

Uncovering Black British History

Introduction

History KS2



Uncovering Black British History: Introduction

History

Key Stage 2

Learning aims

- To understand that Black history is a vital part of British history
- To appreciate how this history helps us to connect and understand Britain today

Curriculum links

- Know and understand the history of these islands
- Appreciate how people's lives have shaped this nation and how Britain has influenced and been influenced by the wider world
- Understand the methods of historical enquiry, including how evidence is used rigorously to make historical claims
- Know and understand how and why contrasting arguments and interpretations of the past have been constructed

The lessons within Uncovering Black British History, are most suitable for KS2, with some for upper KS2. Please adapt these to your class and pupils.

The Uncovering Black British History lessons address two interrelated topics:

Firstly, they look at the evidence we have in the historical record that shows us when and where Black people have been living in Britain over the past two thousand years. So, in Lesson 1 we find out about African Romans living in what was then the Roman province of Britannia, in Lesson 2 we meet Black people who were living in Tudor times, some of them playing key roles in important historical events. The other lessons continue this focus through to the 21st century.

Secondly, from Lesson 3 (the Stuarts) onwards, as well as tracing this history of the Black presence in Britain, we begin to examine what happened as connections between Britain and Africa grew through trade and then through colonisation and decolonisation. As the development, growth and eventual abolition of the Atlantic slave trade is part of that story, the lessons address some challenging aspects of British history. As a result, these lessons trace how ideas about race and racism developed, how they were used to justify the enslavement of millions of people and how the legacy of those ideas continues to impact society to this day and needs to be challenged. These important topics show that history continues to influence our world today. Children may want time and sensitive support to discuss these ideas, and you may also want to make links to your Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum.



Keywords

The archaeological record – physical evidence of the past

The historical record – written (textual and visual) information left behind at different points of time in the past

'Race' – science does not neatly divide human beings into scientifically distinct races, so the idea of race that we have in society is a social idea, not a scientific reality. For that reason, it is written in inverted commas to indicate that it is something that is not real, but that society treats as though it were real

Ancestry – a person's background, cultural or ethnic origins

Inscriptions – words or images inscribed (carved or written) on objects or in books

Epigraphy – the study of inscriptions

Isotope analysis – the study of chemicals left in teeth and bones of people from during childhood

Craniometrics – the study of bones and skulls

The Atlantic Trade – the triangular trading system that involved the enslavement of 3.5 million African people between 1640 and 1807

These can also be found at the end of this PDF and can be placed on a learning wall as they are discussed during the presentation.

PowerPoint presentation

The accompanying PowerPoint presentation has 27 slides with the following learning points:

- Slides 1 to 3 introduce the lesson and establish that:
 - Black history is an integral part of British history, not an add-on
 - Understanding this more complete history, can help us to connect and understand Britain as it is today

Activity 1 (slide 4)

- Slide 4 Quick Quiz to challenge the common perception that the Black presence in Britain is purely a 20th century phenomenon
 - In which wars/battles did Black British troops fight? A: WWI; B: WWII; C: The Battle of Trafalgar
 - Answer: All 3 of them



- Slides 5 to 8 focus on historical Inquiry: Black British History exists, and dates further back than most people think. Staying Power by Peter Fryer in the 1980s was the first to produce a longer history of Black people in Britain. In the past 10 years the work of other historians has expanded what we know, drawing on a growing range of archaeological and historical evidence.

Activity 2 (slide 9)

- Slide 9: Pair/group discussion - Have you seen any programmes or read any books about Black British history? What were they and what did you learn from them?
- Slides 10 to 22 look at the challenges of uncovering Black British history: Finding clues about 'race' and ancestry in the archaeological and historical records is not straightforward. The record is always partial, and we need to construct our understanding by drawing on many different types of evidence. Sometimes we can trace the presence/movement of groups of people, and sometimes we can uncover names and specific details about the lives of specific people.
- Slides 23 to 28 re-examine language: 'Race', and the labels of 'Black' or 'white' are fairly modern ideas that were created to justify the enslavement of African people for economic gain. Some terms hide parts of Black British History.
 - Rather than using the term 'slaves', historians of Black British history used the term 'enslaved Africans' as this makes it clear that enslavement was something done to them.
 - Instead of being called slave traders, it was common to refer to those trading in enslaved people as 'merchant adventurers'.
 - The term 'the Atlantic Trade' is the bland term given to the triangular trading system that connected Britain, African and the Americas/West Indies that involved the enslavement of 3.5 million African people between 1640 and 1807.



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