January 1936, the major event of Baldwin's final months as Prime Minister was the crisis over the wish of the new king, Edward VIII, to marry Mrs Wallis Simpson, an American whose second divorce was impending. In a strained conversation on 20th October, he warned the king that the public reaction to a marriage with Mrs Simpson would be hostile. At their next meeting on 16th November, Baldwin raised the possibility that the king might abdicate. When this was finally accepted by the king on 10th December, Baldwin's handling of the Abdication Crisis received widespread praise.

Baldwin's final ministry had some achievements in domestic reform: these included raising the school-leaving age to fifteen and major programmes of slum clearance. Following his refusal to meet the Jarrow marchers, Baldwin's government resolved to try to persuade organisers that marches were unhelpful and caused unnecessary hardship to those taking part.

### Ellen Wilkinson (1891-1947)

Labour MP for Jarrow at the time of the Jarrow March, she led the march, walking much of the way herself, and presented the marchers' petition to parliament.

Born in Manchester, her father was a worker in a cotton factory. In 1912 she joined the Independent Labour Party and the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, for which she became an organiser in 1913. In 1915 she became the first national women's organiser for the Amalgamated Union of Co-operative Employees (later known as the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers), retaining the post for the rest of her life. As a member of the Women's International League for peace and freedom, she opposed the First World War and was a member of the League's mission sent to Ireland in 1920 to investigate the Black and Tans' activities. (Its report recommended an immediate truce and the release of Irish political prisoners.)



<https://aboutmanchester.co.uk/ellen-wilkinson-from-red-suffragist-to-government-minister/>  
accessed 6-11-23

Wilkinson's joined the British Communist Party on its foundation in 1920 but left the party in 1924. Meanwhile, in 1923 she stood as an official Labour Party candidate for Ashton under Lyne winning more than a quarter of the votes cast but coming bottom of the poll. In the general election of 1924, she was elected as a Labour MP for Middlesbrough, the only woman Labour MP in that parliament. During the general strike of 1926, she was vocal in her support of the miners. In her speeches in parliament, she repeatedly tried to bring home to MPs the realities of working class life. Re-elected for the same constituency in 1929, Wilkinson was appointed parliamentary private secretary at the Ministry of Health in the minority Labour government.

In the general election of 1931, Wilkinson lost her Middlesbrough seat. However, she returned to the House of Commons in 1935 when she was elected MP for Jarrow. Her leadership of the Jarrow march and her presentation of the petition to parliament ensured the enduring identification of her name with the constituency she served for the rest of her career. In 1939, her book *The Town that was Murdered* – where she blamed Jarrow's problems on a defective economic system to which socialism was the only solution. Before her death in 1947, she served as Minister of Education in Attlee's post-war Labour government.

In his book, *The Jarrow Crusade: Protest and Legend*, the historian Matt Perry identifies a number of other figures who played crucial roles in respect of the Jarrow march.

**Sir Walter Runciman** (1870-1949) was the President of the Board of Trade in the mid 1930s. When asked to help Jarrow in July 1936, he told the delegation from the town who had come to meet him: "Jarrow must work out its own salvation". For those who supported the march, Runciman was the butt of much of their criticism of government policy.

**Sir Andrew Duncan** (1884-1952) was the Chairman of the British Iron and Steel Federation from 1935 to 1940 and a Director of the Bank of England from 1929 to 1940. In 1936, the Bank of England turned down an application for finance for steel works in Jarrow due to objections from the Federation. Duncan's role was pivotal in this decision.

The **Bishop of Durham, Hensley Henson** (1863-1947), who sat in the House of Lords was a vocal critic of the march, a march which divided opinion amongst the Anglican clergy.

**Sir John Jarvis** (1876-1950) was an influential businessman and MP for Guildford in Surrey. Known for his interest in labour issues, he had set up the Surry Fund for the relief of Jarrow in 1934. He put over £40,000 into efforts to help the recovery of Jarrow and his fame in the fight against distress in Jarrow is second only to Ellen Wilkinson. His Times obituary stated: "He earned the gratitude of a town by his unselfish work for and help to the people of Jarrow during the worst days of economic depression." Matt Perry suggests that, "He did much to promote his self-image as selfless benefactor ...".

**Sir Percy Malcolm Stewart** (1872-1951) was a businessman and a philanthropist. He was President of the Cement Makers' Federation and, also, President of the National Council of Social Services. The latter was a government-sponsored charitable network that organized various schemes to relieve the suffering caused by the Depression. During the Jarrow march, he resigned from his post as Commissioner for the Special Areas in England and Wales and publicly associated himself with Jarrow's cause.

### **Glossary quiz**

Which of the words used in the short biographical notes above means:

- 1) A wealthy person who uses some of his/her money to help charitable causes?
- 2) Outspoken or expressing through speech?
- 3) An article in a newspaper dealing with the life of somebody who has recently died?
- 4) A representative group?
- 5) Of central importance?

### **Some other names: leading marchers**

Billy Thompson was Mayor of Jarrow and walked part of the way with the 200 marchers. David Riley, march leader a, town councillor and left-wing member of the Labour Party. Tommy ("Tosh") Corr was the leader of the mouth organ band that formed on the march.

## **The Jarrow March, October 1936: contextual timeline of important developments**

### **Background**

- 1929 October 'Wall Street Crash' ended US loans to Europe. British exports fell and unemployment rose sharply.
- 1932 October Large-scale march on London by 2,500 workers from different parts of Britain. Trade unionists were the main organizers. A petition was presented to parliament protesting about the cut in unemployment benefit by 10% which the National Government had introduced in 1931 as the numbers unemployed reached 3 million.
- 1934 Unemployment Act reversed the 10% cut in unemployment. A new Unemployment Assistance Board (UAB) was established to implement more centralized control of unemployment benefit
- 1934 February Nationwide 'hunger march' took place protesting against the new Unemployment Act. The National Unemployed Workers' Movement (NUWM) was amongst the organizers. The march culminated in a congress in London on 24th February and again on 4th March.

### **The march**

- 1936
- 20th July Jarrow Borough Council decided to present a petition to parliament demanding that a steel works be built to bring back employment to their town. 200 men were to be selected to undertake the march.
- 5th October March began, following a church service in Christ Church which included a blessing by the Bishop of Jarrow, Dr Gordon.
- 31st October Marchers reached London.
- 1st November Marchers held a meeting in Hyde Park
- 4th November Petition presented to parliament by Ellen Wilkinson Baldwin refused to meet the marchers.
- 5th November Most of the marchers returned to Jarrow by train, greeted on their return by a large and jubilant crowd.

### **Subsequent developments**

- 1938 Shipbuilding yard and engineering works established 1939 Steelworks established by Consett Iron Company
- 1939-1945 Industry in Jarrow boosted by increased demand for ships and armaments during World War II

## MAP OF JARROW MARCH ROUTE



<https://www.trebuchet-magazine.com/march-jarrow-nhs/> accessed 6-11- 23

In August-September, 2014, a march was held to protest at the Government's policy towards the NHS (National Health Service). The march followed, insofar as was practicable, the route used by the Jarrow marchers of 1936. The map above is reproduced from the web page advertising the march. (As a rough indication, the distance involved is approximately that involved in travelling from Belfast to Killarney via Dublin.)

