

“Who Gets to Tell the Story?”

Hashima Island and Contested Heritage — GCSE Lesson Plan (50 minutes)

Simulating Silence — Secondary Teacher Resources

Key Stage	GCSE / KS4 (Ages 14-16)
Duration	50 minutes
Sources used	Source Sheet: A, E, F, G, K, N
Curriculum link	AQA GCSE History — “Britain: Migration, Empires and the People” (Paper 2A/C)
Key concepts	Interpretation, evidence, causation, significance
Prior knowledge	Basic understanding of what a World Heritage Site is. No Japan knowledge required.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Analyse how different institutions construct competing narratives about the same historical site
2. Evaluate the reliability and utility of digital sources by examining provenance, purpose, and institutional connections
3. Explain why heritage interpretation is contested and what that reveals about the relationship between history and power

Starter: Two descriptions, one island (5 minutes)

Project two descriptions of the same place — Source A’s description of Hashima and Source G’s description. Do not reveal they describe the same island.

Ask: Could these be about the same place?

Reveal they are. The lesson question: Why do these accounts differ so radically?

Main Activity (40 minutes)

Phase 1 — Source analysis in pairs (15 minutes)

Distribute three source pairs to different groups:

Pair 1: Source E (UNESCO 2015) and Source F (UNESCO 2021) — what changed?

Pair 2: Source A (official heritage) and Source K (Truth of Gunkanjima) — same organisation, different audiences

Pair 3: Source G (Korea.net) and Source K (Truth of Gunkanjima) — directly opposing claims

Each pair completes a structured analysis:

Question	Source 1	Source 2
Who made this?		
Who is it for?		

Question	Source 1	Source 2
What does it claim?		
What evidence does it cite?		
What does it not mention?		

Phase 2 — The institutional connection (10 minutes)

Introduce Source N (the section identifying Katō Kōko's role in Sources A, K, and the IHIC).

Whole-class discussion: How does knowing the institutional connection between these sources change how you read them?

Phase 3 — Structured writing (15 minutes)

GCSE-style question:

“How useful are Sources A and G for an enquiry into how governments use heritage sites to shape historical memory?”

Sentence starters for lower-attaining students:

“Source A is useful because it reveals...”

“However, Source A is limited because...”

“Source G is useful for a different reason...”

“When we consider both sources together...”

Extension: Compare to a British example — a heritage site, statue, or museum where the interpretation has been contested.

Plenary: What sources do (5 minutes)

Key concept: sources are not neutral containers of information. Every digital source was created by someone, for a purpose, within an institutional context. The skill is not finding the “right” source — it is understanding what each source is doing and whose interests it serves.

Mark Scheme Guidance (AQA-aligned)

Level 4 (7-8 marks): Student evaluates the utility of both sources, considering content, provenance, and purpose. Uses contextual knowledge to assess what each source reveals and its limitations.

Level 3 (5-6 marks): Student analyses both sources, explaining how provenance and purpose affect utility. Makes some reference to context.

Level 2 (3-4 marks): Student identifies useful content from both sources but does not analyse provenance or purpose in depth.

Level 1 (1-2 marks): Student makes simple comments about one or both sources, identifying basic content without analysis.

Differentiation

Support: Pre-assign the simplest source pair (Pair 1: E and F). Provide a glossary card. For the writing task, provide sentence starters.

Stretch: “Source K includes testimonies from people who were children on Hashima during the wartime period. The Korean government cites testimony from Korean survivors. Neither set of witnesses is lying. How can a historian work with contradictory testimony from sincere witnesses?”

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