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Illustrations

1. The time line charts – blank for the pupil to complete
2. The clock with 60 minutes indicated
3. Time lime of the day – blank for the pupil to complete
4. Time line of the day showing each hour
5. The earth in orbit around the sun – blank version for pupil to complete
6. The earth in orbit around the sun, defining the year
7. The earth in orbit, with the seasons shown, and one season divided into weeks
8. The earth in orbit showing seasons, months and weeks
9. Multiple clock faces
10. The moon's orbit round the earth
11. The sun, the earth and the moon

9. Months

Opening questions:

- Ask the child which month he/she was born in.
- Ask the child which month Christmas is in.
- Ask the child for the first month of the year.
- Ask the child how long a month is. (An answer that says 30 days or 31 days is fine).
- Ask the child which one is longer – a season or a month.
- Ask the child which one is shorter – a week or a month.
- Ask the child to name the months of the year in order.

If the child has problems with any of these questions continue with this section.

Ask the child to tell you the names of the four seasons. Take winter as an example and ask the child if he/she knows any of the months of winter. Although it is true that the seasons start and end part way through a month, for the sake of simplicity (and because most people in the population only have a generalised idea of when seasons start and end) we will work with this pattern of seasons:

Spring – March, April and May

Summer – June, July, August

Autumn – September, October and November

Winter – December, January and February

Winter

We choose winter as the starting point because many children will associate Christmas with winter, and associate Christmas with December. Even if they cannot make the link when you first ask there is a good chance that the child will retain the link once it is pointed out.

Take three cards and write on each card one month of winter – December, January and February. Ask the child what he or she knows about each month. The normal answer for December is Christmas. For January the most likely answer is “New Year” – but any other answer is acceptable if it is meaningful to the child.

February is much more of a problem, unless the child or one of the child’s family has a birthday in February. If all else fails you may have to leave the month blank in terms of a special event – but it is also possible to insert a date from history – especially a period of history that the child has studied. For example, February 1587 – Mary Queen of Scots was beheaded on the order of Queen Elizabeth I. The two were cousins – you might like to divert for a moment onto a discussion about any relatives of the child whom he/she might like to have beheaded! Or you might focus on February 1554, when Lady Jane Grey was beheaded in the Tower of London aged 16. Or February 1790 when 1000 French troops were defeated in their attempt to invade Britain by the female population of Fishguard. It may seem a long diversion to get into one of these stories – but if there is no other way of helping the child remember the month, this must be done.

Details of well over one thousand other anniversaries are given in “*The Relevant Assembly*” – a book designed for those wishing to tie the daily assembly in with a historical event. The book is photocopiable and thus, if a copy of the volume has already been purchased by your

school, it is perfectly permissible for you to photocopy relevant sections. If your school does not have a copy, there are details on the final page of this volume.

Spring

Having established the months of winter, move on to the months of spring. Use different coloured cards this time for these three months, write the names of the months on each one and the season below. On the reverse write something of importance to the child for each month.

Here are a few more ideas – again there are many more in “*The Relevant Assembly*”, as noted above. However you will note that once again we are very deliberately leaving Easter out of the equation. With the historical dates, all we require is for the child to be able to relate to one of them. Thus if the child is familiar with Henry VIII then he/she can put a picture of Henry on the April card, which gives it more significance to the child.

March – St David’s Day; Julius Caesar was stabbed by Marcus Brutus (“Beware the ides of March”).

April – 1739 Dick Turpin hanged, defeat of Bonnie Prince Charlie (1746), Henry VIII became king of England (1509), death of Shakespeare (1616).

May – May Day, maypole dancing, two holidays (May Day and Whitsun), VE Day (1945), Manchester Ship Canal opened (1894), Anne Boleyn beheaded on the orders of Henry VIII who then quickly married Jane Seymour (1536).

Summer

June – longest day of the year, D-Day (1944), Robert the Bruce died (1329), Coronation Day of Queen Elizabeth II (1953).

July – school summer term ends for most children and summer holiday starts, school sports day, first “Live Aid” concert (1985).

August – Coca Cola sold for the first time in England (1900), the only month for most children in the UK where there is no school at all (Schools in Scotland and N Ireland normally have this event in July), first atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima (1945).

Autumn

September – back to school after the summer holiday, terrorists attack twin towers of the World Trade Centre in New York (2001).

