



HISTORY BITES

LITTLE NIBBLES OF HISTORY

What was the last invasion of Britain?

*The French invasion of Fishguard in February 1797.
Possibly the weirdest invasion ever!*

Yes, the French really did try to invade us.

They made the mistake of trying to land in Wales and then march through the country to London.

The year was 1797, just after the French Revolution and Napoleon Bonaparte was otherwise involved in central Europe. In his absence the newly formed French revolutionary government, the Directory, appears to have devised a 'cunning plan', so they thought.

They were convinced that the English people were being held down just like them.



The Plan

They had this simple plan, that they knew would work brilliantly, and the British upper classes wouldn't know what had hit them.

It was a three-pronged attack on Britain devised by a French general, Lazare Hoche. Two forces would land in Britain as a diversionary effort, while the main body would land in Ireland. That was the plan, unfortunately bad weather and ill-discipline halted two of the prongs but the third, landing in Wales and marching on Bristol, went ahead!

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1



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Now, Lazare Hoche, was convinced that once the people saw French revolutionaries, who had come to free them, the people would rise and join them.

A big mistake. The Welsh people were reasonably happy with their lot.

What Happened when they landed?

The French then made a few more mistakes

The Wales-bound invasion force was made up of a weird group of soldiers, there were 1,400 soldiers, and only 600 were real French regular soldiers.

You see, the problem was that the other 800 were irregulars, made up of republicans, deserters, convicts, and even royalist prisoners.

The French assumed this would be easy. They chose to land under the cover of darkness at Carreg Wastad Point, three miles northwest of Fishguard. Then, as they marched across the land to London hundreds of people would join them. Yes, this tiny invasion force would achieve victory!

Actually, I do wonder how many bottles of cognac they had drunk while planning this!

As a result, as soon as they landed discipline broke down as they immediately started to loot nearby settlements. Then, fatally, they found a stash of alcohol!

Jemima Nichols

Now the locals were not happy, especially as the local militia were some miles away. So, a local lady, Jemima Nicholas, decided to trick them. While they waited for the military to react, as there weren't many soldiers in the area, she persuaded local women to dress in cloaks and high black steeple-crowned hats, so they looked like soldiers. Then she got a local retired army commander to marshal them into some kind of a military formation and march up and down a hill till dusk.



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Believe it or not it worked!

The result was the French commander, seeing all these troops marching across the hills, thought he was outnumbered. He panicked and surrendered those soldiers he still commanded. The ladies went out looking for the stragglers. It is said that the ladies rounded them all up. Jemima Nicholas found and captured twelve French soldiers and as she didn't know what to do with them then locked them inside St. Mary's church!

This was the last ever landing on British soil by an invading force, which is why it is called the

"The Last Invasion of Mainland Britain".

So, since 1066 we have never been invaded, there have been revolutions, some glorious, but never successful.

Those pesky French have tried to invade Britain several times.

EDUCATIONAL MUSICALS

has created a fabulous children's musical about one such attempt

TRAFALGAR

Has a great script and 12 catchy songs your children will just love performing.



To Learn more:

<https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofWales/The-Last-Invasion-of-Britain/>

<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/politics/day-1797-french-invaded-wales-14324947>

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3

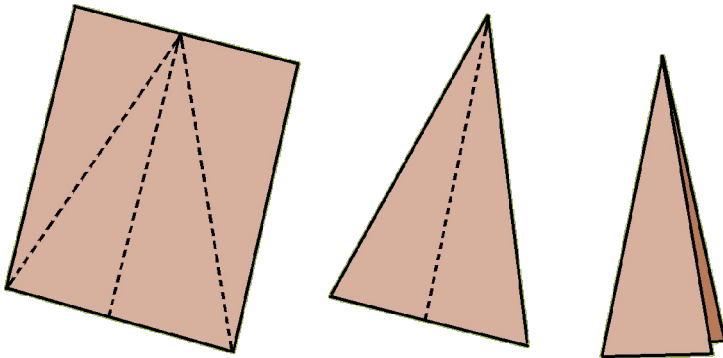


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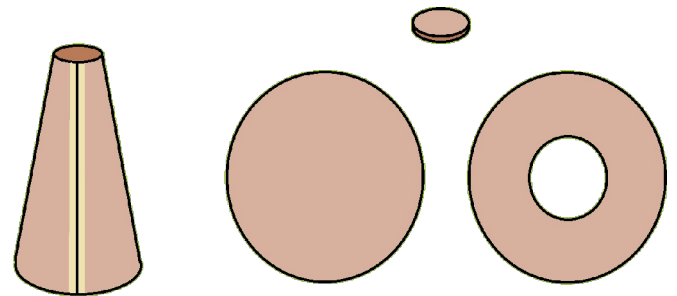
1 lesson.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY TALL HAT



To create a tall hat you will need two pieces of A1 black card. Cut out a large triangle from one sheet of card as in the illustration. Then fold this down the middle and attach with Sellotape or masking tape creating a large cone shape, which should fit over a child's head. If it is too big, cut down until it fits comfortably.

Now cut off the top of the cone to create the flat top part of the hat. Using the other piece of black card cut out a large circle. This doesn't have to be perfect. Place the cone on top of this and draw around it. Cut this smaller circle out of the bigger one so creating a large doughnut shape.



Attach the cone to the hat's brim using one long piece of Sellotape or masking tape attached around the cone's base, half on and half off. Snip this tape, creating a lot of petals. Bend these back and attach the cone to the brim. Using a piece of scrap card create a smaller disc to fill in the top of the cone. You can also use limited amounts of tape to stick the underside of the hat's brim to the inside of the hat's cone. This will make your hat a little stronger.

You can now use a piece of differently coloured card or scrap material to create a band around the hat. Feathers or jewellery created from junk or metallic coloured scrap paper can also be added.