The paragraph below is taken from the web page advertising the march and shows how the organizers make reference to the 1936 march. (The contemporary resonance of the march will be discussed further on pp.34-35.)

"The People's March is a perfect opportunity to build support for the NHS and to join up with amazing NHS campaigners across the country. Following the basic route of the 1936 Jarrow Crusade, the People's March for the NHS will head to Parliament. On route we aim to make the public aware of what the coalition government has been doing to our NHS and what has been happening to our hospitals and health services."

**NOTE:** All excerpts from Matt Perry's, *The Jarrow Crusade: Protest and Legend*, (University of Sunderland Press, 2005) are used with the kind permission of the author. The book is currently out of print but a Kindle version is available. See [http://www.amazon.co.uk/Jarrow-Crusade-Protest-Legend-ebook/dp/B007BDQPSK/ref=tmm\\_kin\\_swatch\\_0?\\_encoding=UTF8&sr=&qid=](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Jarrow-Crusade-Protest-Legend-ebook/dp/B007BDQPSK/ref=tmm_kin_swatch_0?_encoding=UTF8&sr=&qid=)

### **The Jarrow March, October 1936: a possible line of enquiry**

If students are to understand the issues and events of the case study, they will need to explore the reasons why the march took place, how the marchers fared and what impact the march had at the time. They will also need to explore why the march is seen as historically significant, when other – sometimes larger – marches of the 1930s are considerably less well-known. An enquiry question such as the following may be helpful in this regard:

**Of all the protest marches that took place in Britain in the 1920s and 1930s, why is the Jarrow March the one that is most written about and best remembered?**

One way of approaching this enquiry is to focus first on the event itself – why it happened, what it involved, what impact it had at the time – and, then, to explore the reasons for the historical significance of the march.

**Step 1:** Why was there a march from Jarrow to London in October 1936?

**Step 2:** What happened in the course of the march?

**Step 3:** What impact did the march have at the time?

**Step 4:** What is the historical significance of the Jarrow March?

What are the potential benefits of using these questions to focus on the subject matter of the case study?

In the pages that follow, for Steps 1, 2 and 3 of the enquiry a list of 'factors identified in commentaries' or brief introduction is followed by a selection of linked primary source extracts and some secondary source extracts. For Step 4 – which focuses on the historical significance of the march – a number of secondary source extracts are used.

While most sources have undergone some degree of editing, teachers may decide to engage in further editing of some documents to facilitate use with their own classes.

### **A possible 'hook'**

One could begin with a YouTube film clip relating to the march, and use this as a 'launching' point for the enquiry. A suitable clip is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=31dchjUVaV8>

There is a transcript of the spoken content of the film clip on the next page and on the page that follows a worksheet on the content of the film clip and transcript.

## **Transcript of YouTube film clip**

### **Section A: first spoken piece**

I beg to ask leave to present to this honorable House the petition of the people of Jarrow praying for assistance in the resuscitation of its industry. During the past fifteen years, Jarrow has passed through a period of industrial depression without parallel in the town's history. Its shipyard is closed, its steelworks have been denied the right to re-open. Where, formerly, eight thousand people, many of them skilled workers were employed, only a hundred men are now employed on a temporary scheme. The town cannot be left derelict, and therefore your petitioners humbly pray that His Majesty's Government, and this honorable House, should realize the urgent need that work should be provided without further delay.

### **Section B: second spoken piece**

In the opinion of His Majesty's Government, such marchers can do no good for the causes for which they are represented to be undertaken, are liable to cause unnecessary hardship to those taking part in them, and are altogether undesirable.

### **Section C: third spoken piece**

No man has hired us  
With pocketed hands  
And lowered faces  
We stand about in open places  
And shiver in unlit rooms  
Only the wind moves  
Over empty fields, untilled  
Where the plough rests, at an angle  
To the furrow. In this land  
There shall be one cigarette to two men,  
To two women one half pints of bitter  
Ale. In this land  
No man has hired us.  
Our life is unwelcome, our death  
Unmentioned in 'The Times'.

### **Notes:**

1. Section A features an actor reading the words of Ellen Wilkinson as she presented the Jarrow marchers' petition to Parliament on 4th November, 1936.
2. Section B is taken from a Government statement issued following the cabinet meeting of 14th October, 1936.
3. Section C is taken from *The Rock* by T.S. Eliot, a pageant play first performed in 1934. (A pageant play is one that deals with historical or topical events. *The Rock* has a strongly Christian theme and was commissioned as a fund-raiser for a church-building project in London.)

## WORKSHEET

### Questions on the film clip/visual images

1. What are the first two words to appear on screen? Why do you think that second word is used to describe the Jarrow March?
2. What are the next two words that appear in the first frame of the film clip? What is the meaning of that second word?
3. What impressions of the marchers do we get from the sequence of images –still and moving – that follow?
4. The next words to appear on-screen are, “Jarrow marchers reach London”. What is the name of the newsreel company that produced this film?
5. The last sequence (which begins as the words, “No man will hire us ...” are spoken) differs from what has gone before. What sort of images does it show?

### Questions on the transcript

1. According to Section A of the transcript, what were the people of Jarrow looking for in their petition to the House of Commons?
2. According to Section A of the transcript, how had industrial depression affected Jarrow over the previous fifteen years?
3. According to Section B of the transcript, why did the Government disapprove of marches such as the Jarrow March?
4. How is the suffering of unemployed men conveyed in Section C of the transcript?
5. Explain what you think is meant by the last two lines of Section C of the transcript?



<https://tribunemag.co.uk/2021/10/jarrow-crusade-march-anniversary-unemployment-work-north-east> accessed 6-11-23



## Enquiry, Stage 1

**Why was there a march from Jarrow to London in October 1936?** Among the factors identified in commentaries are:

- Jarrow was hit hard by the Depression with unemployment levels reaching 70%.
- Palmer's shipyard, the main source of employment in the town, had closed down the previous year.
- Jarrow Borough Council decided in July 1936 that the problems of Jarrow needed to be brought to the attention of Parliament and that the best way of doing this was through a march of workers from Jarrow to London.
- A petition was organized and signed by 11,000 Jarrow people. This requested that a steel works be established in Jarrow to give employment.
- The plan to march on London was strongly supported by the local MP, Ellen Wilkinson.

### Relevant sources

#### Secondary Source 1

In October 1936, a group of 200 men from the north-eastern town of Jarrow marched 300 miles to London. They wanted Parliament, and the people in the south, to understand that they were orderly, responsible citizens, but were living in a region where there was 70 per cent unemployment – leading one of the marchers to describe his home town in those days as "... a filthy, dirty, falling down, consumptive area".

The men were demanding that a steel works be built to bring back jobs to their town, as Palmer's shipyard in Jarrow had been closed down the previous year. The yard had been Jarrow's main source of employment, and the closure compounded the problems of poverty, overcrowding, poor housing and high mortality rates that already beset the town.