October – “Summer Time” ends – clocks go back, Halloween, introduction of breath tests for drivers in the UK (1967).

November – Remembrance Day, Guy Fawkes Day, start of the demolition of the Berlin Wall (1989).

Having selected something for each month, using where ever possible personal rather than historical data, ask the child to set out twelve cards and on each one write the name of the months in order. Then the child should draw a picture on the back that relates to that month.

Ask the child to lay out the 12 pictures in order.

Now ask the child to relate the 12 months to the four seasons, by laying them out in groups of three – each group having a different colour – so now we have the months of the year in order, clearly showing the seasons as they progress.

Ask the child:

- Which are the warmest months?
- Which are the coldest months?
- Which are the months of summer?
- Which is the first month of the year?

If the child is struggling at this point ask the child to write out the months on card once again but this time use different coloured card – one for each season. Put winter on white card, spring on green, summer on yellow and autumn on brown. Ask the child why he/she thinks we might have chosen these particular colours.

If the child is coping with this sequence the child might, at this point, have a problem with the start of the year, because we have not looked at the year as a sequence running January to December but have focussed on the seasons as the dividing line. If the child does not know that the year starts in January and ends in December we now have to take the cards and lay them out as a year. The seasons will still be visible because of the colour change on the cards, so you can ask the child where winter is on the new layout. The answer of course is that winter starts in one year and ends in the next – but it may be necessary to point this out to the child.

- Which is the last month of the year?
- Which month is your birthday?
- Which month comes after the month with your birthday?
- Which month is Christmas Day in?
- Which month are you away from school on holiday? (This question has a different answer in different parts of the UK).
- How many months are there in a year?
- How many seasons are there in a year?
- How many months in a season?
- Which is the longest – a week or a month?
- Which is the shortest – a month or a year?

At this point it is possible to contemplate the mathematical link between the week, and the month, but of course it is complex, and my own view is that it is better left.

10. Days of the month

If the child has grasped months you can ask the child how long each month is – and get the answer that they are mostly 30 or 31 days. The point to remember is that we are teaching the sequence of the months of the year and the inter-relationship of months and days. So the answer “30 or 31” is perfectly adequate.

If the child does not know the answer get out a diary or calendar and point out that each month is different but all except one have either 30 or 31 days.

If the child has grasped months with ease you can of course continue and teach the whole sequence of the months, and bring February and leap years into the equation – but this is not essential – and it should certainly not get in the way of moving along the sequence of time.

The best approach for children who don't know about the days of the month is to have the child set out the 12 cards once again, and for you to write the number of days in each month on the cards. Since the cards have become familiar in the learning of the sequence of months the addition of the number is one more addition to an existing pack.

The child should now practise saying the sequence in order with the number of days – as in January 31, February 28, March 31, etc. The idea is not for the child to learn the sequence by rote but rather for the child to remember that the number of days per month varies.

At this point you can introduce a calendar and show the child that in its own way this reflects the number of days in the month.

The question now is whether the child needs to know how many days there are in each month. My view is that where the child is still having all sorts of problems with time it is not a good idea to load the child with issues of which months have how many days. However if you do ask the child to repeat the months of the year regularly in the pattern “January –31, February – 28, March – 31, April – 30, May – 31, June – 30, July – 31, August – 31, September – 30, October – 31, November – 30, December 31” they can start to learn it. They will also appreciate that for the most part every other month has 31 days – except for the issue of July and August. For English children July and August having 31 days is a particularly good piece of news since they are on holiday in the latter part of July and all of August. (It is a trivial comment such as this which can help make the abstract concept of the number of days in a month more meaningful to many children).

Children might also find it helps to remember the rhyme:

*30 days hath September, April, June and November
All the rest have 31 except for February alone
Which hath but 28 days clear and 29 in each leap year.*

It is worth exploring any route possible to help the children remember this type of information because the situation in terms of our measurement of time gets even more complex at this point for the next step following the months of the year and the days of the month is to point out the issue of the leap year, and the sheer oddity of the fact that it takes the earth 365.25 days to revolve around the sun. Worse, even this knowledge does not readily explain why we need leap days.

We do need to return to issues of the calendar and the diary in order to get an overall perspective of time and I therefore strongly suggest that unless the child already knows the