

Uncovering Black British History

Victorians 1837-1901

History KS2



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History

Key Stage 2

Learning aims

In this lesson we will learn about:

- The work of Britain's Royal Navy, which went from protecting slave ships to stopping them and freeing their captives
- Britain's ongoing anti-slavery campaign and the role of Black American visitors to the movement
- How British people supported the northern states in the American Civil War that led to the end of slavery in America
- The expansion of the British Empire in the 1880s, which brought new colonies in Africa
- Royal encounters between Britain and Africa and finding evidence of working-class Black Victorians in Britain

Curriculum links

- To learn of the expansion of the British Empire, and how Britain has influenced and been influenced by the wider world
- To appreciate the methods of historical enquiry, including how evidence is used to make historical claims
- To 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.



Keywords

West Africa Squadron – the part of the Royal Navy that was given the task of patrolling the Atlantic to prevent ships from engaging in slave trading after 1833

Anti-Slavery Movement – after the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, which had ended slavery in Britain's colonies, the movement continued to campaign for the end of slavery everywhere

Quaker – a Quaker is a member of the Religious Society of Friends, which is a form of Christianity that places an emphasis on community, equality and peace

Segregation – this was a practice carried out in the United States of America whereby black people and white people were kept apart, attending different churches, schools and social spaces

The Cotton Famine – although Britain banned slavery in its own colonies in 1833, its factories continued to rely on cotton grown by enslaved people in America. During the American Civil War, the supply of cotton was cut off, leading to workers losing their jobs and families going hungry

Colonisation – the process whereby a country takes control over another land, its people and its resources for economic gain and political power

The Scramble for Africa – the period from the 1880s when European powers colonised most of Africa

Social Darwinism – the misapplication of ideas from Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, to divide human beings into different racial groups and ascribe racial characteristics to them

Protectorate – unlike a colony, a protectorate remains a nation in its own right, governed by its own government, but reliant on another country for protection from others

Digitisation – the process of converting text, pictures, sound or video into a digital format that can be processed and accessed by computer

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 47 slides with the following learning points:

- Slides 1 to 3 establish the lesson focus: introducing the lesson content and curriculum links.
- Slides 4 to 8 focus on The West Africa Squadron: explaining how the role of the Royal Navy was reversed from protecting the slave trade, to preventing it. We discuss how captured slave ships were commandeered and used by the Squadron. We also know that some of the Royal Navy sailors were African, some of whom settled in some of Britain's port cities.
- Slides 9 to 18 look at three Anti-Slavery Campaigners: and we introduce the World Anti-Slavery Convention, held in London in 1840. This was captured in a painting by Benjamin Robert Haydon, in which some Black formerly enslaved campaigners, are depicted. We introduce the Black American campaigners Frederick Douglass, Henry Box Brown and Sarah Remond, and their contribution to the movement in Britain.
- Slides 19 to 23 introduce The American Civil War and the Cotton Famine: and the economic impact that cutting off access to cotton from America, had to British factories. We look at the Cotton Famine and the campaign to boycott American cotton in favour of cotton from India, which was grown by free workers and not enslaved people. Barrels of food were sent to the people of Rochdale from the Northern states, to thank them for their campaigning and support during the Civil War.
- Slides 24 to 28 examine the Scramble for Africa. This rapid colonisation of Africa from the 1880s, after the meeting in Berlin in 1884 of European, American and Ottoman leaders, meant that by 1900, Africa only controlled 10% of their own land.
- Slides 29 and 30 look at Social Darwinism. We discuss the influence of social Darwinism and scientific racism on the treatment of African colonies and their people. We also introduce Cecil Rhodes who we will return to on Slide 34.

Activity 1 (slide 33)

- Slides 31 to 37 focus on Royal Encounters: explaining that with colonisation came increased movement of people between African and Britain, which included some royal encounters. Slides 32 and 33 look at the life of Sarah Forbes Bonetta who was captive in Africa and given as a gift to Queen Victoria. Ask the children to read the newspaper account of Sarah's wedding. What do they notice about the description of Sarah?



Do they know what 'phrenological' means? Relate this back to the earlier slide 29 about scientific racism.

Activity 2

- Slides 34 to 37 tell the story of the three kings of Bechuanaland who successfully resisted attempts by Cecil Rhodes to take over their country and its resources, by travelling to Britain to present their case to the British public and government. Ask the children to read the newspaper report about a visit of two of the kings to a church in Forest Gate in London. Why do the kings seem to be so popular? Ask them to record their answers on the worksheet provided in this PDF. Do the children know who David Livingstone is and why the British people might be impressed about the connection between him and King Sebele?