Christine Collette, The Jarrow Crusade, on BBC History – British History at [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/britain\\_wwone/jarrow\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/britain_wwone/jarrow_01.shtml) , accessed 19-10-2023

### Questions and points for discussion

1. According to Secondary Source 1, how many men walked from Jarrow to London and how many miles did they walk?
2. What impression of themselves and their conditions did the marchers wish to give to Parliament and to people in the south of England?
3. What did the marchers want the Parliament to do to help improve the situation in Jarrow?
4. Why had the closure of Jarrow's shipyard the previous year caused serious problems?

## Secondary Source 2

Sir Charles Mark Palmer (1822-1907) had created modern Jarrow with his shipyard ... Jarrow was in effect a company town ... Between 1852 when it opened and 1932, Palmer's Yard had built over 1,000 ships. Referring to Palmer's manager McGowan of the 1920s, the people of Jarrow summed up their history thus: 'St. Bede founded it, Sir Charles Palmer built it, and McGowan bugged it.' Despite being reputedly one of the most efficient in the country, financial difficulties had crippled the yard. The management had ... misread the market in the immediate post-war years when they had bought a yard at Amble, Northumberland and the South Pelaw colliery. They also upgraded the steelworks, thereby piling up large debts. ... The last ship, the destroyer HMS Duchess, was launched on 19 July 1932. In 1933 because of the overdraft at the bank and lack of orders, the receiver was called in. In the following year, the receiver sold the yard ... The moment that symbolized the greatest despair was when Palmer's distinctive forward-leaning square cranes ... were pulled down. Their toppling was to be remembered as a terrible day of heartbreak for Jarrow.

Matt Perry, *The Jarrow Crusade: Protest and Legend*. University of Sunderland Press, 2005, p.11 [Edited]

### Questions and points for discussion

1. How does the writer show the importance to Jarrow of Palmer's shipyard?
2. According to the writer, what mistakes did the management of Palmer's shipyard make in the late 1910s and 1920s?
3. Why was the launch of the HMS Duchess significant in the history of Palmer's shipyard?
4. Explain the writer's comments about "The moment that symbolized the greatest despair ...".



<http://www.tynebuiltships.co.uk/Palmer-Ironworks.html>

## Source 1

The following is an edited extract from a memo sent by J. Robinson, Manager of the Ministry of Labour's Jarrow office to the Home Office in London on 6th October, 1936. A facsimile copy and transcript are currently available at

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/thirties-britain/jarrow-crusade/>

A March has been organized for the purpose of drawing the attention of the Government to the Unemployment position in the town, and in the hope that by this means the position of Jarrow will obtain wide publicity and sympathy of the general public resulting in the establishment of industry to provide work for unemployed men.

...

The March has been organized by the Mayor and Council of Jarrow, and the principal person responsible for the organization, etc. is Councillor D.F. Riley, member of the Jarrow Borough Council. A separate office in the Town Hall has been opened to deal with the project ... In addition, a petition has been signed by residents in Jarrow and adjacent towns. This petition to be placed before the House of Commons draws attention to the serious unemployment situation existing in Jarrow.

A notice is displayed in the Town Hall requesting men who are willing to join in the March to register their names. I am given to understand that the number of Marchers will be determined by the amount of financial assistance received. ... At present, it is estimated that approximately 200 men will participate in the March.

### Questions and points for discussion

1. What reasons for the organizing of the march are given by the writer?
2. Who does the writer identify as being the main organizers of the march?
3. What does the writer say about the petition mentioned in the second paragraph?
4. How were marchers to be recruited according to the writer?

## Source 2

The following is an edited extract from a speech made in the House of Commons on 11th November, 1936, by the MP for Jarrow, Ellen Wilkinson. A transcript is currently available at

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/1936-11-11/debates/9d135ae9-b284-4025-b51e-18fb6a645d8a/UnemployedMarchersPetition> accessed 20-10-23

... the Jarrow marchers and the Jarrow Town Council deliberately asked for their petition to come before this house because they wanted to appeal to this House, because literally they had tried everything, every kind and sort of constitutional procedure. And there was no point in going through it all again, always to be met with a blank wall and the remark of the President of the Board of Trade that we must work out our own salvation. So we took him at his word and came to the only possible place where finally the grievance must be heard.

... the Jarrow marchers and the Jarrow Town Council deliberately asked for their petition to come before this house because they wanted to appeal to this House, because literally they had tried everything, every kind and sort of constitutional procedure. And there was no point in going through it all again, always to be met with a blank wall and the remark of the President of the Board of Trade that we must work out our own salvation. So we took him at his word and came to the only possible place where finally the grievance must be heard.

### **Questions and points for discussion**

1. What does the writer say about the decision to send a petition to “this house” (i.e. the House of Commons)?
2. What was the name of the President of the Board of Trade to whom the writer refers?

### **Enquiry, Stage 2: What happened in the course of the march?**

The marchers passed through many towns and were mainly warmly received according to contemporary reports. The sources that follow present a selection of anecdotes and details on the experiences of the marchers and the reception they received from the people whose towns they passed through.

### Source 3

## Details of the route to be followed by the Jarrow marchers sent from the Ministry of Labour to the Home Office, 26th September, 1936

COPY 54

BOROUGH OF JARROW  
PROTEST MARCH TO LONDON

Leave JARROW - Monday, 5th October, 1936.

<u>To.</u>	<u>No. of Miles.</u>	<u>Date of Arrival.</u>
CHESTER LE STREET	12	Monday, 5th October.
FERRYHILL	12	Tuesday, 6th October.
DARLINGTON	16	Wednesday, 7th October.
NORTHALLERTON	8½	Thursday, 8th October.
THIRSK	11	Friday, 9th October.
BOROUGHBRIDGE	10½	Saturday, 10th October. (Sunday - rest).
HARROGATE	15½	Monday, 12th October.
LEEDS	9	Tuesday, 13th October.
WAKEFIELD	9¾	Wednesday, 14th October.
BARNSELY	13½	Thursday, 15th October.
SHEFFIELD	11¾	Friday, 16th October.
CHESTERFIELD	12	Saturday, 17th October. (Sunday - rest).
HAUSFIELD	14½	Monday, 19th October.
NOTTINGHAM	15	Tuesday, 20th October.
LOUGHBOROUGH	11½	Wednesday, 21st October.
LEICESTER	14½	Thursday, 22nd October.
MARKET HARBOURGH	17½	Friday, 23rd October.
NORTHAMPTON	21	Saturday, 24th October. (Sunday - rest).
BEDFORD	19	Monday, 26th October. (Tuesday - rest).
LUTON	10½	Wednesday, 28th October.
ST. ALBANS	11	Thursday, 29th October.
ENDBURGH (L'don)	8½	Friday, 30th October.
LONDON (Marble Arch)	-	Saturday, 31st October.

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/thirties-britain/route-jarrow-marchers/>  
accessed 20-10-23

### Transcript of note from Ministry of Labour to Home Office, 26th September 1936, setting out the route to be followed by the Jarrow marchers

#### To. No. of miles. Date of arrival.

CHESTER LE STREET 12 Monday, 5th October.

