WIKIPEDIA: TOODYAY'S GAOL MEETS THE WORLD

HASS, English

How useful is Wikipedia for learning about Toodyay's past?

Students will:

- Examine the structure and content of a Wikipedia article about Toodyay's Newcastle Gaol.
- Consider the pluses and minuses of using Wikipedia when undertaking research.
- Appreciate how community volunteers have contributed to making Toodyay's history more accessible.
- Simplify complex text.

ENGAGE

- What is 'Wikipedia'?
- Have you ever used it? If so, how useful did you find it?
- What have you heard people say about it?

EXPLORE

Look at the Wikipedia article about Toodyay's Newcastle Gaol Museum.

Discuss:

- How is the information organised (what headings and sub headings are used)?
- What can you learn about the Gaol by looking at the pictures?
- Why are some words in the article in blue?
- What do the small numbers in square brackets next to some words mean?
- What are some other interesting things you see on the page?

Read the article and, using the attached template:

- list at least five things that you have learned about the history of the Newcastle Gaol;
- identify anything that you are not clear about (eg. meaning of some of the words);
- identify at least one thing about the gaol that is not answered by reading the article.

Discuss students' responses.

- Do we know who wrote this article and where they got their information from?

EXPLAIN

- Wikipedia is an online encyclopaedia, written collaboratively by the people who use it. It is a special type of website designed to make collaboration easy, called a wiki.
- Since 2015, the Shire of Toodyay, Toodyay Historical Society and Wikimedia Australia have collaborated to produce a series of articles about Toodyay's buildings, historic sites and people. The goal of this 'Toodyaypedia' project was to share information about Toodyay with the world – and to make it easy for visitors to the town to learn about its heritage. The project included getting the community involved in writing Wikipedia articles about Toodyay, and installing QR codes around various locations around the town which, when scanned, bring up the relevant article. (Show students some photos linked to the Toodyaypedia project).
- Some of the articles were written by Margie Eberle, the Shire's Museum Curator and Cultural Heritage Officer. Others were produced

by researchers from Toodyay Historical Society and other volunteers. Amongst their sources of information were the Shire's local history records – such as old diaries, news articles and photos. Many of these original sources are listed in the 'References' section at the bottom of the Wikipedia page.

- Before articles can be posted on Wikipedia, they need to meet certain guidelines, eg. they cannot include material which is under copyright.
- Wikipedia articles can be edited by anyone, which is why sometimes Wikipedia is not considered a 'reliable' source of information. However, these changes are monitored very closely by the Wikipedia community, in an effort to maintain and continuously improve material which is online. Wikipedia is a great starting point for information about a subject. Wikipedia recommends you explore the quoted references, as well as other sources of information to conduct your own research.
- Watch a video about the Toodyayapedia project on WA Weekender.

EXTEND

Although anyone can use Wikipedia, the articles are written with adults in mind, and often assume that the readers have a certain amount of knowledge already. This means that the language used in Wikipedia articles can sometimes be difficult to understand for students or people who don't speak English very well. However, there are also Wikipedia articles in other languages, and 'Simple English' articles – although they do not have as much content as standard Wikipedia.

Working individually or in pairs, get students to re-write the Wikipedia article about the Newcastle Gaol so that is simple enough to understand by young children.

EVALUATE AND REFLECT

- What are some positive and negative aspects to Wikipedia?

- Why did the Shire of Toodyay undertake the 'Wikipedia' project?

WANT TO DO MORE?

- Explore other Toodyaypedia articles. Can you suggest one person, place or event linked to Toodyay that should be included on Wikipedia that isn't? List three persuasive reasons for why they should be included.

NEWCASTLE GAOL MUSEUM WIKIPEDIA ARTICLE

Facts I learned about Newcastle Gaol	Things in the article I don't understand

One thing that this article doesn't tell me is: _____

_____

Launching and promoting Toodyaypedia at the Toodyay Agricultural Show.

QR codes linking to Wikipedia articles at Connor's Mill Museum

One of the Toodyaypedia plaques placed around the town.

A busload of 'Wikimedians' (experienced Wikipedia writers) from Perth volunteered their time to provide one-on-one assistance for interested people to learn the ropes in editing articles for Toodyaypedia