Line of agreement

Draw an imaginary line around the edge of the classroom and ask students to stand along it in order to indicate how relevant the following things are to them. One end of the line should be ‘extremely relevant’ and the opposite end should be ‘not relevant at all’. The mid point on the line is ‘I don’t know’.

- The moon landing
- The royal family
- The invention of anaesthetic
- Britain winning World War Two
- The abolition of slavery
- Having a free health service
- Beethoven’s music
- The 1966 World Cup Final
- The invention of the telephone
- Renewable energy
- Obama becoming the first black President of the United States
- 9/11

When the class has completed this activity, discuss as a group what point the poet is trying to make.
Drama activities

‘Checking Out Me History’ by John Agard

Now choose one or two of the following activities for students to work through in groups of five or six, using the poem as a point of reference:

1. Ask students to imagine that they are part of a government committee given the task of deciding which topics should be studied at school in the modern history classroom.
   - They should make a list of topics they have already studied, and eliminate any that they regard as being irrelevant to them.
   - They should then write a list of history topics that they feel they should be taught at school.
   - They could then present their ideas to the ‘Prime Minister’ (teacher / another student in role).

2. After reading the poem, groups devise a role-play activity or scene set in a history classroom in which students argue that the topic being studied is not relevant to them. Their ‘teacher’ sets them the challenge of making the subject more relevant to them and they take over the lesson.

3. Students select one topic they chose as being relevant to them, and devise a scene that shows this topic being taught. This could be any topic of their choice (the origins of the Wii or Facebook, etc).

4. Students devise a piece of drama using split screen, in which an important event is taught from two different perspectives in two separate classrooms, eg a lesson on World War Two set in a modern day English classroom and a modern day German classroom. How might the same topic be presented differently?

   When using split screen, the stage is divided into two to allow two separate scenes to run simultaneously to highlight the degree of contrast. When one scene is running, the other is frozen, so that the audience only has to concentrate on one scene at a time. The action should cut between the two scenes in an interesting way.

5. Repeat the line of agreement activity, replacing the original list with topics suggested by students.