FERRYHILL 12 Tuesday, 6th October.

DARLINGTON 16 Wednesday, 7th October. NORTHALLERTON 8½ Thursday, 8th October.

THIRSK 11 Friday, 9th October.

BOROUGHBRIDGE 10½ Saturday, 10th October.

(Sunday - rest)

HARROGATE 15½ Monday, 12th October.

LEEDS 9 Tuesday, 13th October.

WAKEFIELD 9¾ Wednesday, 14th October. BARNSELY 13½ Thursday, 15th October.

SHEFFIELD 11¾ Friday, 16th October.

CHESTERFIELD 12 Saturday, 17th October.

(Sunday - rest)

MANSFIELD 14¼ Monday, 19th October.

NOTTINGHAM 15 Tuesday, 20th October.

LOUGHBOROUGH 11¼ Wednesday, 21st October. LEICESTER 14½ Thursday, 22nd October.

MARKET HARBOROUGH 17¼ Friday, 23rd October.

NORTHAMPTON 21 Saturday, 24th October.

(Sunday - rest)

BEDFORD 19 Monday, 26th October.

(Tuesday - rest)

LUTON 10½ Wednesday, 28th October. ST. ALBANS 11 Thursday, 29th October. EDGWARE (L' don) 8½ Friday, 30th October.

LONDON (Marble Arch) - Saturday, 31st October

### Questions and points for discussion

1. Why were Sundays a day of rest during the march?
2. How many miles in total had the marchers walked when they reached the town of Northallerton on Thursday, 8th October?
3. How many more miles did the marchers have to walk before they reached Harrogate on Monday, 12th October?
4. On what date did the marchers finally arrive in central London (Marble Arch)?

### Source 4

In Northallerton, a small agricultural town, there was no official reception for the marchers. However, the local people turned out in welcome and the local minister, Reverend Thomas, made the following comments (8th October):

I don't think the decision of the council not to welcome the marchers can be taken as representative of the people of Northallerton. This march is the finest organized I have ever seen. It is, in my opinion, a religious matter, as the provision of comfort for one's fellow men is the main basis of our Christian religion. It is our duty as individuals to spare no effort to help our unfortunate comrades and I do think that the churches of this country should have led the march and taken it right to London as an appeal not only to the Government but also to the common humanity in man.

Cited in Matt Perry, *The Jarrow Crusade: Protest and Legend*. University of Sunderland Press, 2005, p.40.

### Questions and points for discussion

1. Explain the comments of Reverend Thomas about the decision not to have an official welcome for the marchers.
2. Explain the comment made by Reverend Thomas about the organization of the march.
3. Why does Reverend Thomas see the march as a "religious matter"?

**Source 5**

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2257003/Last-Jarrow-Marchers-walked-300-miles-London-poverty-protest-dies-aged-96.html>



<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2257003/Last-Jarrow-Marchers-walked-300-miles-London-poverty-protest-dies-aged-96.html> accessed 20-10-23

**Questions and points for discussion**

1. How does the man in the middle at the front look different to the other men? Who do you think he might be?
2. Comment on the use of the word "crusade" in the marchers' banner.
3. Explain what the men immediately in front of the banner are doing.

**Source 6: edited excerpt from a Manchester Guardian report**

Harrogate welcomed the Jarrow marchers to-day as cheerfully as if they were a relief column raising a siege. The music of the mouth-organ band might have been the bagpipes so surely did it bring the people flocking, and when the two hundred reached the Concert Rooms there were hundreds of folk drawn up on the slopes around to cheer them. The police were in attendance and there was a big banner raised saying, 'Harrogate welcomes the Jarrow marchers'. At the Drill Hall, the headquarters for the night, the crowd was even denser.



There can be no doubt that as a gesture the march is a bounding success. I fell in with it this morning on the Ripon road. Under its two banners ('Jarrow Crusade'), with its harmonicas, its kettledrum and its four hundred feet, it was going strong. The marchers have with them two doctors, a barber, a group of pressmen, a Labrador dog mascot, and for a great deal of the time so far the Mayor of Jarrow (Alderman J.W. Thompson), who keeps travelling back to Jarrow to maintain touch with his civic duties and then south again to maintain touch with the marchers. It is an example of civic spirit probably without parallel anywhere else in the country.

The Manchester Guardian, Tuesday, 13th October, 1936 © Guardian News and Media Limited

### Questions and points for discussion

1. What evidence in there in this report that the marchers were well-received in Harrogate?
2. Discuss what the writer means when he says that "as a gesture the march is abounding success".
3. In the sentence beginning, "The marchers have with them ...", what do you think was the importance to the march of each of those mentioned?

### Source 7



<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2257003/Last-Jarrow-Marchers-walked-300-miles-London-poverty-protest-dies-aged-96.html> accessed 20-10-23

### Point for discussion

What similarities are there with the photograph on page 22? What are the differences?



### Source 8

#### Excerpt from an interview given by Ellen Wilkinson to the Barnsley Chronicle and South Yorkshire News on 15th October 1936

... the men were a model to all marchers; they took the greatest care to leave no litter behind them and were always cheerful. Every place through which they had passed had extended to them the warmest welcome, and Barnsley itself had shown the hospitality characteristic of the 'county of the broad acres'. The ratepayers of Barnsley were exceedingly generous in their treatment and she felt sure the marchers were deeply appreciative.

Cited in Matt Perry, *The Jarrow Crusade: Protest and Legend*. University of Sunderland Press, 2005, pp.75-76.

**Note:** Yorkshire is known as the 'county of the broad acres'.

#### Questions and points for discussion

1. What does Ms Wilkinson mean when she describes the men as "a model to all marchers"?
2. What impression does Ms Wilkinson give of the general response to the marchers along the route?
3. Why does Ms Wilkinson say "she felt sure the marchers were deeply appreciative" of the generosity of the ratepayers of Barnsley?

### Source 9

In Chesterfield, on Saturday 17th October, some communists from a nearby mining village (South Normanton) held a meeting in the market square. One of the speakers announced that they had collected £20 for the Crusade. This led to complaints from local Conservative politicians who said it contravened the non-political nature of the march. David Riley made the following statement to a local journalist:

This is the fourth time the communists have tried to gatecrash. They are not going to get in as easily as they think. We are determined at all costs to preserve the non-political character of this Crusade, and we shall defend ourselves strenuously against any attempt at interference. If necessary we shall call the authorities to assist us. They have already been notified, and are aware of our difficulty, but so far we have not made any definite appeal for intervention. *Shields Gazette*, 19th October, 1936

Cited in Matt Perry, *The Jarrow Crusade: Protest and Legend*. University of Sunderland Press, 2005, p.85.

#### Questions and points for discussion

1. What did David Riley mean when he said "the communists have tried to gatecrash"? Why was he determined to stop this happening?
2. Why do you think David Riley and other march leaders may have been slow to "appeal for intervention" by the authorities?

