Is the work in copyright? 
- If old, factual information, not sufficiently creative/original - may not be protected.

Yes  

Is there an exception in law that you can use? 
- For example: criticism and review, illustration for instruction - subject to fair dealing test!

Yes  

This is permission

No  

Is there a licence that you can use (or an openly licensed alternative?) 
- For example: Creative Commons, or terms and conditions relating to that particular resource that cover your use.

Yes  

This is permission

No  

If none of the above apply, write to the owner/creator of the content to ask for permission to use.
- Leave plenty of time for a response, and keep a record of correspondence.
- A lack of response does not equate to consent