**The future of Venice**

**Lesson 4 plan: A changing place: governance, economic issues and challenges**

**Lesson aim:** To gain an understanding of how political and economic changes have affected the historic city of Venice, to better understand the challenges currently facing the city, and to learn about some of the ways that Venice could meet these challenges over the coming decades.

**Lesson objectives:**

* An update on high and low water events affecting the city in 2019 and 2020
* To learn about the municipality of Venice (Comune of Venice) and the different scales of governance that affect the historic centre
* To learn about specific economic challenges facing the city
* To consider how political and economic problems could be addressed to sustain Venice as a living city
* To consider aspects of Venetian identity and how it has changed and may change in the future

**Learning activities and tasks:**

**Starter (20 minutes)**

Students read the articles about the scale and impacts of flooding (*acqua alta*) in November 2019 and about the exceptionally low water levels reported in January 2020. There are also short embedded video clips to watch within these articles.

[**https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-50401308**](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-50401308)

[**https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-51098129**](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-51098129)

[**https://news.sky.com/story/venice-canals-almost-run-dry-just-two-months-after-flooding-11907106**](https://news.sky.com/story/venice-canals-almost-run-dry-just-two-months-after-flooding-11907106)

Students then attempt answers to the following questions, either independently or as a class based discussion.

* How significant was the flooding of Venice in November 2019 compared with its historic record of flooding?
* Suggest reasons for the flooding of Venice in November 2019.
* Give some social and economic impacts of this episode of flooding.
* What might be a reason for the exceptionally low water levels observed in January 2020? (*hint*: consider factors that influence the way water flows in and out of the lagoon with the tides, Lesson 2 contains more detail on the nature of coastal lagoons.)
* What types of problems for the city result from both exceptionally high and exceptionally low water levels?

Students can review their answers by reading the **2019 and 2020 briefing document**.

As an optional skills exercise (class room based or preparatory assignment), students can open the ***Acqua alta* data table** to plot a line graph of the data and to comment on the observed trend and on what might be extrapolated for the future.

**Main activities**

*An exploration of relationships and connections: political forces, different levels of governance, and related economic issues.*

**Activity 1 (10 to 20 minutes)**

Students watch this short Sky News video and discuss the following questions: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MmQbEgUVz40>

* Why are cruise ships such a significant presence in Venice despite increasing opposition by many residents? What political and economic conflicts probably relate to the cruise ships?

Students then read and make notes on two articles, one on economic and social issues surrounding mass tourism in Venice, and the other on the December 2019 governance referendum.

[**https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/venice-tourism-overcrowding-intl/index.html**](https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/venice-tourism-overcrowding-intl/index.html) (includes an embedded video clip on the proposed day tripper admission fee)

[**https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/dec/02/venice-rejects-autonomous-rule-referendum-low-turnout-italy**](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/dec/02/venice-rejects-autonomous-rule-referendum-low-turnout-italy)

**Activity 2 (40 to 50 minutes)**

Students study the **Levels of governance** PowerPoint slides and complete the **Governance noting sheet and Comune of Venice map activity**.

Students then study the **Venice governance and economy** PowerPoint slides (either individually or teacher led) and also explore the hyperlinks that are contained within the slide show. Classroom discussion (or written work) to follow on any of four questions:

* “Can Venice’s problems be most effectively tackled at the local, regional, or national level?”

*Students should be able to identify conflicts of interest between different stakeholders and to recognise that different priorities exist at different levels of governance.*

* “Mass tourism: a blessing and a curse. Evaluate the pros and cons of the tourist industry for Venice.” *Students should recognise that tourism in itself is not necessarily a damaging activity, rather it depends on the type of tourism and its management.*
* “A step towards sustainable tourism or a sticking plaster? Assess the benefit of the day tripper admission fee which comes into effect in 2020.” *Students should be able to recognise ways in which Venice’s economic challenges are more complex than simply the need to generate more revenue to cope with the impacts of mass tourism.*
* “Discuss ways in which the historic city’s economy could be strengthened and diversified in the years to come.” *Students should be able to suggest and evaluate the potential of some economic activities not aimed at mass tourism.*

**Plenary (20 minutes)**

Classroom discussion or debate about priorities for Venice and its political and economic future with students taking on the views and perspectives of different stakeholders. For example:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Retired resident of Venice | Hotel manager resident in Venice | Student at a university in Venice | Cruise ship port employee |
| An international tourist | Person in the local fishing industry | Resident of Mestre commuting to Venice for work | Farmer on one of the islands in the lagoon of Venice |

Other options to discuss as a plenary include:

* Do you agree that UNESCO should add Venice to its list ‘World Heritage in Danger’? Give reasons for your opinion.
* Imagine that the Comune of Venice is given several billion euros by the Italian government without any specific spending requirements. Give a reasoned account of how you think the Comune of Venice should spend this money.
* Discuss what you understand by a *Venetian* identity and whether such an identity can survive the era of mass tourism. (See the Wikipedia entry on ‘place identity’ for ideas.)
* Study the Field Studies Council webpage on ‘placemaking’: <https://www.geography-fieldwork.org/a-level/place/placemaking/> and decide which research questions would apply to Venice as a ‘changing place’ or as a place that is perceived and experienced differently by different people?

**Resources:**

* BBC article <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-50401308>
* BBC article <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-51098129>
* SkyNews article <https://news.sky.com/story/venice-canals-almost-run-dry-just-two-months-after-flooding-11907106>
* SkyNews video (Cruise ship crashes into dock and tourist boat in Venice) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MmQbEgUVz40>
* CNN article <https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/venice-tourism-overcrowding-intl/index.html>
* Guardian article <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/dec/02/venice-rejects-autonomous-rule-referendum-low-turnout-italy>
* 2019 and 2020 briefing document (pdf/msword)
* *Acqua alta* data table (excel)
* Levels of governance (PowerPoint)
* Governance noting sheet and Comune of Venice map activity (pdf/msword)
* Venice governance and economy (PowerPoint)