### Secondary Source 3

[20th October] Alderman Sir Albert Ball, Lord Mayor of Nottingham, welcomed the marchers to the town. There were several examples of East Midlands generosity in Nottingham. In a city known for its hosiery and textiles, especially lace, two Nottingham firms presented the Crusaders with 200

sets of underwear and a local manufacturing chemist's gave a large amount of medical supplies. As elsewhere, the co-operative movement provided substantial support to the march, the Nottingham Co-operative Society donating 32 pairs of boots and 12 pairs of trousers and socks. In total, the co operative societies accounted for a fifth of all march funds, three time that from the trade unions and five times that from all political parties. Music hall comedian Sandy Powell sent his accordion band to cheer up the exhausted marchers and donated £5 to their funds. Matt Perry, *The Jarrow Crusade: Protest and Legend*. University of Sunderland Press, 2005, p.93.

### **Questions and points for discussion**

1. What evidence is there in the extract that the marchers received a warm welcome in the town of Nottingham?
2. What general point does the writer make about the role of cooperative societies in helping the marchers?

### **Source 10**

#### **The Morning Post's labour correspondent describes the marchers' arrival in London**

Preceded by a battery of cameras, escorted by a posse of police, pursued by a crowd of spectators, the 'Jarrow Crusade' has arrived on the outskirts of London. I walked with it from beyond Elstree, stepping to the strains of several mouth organs, punctuated by a drum. Every time we approached a village, two banners were unfurled and the marchers broke into song. They were led by Miss Ellen Wilkinson, and by Paddy, the canine mascot. Score of onlookers lined the routes, their numbers swelling into the hundreds as we neared urban areas. *Morning Post*, 31st October, 1936

Cited in Matt Perry, *The Jarrow Crusade: Protest and Legend*. University of Sunderland Press, 2005, p.137.

### **Questions and points for discussion**

1. Name three types of people who surrounded the marchers as they arrived on the outskirts of London.
2. What details given by this reporter recall details given in other reports that we have already read?

### Source 11



<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2257003/Last-Jarrow-Marchers-walked-300-miles-London-poverty-protest-dies-aged-96.html> accessed 20-10-23

#### Points for discussion

1. What evidence is there in the picture that the marchers have arrived in an urban area?
2. What evidence is there in the picture regarding weather conditions at the time?

#### Secondary Source 4

At Marble Arch, the 291 miles from Jarrow to London was complete. The last leg took place with large crowds looking on and plenty of photographers poised for the Sunday newspapers. The mouth organ and kettledrum band kept up spirits despite the heavy rain. The band had been formed because two journalists had raised the money for the mouth organs from their newspaper colleagues. Amongst the favourites of the marchers were 'Roll along, Jarrow marchers, roll along', 'The Sergeant Major', 'Tipperary', 'The Minstrel Boy', 'Poor Old Joe', 'The Long, Long Trail', 'Annie Laurie' and 'Goodbye, old Ship, Goodbye'. According to a press report, the band was asked to make a gramophone record of the songs that they had played in the course of the march. This record was never made and Tosh Corr's players disbanded on their return to Jarrow.

Matt Perry, *The Jarrow Crusade: Protest and Legend*. University of Sunderland Press, 2005, pp.141-142.

#### Questions and points for discussion

1. Whereabouts in London did the marchers finish their march?
2. What were the weather conditions at the time?
3. Was there much public interest in the marchers' arrival, according to the writer?
4. Does the list of favourite tunes suggest anything about the background of the marchers? Explain.
5. What was the name of the leader of the mouth organ band?

### **Source 12: Ellen Wilkinson on David Riley, the march marshal**

Leadership is as important as machinery. The kindly fates gave us a hefty Irishman in Councillor Riley with an iron will and 'a way with him'. He and I had a stand-up fight or two in the early days, but on the march I succumbed willingly to his leadership as did everyone else. A man who gets rigid obedience with a jest is a priceless possession for a show of this kind – and how he worked, and made everyone else work two! Sunday Sun, 1st November, 1936

Cited in Matt Perry, *The Jarrow Crusade: Protest and Legend*. University of Sunderland Press, 2005, p.143.

#### **Questions and points for discussion**

1. Name three characteristics of David Riley as identified by Ellen Wilkinson.
2. Suggest two reasons why Ellen Wilkinson – along with the rest of the marchers – “succumbed willingly to his leadership”.

### **Source 13: Ellen Wilkinson on the Hyde Park meeting, 1st November**

There seemed no time to organize a Hyde Park meeting. But we hastily got permission to hold one in the park, and hoped for an audience from the crowds there.

The Communist Party had gathered a big demonstration on a general unemployment protest. The generously gave way for an hour and asked their audience to swell our Crusade meeting, which grew to enormous size when it was known the Jarrow Crusaders were there.

Ellen Wilkinson, *The Town That Was Murdered*. p.209. Cited in Matt Perry, *The Jarrow Crusade: Protest and Legend*. University of Sunderland Press, 2005, p.147.

#### **Questions and points for discussion**

1. Had the march leaders organized the meeting in Hyde Park well in advance? Explain your answer.
2. Explain how the Jarrow marchers' meeting “grew to enormous size”.

### **Source 14: Ellen Wilkinson speaking at the Hyde Park meeting**

Jarrow as a town has been murdered. It has been murdered as a result of the arrangements of two great combines – the shipping combine on the one side and the steel combine on the other. Jarrow is an object lesson in the working of a system of society that condemns these men of ours to unemployment, and that is something we cannot get away from. What has the Government done? I do not wonder that this cabinet does not want to see us. It does not want to tell the truth about these black areas in the North, in Scotland, and in South Wales that have been left to rot. These are the by-products of a system where men are thrown on slag heaps, as is the stuff that is thrown out of furnaces. They will not be treated like slag, like things you can throw away.

Belfast Telegraph, 2nd November 1936

### **Source 15: Ellen Wilkinson speaking at the Hyde Park meeting**

... It has been suggested that Jarrow has been the centre of a subversive movement against the Government. It may therefore interest you to know that of the total number of marchers 62% are old Army men who served in the war. North Mail, 2nd November 1936  
Cited in Matt Perry, *The Jarrow Crusade: Protest and Legend*. University of Sunderland Press, 2005, pp.149-150.

### **Questions and points for discussion**

1. According to Source 13, who 'murdered' the town of Jarrow?
2. Besides the North of England (where Jarrow is located), what other areas of Britain are identified in Source 13 as 'black areas' (areas of high unemployment)?
3. Explain the reference to 'slag heaps' in Source 13.
4. Explain in your own words the point made by the writer in Source 14.
5. In Source 15, why does the speaker mention the army service of some of the marchers?



[https://www.bbc.co.uk/tyne/content/articles/2006/09/26/jarrow\\_crusade\\_route\\_feature.shtml](https://www.bbc.co.uk/tyne/content/articles/2006/09/26/jarrow_crusade_route_feature.shtml)  
accessed 6-11-23

### **Source 16: Billy McShane on the House of Commons rejection of the petition**

We got turned down. We got a cup of tea, they gave us a cup of tea. When we got turned down in the House of Commons, that was it ... You knew you were finished.

The Guardian, 20th June 1997, cited in Matt Perry, *The Jarrow Crusade: Protest and Legend*. University of Sunderland Press, 2005, p.166.

