



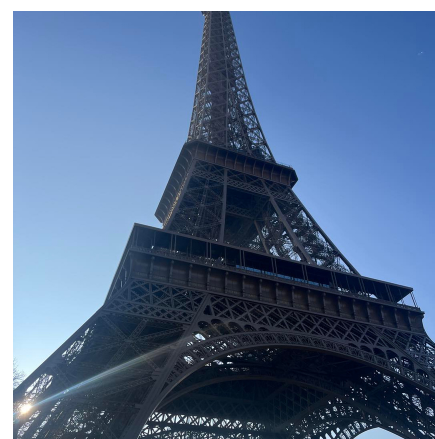
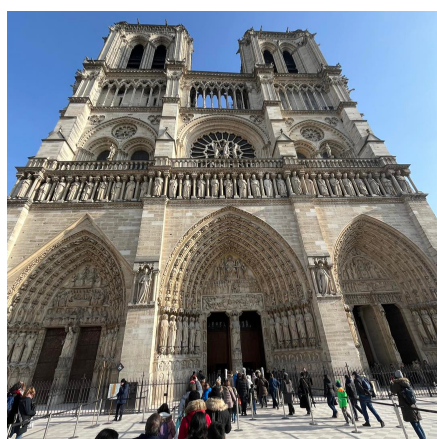
Praise the memory makers

Written by Alan Pearson

I've just returned from my 9th Paris trip with the current year sixes. During the return journey to the U.K. I was reflecting on the trip and evaluating the worthiness of the experience, for staff and importantly for the pupils. The Eiffel Tower, The river boat, Notre Dame, Disney and the Vimy Ridge Memorial.

My mind started to drift back to 1983, and I began to relive vivid memories of my own educational visit to France.

I can remember how excited I was. The first time I was leaving the U.K. On the coach with my friends, making new friends, new sights, new tastes, new smells and new experiences- no less than sensational. Just a few highlights; The Paris architecture, the first visit to a hyper market, trying new foods, running from the bottom to the top of the Eiffel Tower up all those steps without stopping (I couldn't do that now) Joan of Arc, Rouen Cathedral....and so many more memories, so bright all these years on!



Who was the architect who made this happen, who had the foresight and the vision of this mind expanding trip? Of course it wouldn't have worked without the teachers and staff, however without embarrassment and with the upmost respect it was the trip coordinator- Mr Ayres. Someone who had the foresight to see the benefits, a visit which was almost unheard of back in '83, he was and is a memory maker.

For a long time I have believed teachers are the makers of meaningful, memorable memories. I have to ask myself why am I such a believer of practical experiences?

The trip to France in 1983 must be a significant contributor.

The learning that stuck from that visit is another list, a different currency - the maths, geography, history, social skillsbut I also have to mention the excitement and the FUN. Being with new friends and buying Michael Jackson's Thriller on cassette from a vast hyper market for my Walkman on the coach.

There is much theory linked to practical experiences and learning, experiences that engage the senses and that are worthy - I'm most certainly a subscriber to this theory. Ask yourself the question; what positive lessons or experiences can you remember from school? Art, D.T., P.E., singing, a musical production, chanting tables or was it cooking? Why, maybe because what you can remember were practical experiences?

I fully understand how it would be difficult to make all and everything practical, however many pupils use exercise books for completing tasks which you could argue is practical. The question here is; what school tasks can I remember and why? It was the ones that I enjoyed, sports, making things, it was physical tasks I liked doing and those lessons sailed by so quickly. I was engaged. My opinion here is clear, whatever area of the curriculum that you are delivering, try adding some practical and turn the session into a meaningful, memorable one! Teachers are memory makers.

I was lucky enough to visit a school a couple of years ago on the south west coast. They had woven parts of the curriculum; design and technology, science along with location. Certainly not tenuous links. The task was kite making and then to take the kite/s to the local beach to test them! The writing the children did afterwards about

their experience was fantastic. Do you think the children will remember that experience? I think so. Sky high learning!

So let's praise the memory makers and continue to make meaningful, magical memories.