### **Questions and points for discussion**

1. Who presented the marchers' petition to the House of Commons?
2. What was the main demand made in the petition?

3. What did Billy McShane mean when he said, “You knew you were finished”?

**Source 17: Malcolm Stewart, Commissioner of Special Areas, addresses the marchers at King’s Cross Station, London, before their departure for Jarrow, 5th November, 1936**

I have not been invited to meet you but was determined that you should not go back without a word of encouragement. Your march has done good. I fail to understand how any sober-minded person could have associated your march with revolutionary ideas or intentions. I admire you. You have demonstrated to the country that patience and courage with which you have borne the sufferings of unemployment for many a long year. I am not making promises or raising hopes – but don’t lose courage, I have hope for Jarrow. News Chronicle, 5th November, 1936

Cited in Matt Perry, *The Jarrow Crusade: Protest and Legend*. University of Sunderland Press, 2005, pp.172-173

**Questions and points for discussion**

1. Malcolm Stewart tells the marchers, “Your march has done good.” What ‘good’ does he go on to mention?
2. Explain Malcolm Stewart’s message to the marchers.

**Enquiry, Stage 3: What impact did the march have at the time?**

As is evident from many of the sources examined thus far, the march attracted a lot of attention and much support from the public in the towns they marched through. (See Sources 4, 6, 8 and 10 and Secondary Sources 3 and 4.) Some of the support was due in part to Ellen Wilkinson’s role as a march leader. However, they also attracted criticism from the Government – who questioned the wisdom of holding such marches – and others, some of whom linked the motives of the marchers to communist ideology.

In terms of their immediate objective of a meeting with the Prime Minister, this did not happen. Neither did the Government take any immediate action to alleviate the problem of unemployment in Jarrow and its consequent deprivation and poverty.

On the other hand, there is no doubt that the march captured the public imagination in a way that other marches did not and, for this, various reasons have been suggested e.g. the focus on the problems of one town made it easier for people to identify with; the cross party support for the march, and the attempts to keep it non-political, made it easier for many to support the march without compromising their own political position; the good behavior of the men made a positive impression on the general public which was reflected in their newspaper reports, and the positive impressions were reinforced by colourful details such as the mouth-organ band and the presence of ‘Paddy’, the dog who accompanied the marchers.

Many of the points set out in the preceding paragraphs can be inferred from the sources that follow.

**Source 18: From a report in the Harrogate Herald describing Ellen Wilkinson's speech at the Territorial Army Drill Hall, Harrogate, 12th October**

The pièce de résistance of the evening, however, came at its conclusion, when Miss Ellen Wilkinson, MP for Jarrow, addressed the meeting. A petite figure, with a wealth of bronze hair, spoke fearlessly from the heart, and as she warmed to her subject she fired the audience to frequent bursts of acclamation. I can quite understand Miss Wilkinson's popularity in political circles, and in her the Jarrow crusaders have a marching companion whose efforts in the parliamentary sphere will not slacken until the fate of her constituency has received deeper consideration than it has to date. As I listened I was reminded somehow of Joan of Arc.

Cited in Matt Perry, *The Jarrow Crusade: Protest and Legend*. University of Sunderland Press, 2005, pp.56-57.

**Questions and points for discussion**

1. What impressions of Ellen Wilkinson as a public speaker does the writer convey here?
2. What evidence is there that Ellen Wilkinson's speech made a big impression on the writer?

**Source 19: edited excerpt from a Manchester Guardian report**

There is no political aspect to this march. It is simply the town of Jarrow saying 'Send us work'. In the ranks of the marchers are Labour men, Liberals, Tories, and one or two communists, but you cannot tell who's who. It has the Church's blessing; in fact, it took the blessing of the Bishop of Ripon (Dr. Lunt) and a subscription of £5 from him when it set out today. It also had the blessing of the Bishop of Jarrow (Dr. Gordon).

Miss Wilkinson met us outside Killinghall this afternoon and became the only woman in the procession. She had motored from Manchester to-day but had met with petrol trouble and had been delayed. It was interesting to watch motorists who passed us on the road recognize her and lean out of the window as they went by. Like us all, she made friends with Paddy, the Labrador dog who accompanied the procession uninvited for five miles from Jarrow before anyone realized that he intended to go all the way. When the marshal's whistle goes he goes too and there is no holding him.

Manchester Guardian, Tuesday, 13th October, 1936 © Guardian News and Media Limited

**Questions and points for discussion**

1. How does the writer attempt to demonstrate that, "There is no political aspect to this march"?
2. What evidence does the writer offer that the march "has the Church's blessing"? (However, see also Secondary Source 5.)

3. What impressions of Ellen Wilkinson does Source 18 convey?
4. Who was the 'marshal' referred to in the final sentence?

### Source 20



<https://www.shieldsgazette.com/heritage-and-retro/retro/the-jarrow-march-85-years-on-a-tribute-in-10-pictures-3412946> accessed 6-11-23

### Questions and points for discussion

1. Who is the woman marching to the left of the picture? What is your evidence for this?
2. What are the two men on the right hand side of the picture carrying? What is your evidence for this?

### Source 21: Excerpt from Government statement 15th October, 1936

In the opinion of His Majesty's Government such marches can do no good to the cause for which they are represented to be undertaken, are liable to cause unnecessary hardship for those taking part in them, and are altogether undesirable. In this country governed by a parliamentary system, where every adult has a vote and every area has its representative in the House of Commons to put forward grievances and suggest remedies, processions to London cannot claim to have any constitutional influence on policy. Ministers have therefore decided that encouragement cannot be given to such marches, whatever their particular purpose, and Ministers cannot consent to receive any deputation of 'marchers', although, of course, they are always prepared to meet members of Parliament. Daily Dispatch, 15th October, 1936

Cited in Matt Perry, *The Jarrow Crusade: Protest and Legend*. University of Sunderland Press, 2005, pp.66-67.

### Questions and points for discussion

1. What three objections to the march does the Government statement make?
2. According to the Government statement, whose responsibility was it "to put forward grievances and suggest remedies"?
3. What does the statement say about the possibility of meeting deputations of marchers?



### Secondary Source 5

Despite the prominent coverage of the support that churches gave the Crusade, behind the scenes Herbert Hensley Henson, the Bishop of Durham, was doing his best to undermine the march. He wrote to Cosmo Gordon Lang, the Archbishop of Canterbury, on 15 October to this effect. He had read the report in *The Times* about the Bishop of Jarrow's blessing of the Crusade with consternation. Henson had spoken to the Bishop of Jarrow about the matter the week before the Crusade and the latter had assured him that he would take no part in the event, showing his superior his letter declining the Council's invitation ...

... The reason for the bishop's great determination in opposing the Crusade was not only his paranoid fear of communism and his hostility to Labour but because ... his battle to keep Church of England clergy out of politics, too many of whom were openly sympathetic to the Labour Party.

Matt Perry, *The Jarrow Crusade: Protest and Legend*. University of Sunderland Press, 2005, pp.71-72.

#### Questions and points for discussion

1. What does the writer mean when he says that the Bishop of Durham was working 'behind the scenes' to undermine the march?
2. Explain the interaction between the Bishop of Durham and the Bishop of Jarrow before the march began.
3. What reasons for the Bishop of Durham's opposition to the march does the writer give?

#### Source 22: from *The Irish Times* 'London Letter', 3rd November 1936

The two hundred men who have marched from Jarrow to London have been given are to be given a special place in the Mall to-morrow to witness the passing of the King on his way to Parliament, and later they will hold a public meeting in the Memorial Hall in Farringdon Street. On Wednesday they will spend the greater part of the day in and about the Houses of Parliament, and lunch and tea will be provided for them by friends. During the day the men will be received at the House of Commons

by a number of members who will listen to their stories. On Thursday they return home by train. The conduct of the men while in London has been beyond reproach, and everywhere they have been received with sympathy and encouragement

*The Irish Times*, Tuesday, 3rd November, 1936 © *The Irish Times*

#### Questions and points for discussion

1. What impressions of the way in which the marchers were treated in London does this report convey?
2. Discuss the reporter's observation that, "The conduct of the men while in London has been beyond reproach."

### Source 23

In the late afternoon of 4th November, David Riley described the events of that morning in the House of Commons to his fellow Crusaders. He said the petition was handed over

As if no more than a minute had been spent in organizing it. I heard the answers of the Prime Minister and Mr. Walter Runciman. It means you have drawn a blank. ... They are certainly not going to do that with Jarrow. It does not matter what the consequences are, we are determined. Let us prove to these people that we are not going to suffer that kind of thing. Morning Advertiser, 5th November, 1936

Cited in Matt Perry, *The Jarrow Crusade: Protest and Legend*. University of Sunderland Press, 2005, p.168.

#### Questions and points for discussion

1. Explain why David Riley was unhappy with the way the petition was handed over.
2. What were the names of the two Government ministers mentioned by David Riley? What Government positions did they hold?
3. What did David Riley mean when he said to his fellow marchers: "It means you have drawn a blank"?
4. How would you describe the mood of David Riley as expressed in the concluding sentences of Source 15?

#### **Enquiry, Stage 4: What is the historical significance of the Jarrow March?**

##### **Considering the concept of historical significance**

An important attribute of the historian is the capacity to assess the historical significance of events and issues in the past. Such assessments are provisional rather than absolute and historians may disagree about the significance of particular events, but thinking about and weighing up significance is an important part of what historians do. Getting students to think about historical significance is an excellent way of helping to develop students' critical thinking skills in history.

Christine Counsell, *History and Literacy in Y7: building the lesson around the text*. John Murray, 2004, p.80

### **Five Rs for thinking about historical significance**

Historians tend to judge historical phenomena as significant when these phenomena are one or more of the following:

<b>Revealing</b>	of some aspect of the past
<b>Remarked upon</b>	the event/development was remarked upon by people at the time and/or since
<b>Remembered</b>	the event/development was important at some stage in history within the collective memory of a group or groups
<b>Resonant</b>	people like to make analogies with it; it is possible to connect with experiences, beliefs or situations across time and space
<b>Resulting in change</b>	it had consequences for the future

It is worthwhile exploring with students the extent to which the Jarrow march fits the criteria above, by posing questions based on each criterion. Depending on the class profile, the level of interest and the time available, some or all of the following may be explored with students. Some consideration – brief, if necessary – should be given to each of the five questions.

Question 1: Is the Jarrow March revealing of some aspect of the past?

Question 2: Was the Jarrow March remarked on at the time and/or since?

Question 3: Is the Jarrow March remembered today by the people of Jarrow and other groups of people?

Question 4: Does the Jarrow March still resonate today in the sense that people make connections with it across time and space?

Question 5: Did the Jarrow March cause change or have consequences for the future?

#### **Question 1: Is the Jarrow March revealing of some aspect of the past?**

The 1930s was a period of high unemployment in Britain and elsewhere. For many, the plight of Jarrow and the actions of its marchers came to symbolize the problems of that decade.

#### **Secondary Source 6**

People often think of the 'Thirties' in Britain as a wasted decade dominated by the problem of unemployment. The most enduring images, for example, are the man on the Wigan street corner and the marchers of the Jarrow Crusade. P.188

Dudley Baines, *Recovery from Depression*, in Paul Johnson (ed.) *20th Century Britain: Economic, Social and Cultural Change*. Longman (London and New York), 1994

#### **Secondary Source 7**

Of all the protests against unemployment which the working class in Britain sustained during the interwar years, the Jarrow Crusade stands out. It does so not because it was the largest

event; nor because its threat was greater than any other unemployed protest. If anything it stands out for the opposite reason, for the Crusade was a controlled, stylized version of the appeals which hungry and hard-up workers made to the wider community. Nevertheless, Jarrow's contribution to

the struggles of the unemployed has become far more than the than the major memory of unemployed struggles and protests. It has morphed into an iconic representation of wider streams of working-class consciousness. If today, ordinary men and women on the street were asked to list seminal moments in labour history, Jarrow would feature prominently. P.167

Donald McRaild (2008) Review Forum: The Jarrow Crusade. Editorial Comment, Labour History Review, Vol.73, No.1, April 2008, pp. 167-180 © Society for the Study of Labour History

### **Question 2: Was the Jarrow March remarked on at the time and/or since?**

We have seen how the march was remarked on by newspapers, government officials and in Parliament, and that it also featured in newsreel footage and newspaper photographs. It has been the subject of a major historical study by the historian, Matt Perry, *The Jarrow Crusade: Protest and Legend*, published in 2005.

### **Question 3: Is the Jarrow March remembered today by the people of Jarrow and other groups of people?**

Matt Perry (author of *The Jarrow Crusade: Protest and Legend*) mentions that while his book was in preparation three exhibitions featured the Jarrow March. He goes on to say: "There are - to my knowledge – five plays, two musicals, an opera, three pop songs, two folk songs, several paintings and poems, a short story, performance art, a mural, two sculptures [in Jarrow], glassware, four television documentaries (three British, one German), four radio programmes, a children's story, a cuddly toy, a real ale, a public house, an election poster, street names, innumerable pieces of journalism and historical references, and of course hundreds of often-reproduced photographs." P.2

### **Question 4: Does the Jarrow March still resonate today in the sense that people make connections with it across time and space?**

One obvious way in which this is so is the march organized for August-September 2014 to protest at the Government's policy towards the National Health Service (NHS). That march followed as closely as possible the route followed by the Jarrow marchers of 1936. (See page 13 of this resource.)

### **Question 5: Did the Jarrow March cause change or have consequences for the future?**

Obviously, at the time, the march did not cause any significant change in government policy. However, some historians have suggested that the march did have consequences for the future, that, for example, the construction of the welfare state after World War II was influenced by the increased dissatisfaction with the consequences of unemployment and poverty that the Jarrow March helped to publicise.

### **Secondary source 8**

The marchers went home with nothing achieved and had their dole money cut because they had not been available for work (not that there was any) during the period of their march. In the end, it was left to Hitler to solve England's unemployment problem by driving its Government to rearmament and to the conscription of the entire labour force for the prosecution of total war. The Welfare State that emerged after that war was not created out of mere sentimental humanitarianism. It was created mainly out of angry disgust at the humiliations suffered by millions of people between the wars under Governments composed of men deficient in both intelligence and imagination.

L.C.B. Seaman, *Life in Britain between the Wars*, London: B.T. Batsford Ltd, New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons. (1970) pp.180-182

### **Secondary Source 9**

The defeat of the Jarrow Crusade bore the potential for postponed victory in a second sense. The bitter struggles of the 1930s informed the post-war reforms of reconstruction:

unemployment provision, regional policy, the National Health Service and the governmental commitment to full employment.

Matt Perry, *The Jarrow Crusade: Protest and Legend*. University of Sunderland Press, 2005, p.194.

### **Questions and points for discussion**

1. Of what aspect of the past is the Jarrow March 'revealing', according to Secondary Source 6?
2. Of the many protests against unemployment during the inter-war years, why does the Jarrow March 'stand out', according to Secondary Source 7?
3. Which of the primary sources about the Jarrow March that you have examined do you think best captures the impact the march made at the time?
4. Research: See if you can find online an image of one of the sculptures mentioned by Matt Perry, the one unveiled in 2001 on the 65th anniversary of the march.
5. What evidence is there that the Jarrow March still resonates with people today?
6. How did the Jarrow March influence post-war government policy according to Secondary Sources 8 and 9.

## **A critical skills exercise**

Documents-based study



Development of critical skills



Documents-based question

The documents-based study is “the primary means of developing their skills in working with evidence”. (S.5)

The documents-based question, “will test candidates’ ability to interrogate, correlate and evaluate a particular body of evidence”. (S.15)

### **Rationale for card sorts**

In a card sort, cards with text (single words, phrases, sentences) are grouped or ranked according to particular criteria. Card sorts are good in helping students to make connections and form judgements. By having the text on cards, students can move them around, group them and, when necessary, change their minds. This approach promotes discussion and collaborative learning.

The intention of the critical skills exercise on the pages that follow is to illustrate in a practical and active manner the type of critical skills that the documents-based study is designed to develop. Essentially, the purpose of the exercise is to encourage students to THINK by discussing snippets of evidence and making judgements on their import by deciding whether they support or oppose the given proposition. The PLAY element is important and the exercise should be an engaging one for students. The intention is not to come up with answers that are either ‘right’ or ‘wrong’: much of the value of the exercise is in the process itself. That said, it should be possible to reach consensus in most cases and to clarify misunderstandings – where these arise – in the process.

In literacy development, such approaches can play a pivotal role as students engage together in purposeful reading and discussion of text and are active participants in the learning process.

### **What is involved in the critical skills exercise**

Each group of 4-5 students is given an A4 sheet with the proposition at the top of the page and two columns headed: Agrees and Disagrees. Each group is also given an envelope containing 8 short documentary extracts – each on its own small strip of paper or cardboard – and the task is to discuss with each other the appropriate column in which to place each extract. When each group has reached its conclusions, the outcome of the exercise is discussed in a whole group setting.

**Proposition: The Jarrow march achieved nothing for the people who marched**

Place each of the source extracts in the appropriate column, depending on whether you think it agrees or disagrees with the above proposition. If the group cannot agree on whether a particular extract agrees or disagrees with the proposition, place it along the dividing line in the middle and wait to hear what other groups have to say about the extract.

Agrees	Disagrees

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Source A</b></p> <p>Popular pressure very often is needed to stir up a Government to a more energetic sense of its duties, and the Jarrow marchers have drawn so much attention to the desperate conditions in their town that they may provide a case in point.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Source E</b></p> <p>Our march didn't do us a bit of good – we were still out of work at the end of it.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Source B</b></p> <p>It's nice that this [opera] was written for the marchers, but I cannot understand it in some ways, because the march was not really a success. It didn't bring jobs back to the town – only the war did that.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Source F</b></p> <p>It was a waste of time, but I enjoyed every step ... The only thing that saved Jarrow was the war when the shipyards were needed again. The thing about the march was that it was the best feed I've ever had. I was young and I liked walking ... It was like a holiday.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Source C</b></p> <p>My feet hurt horribly – but, all the same, it's been a holiday. While you're marching you don't think.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Source G</b></p> <p>There is not a man here who is not better in health for the march. We have seen food we had not seen before for nearly 12 years – good beef and ham, instead of bread and margarine.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Source D</b></p> <p>We got a good reception everywhere we went. We had good meals and a good spirit among the men – no rows. It was champion. I'd go tomorrow.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Source H</b></p> <p>It was fantastic. You couldn't get moved at Jarrow train station. We were supposed to have marched back to the Town Hall. We couldn't. It was more than the VE-day celebrations. I was proud myself to be part of it. In my opinion, there will never be another one like it.</p>



<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Source E</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Eddie Stead One of the marchers, speaking in 1986</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Cited in Matt Perry, <i>The Jarrow Crusade: Protest and Legend</i> University of Sunderland Press, 2005, p.166</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Source A</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The Irish Times</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">16 October, 1936</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Source F</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Conn Whalen Last survivor of the march, interviewed in 1986</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Cited in Matt Perry, <i>The Jarrow Crusade: Protest and Legend</i> University of Sunderland Press, 2006, p.167</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Source B</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Jimmy McCauley One of the original marchers interviewed in 1997, after a performance of <i>Burning Road</i>, an opera about the Jarrow march</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Cited in Matt Perry, <i>The Jarrow Crusade: Protest and Legend</i> University of Sunderland Press</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Source G</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Unnamed marcher</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1 November, 1936</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Cited in Matt Perry, <i>The Jarrow Crusade: Protest and Legend</i> University of Sunderland Press, 2005, p.145</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Source C</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Unnamed marcher</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Star</i> 31 October, 1936</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Source H</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Bob Maugham Marcher, remembering the return to Jarrow 60 years later</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Cited in Matt Perry, <i>The Jarrow Crusade: Protest and Legend</i> University of Sunderland Press, 2005, p.173</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Source D</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Billy McShane</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Shields Gazette</i> Jarrow March Supplement, 1986, xi</p>

### **Your conclusions on the enquiry**

Our enquiry has looked at reaction to the march at the time and, also, reasons why it is still seen as having historical significance.

Based on the evidence you have encountered in the course of the enquiry, draw up

- a) a list of what you think are the four most important points about the reaction to the marchers at the time of the march
- b) a list of what you think are the three most important reasons why the march is still seen today as historically significant

Make your case in a written report, devoting one paragraph to each of the reasons identified. In a concluding paragraph, give your judgement – based on the evidence you have read – in relation to the question: Why did the Jarrow march make such a big impact?

OR

Now that we have looked at a wide range of evidence on the Jarrow march of October 1936

What do you think are the THREE most important points about the way different people reacted to the march?

What do you think are the THREE most important reasons why the march is seen as historically significant today

For each of the reasons you give, you must back up your reason with evidence from the primary sources (such as newspaper reports, film clips, diary extracts) or secondary sources (such as extracts from the writings of historians) that we have studied.