Activity 3 (slides 43 and 44)

- Slides 38 to 47 look at The Black Poor: examining more recent work by the Black British historian Dr Caroline Bressey, to uncover new sources of evidence about the Black Victorian poor. We explain that the digitisation of archives in recent years has meant that historians now have access to a range of archives from newspapers, charities and other organisations that can be accessed and searched online. Dr Bressey has looked at the photographic archives of Dr Barnardo's, the Victorian children's charity, and of hundreds of local newspapers and magazines from the Victorian era. Slide 42 looks at evidence of black children from the Barnardo's archives. More examples can be found at the Barnardo's Black History Month pages, useful links are provided on slide 46. Slides 43 and 44 look at examples Dr Bressey has found of newspaper advertisements placed by black people looking for employment, and by employers who wanted to employ black people. Please note that the term used at the time, 'coloured', is not a term that we would use today. Ask the children the questions on these slides to help them investigate what kinds of skills and employment are being talked about. On slide 45, ask the children if they have seen any films or programmes about Victorian Britain that include black characters?



Sarah Forbes Bonetta

Read this newspaper story about the wedding of Sarah Forbes Bonetta

On Thursday a marriage was solemnized in the parish church of Brighton, the Bishop of Sierra Leone officiating, between Miss Sarah Forbes Bonetta, and Mr. James Davis, who was originally a slave. The local *Gazette* says :—The lady, supposed to be an African chief-tain's daughter, was presented, when about the age of five years, to the late Captain Frederick Forbes, R.N., who officially visited the King of Dahomey, with a view to aid the suppression of the slave trade in the interior of Africa. Of her own history she has only a confused idea. Her parents were decapitated; her brothers and sisters, she knows not what their fate might have been. For her age, supposed to be eight years, she is a perfect genius; she now speaks English well, and has a great talent for music. She has won the affections, with but few exceptions, of all who have known her by her docile and amiable conduct, which nothing can exceed. She is far in advance of any white child of her age in aptness of learning and strength of mind and affection. Her head is considered so excellent a phrenological specimen, and illustrating such high intellect, that M. Pistrucci, the medallist to the Mint, has undertaken to take a bust of her. She was baptized Sarah Forbes Bonetta. Her Most Gracious Majesty has provided the means for completing the education of Miss Sarah Forbes Bonetta, and has taken a great interest in her marriage; she has also herself provided the whole of the outfit, &c. Mr. James Davis, the bridegroom, was originally a slave, taken by one of our cruisers, and educated in the schools of the Church Missionary Society at Sierra Leone, and showing himself to possess great talents, and capable of profiting by education, was, with the sanction of the Admiralty, placed in an official capacity upon one of Her Majesty's ships, under the care of Captain Coote, R.N. He afterwards commenced trading on his own account, and is now a prosperous and influential tradesman at Lagos, employing upwards of 100 of his fellow-countrymen, and trying to improve their moral and intellectual *status*. There was a large wedding party, including about twenty Africans. The bride was attended by sixteen bridesmaids, of whom four were ladies of colour.



Which details in the story tell you that Sarah has connections to royalty and to important people in Britain and in Africa?

What do you notice about the way that Sarah herself, and her achievements, are described? Can you find things that you think would probably not be written about a white person who was getting married?



The Three Kings of Bechuanaland

Read the newspaper report about a visit of two of the kings to a church in Forest Gate in London. Why do the kings seem to be so popular?

FOREST GATE

Kings Sebele and Bathoen. - Two of the three Bechuanaland kings, Sebele and Bathoen, with a few of their headmen, who are on a visit to England, were present at the morning service at Norwichroad Congregational church, Forest Gate, the last Sunday. During the service the pastor, the Rev. R. Nobbs, descended from the pulpit and sat at the Communion Table with one of the chiefs on each side of him. The Rev. Edward Lloyd (who is their interpreter, is a member of the London Missionary Society, has been abroad as a missionary for five or six years, and is an old friend of Mr. Nobbs) gave a short but interesting address concerning the two chiefs, who, he said, had spent a large amount of money on their church, and the other day had bought a number of lamps etc., with which to decorate it on their return. Sebele then spoke (in his native tongue each sentence being interpreted by Mr Lloyd) thanking the English people for their kindness towards them, and saying that David Livingstone, the first white man they had ever seen, taught him to read and write. Bathoen also thanked the English people for their hospitality, and said that when he got back home, he should tell his friends of the kindness with which they had been treated. The Rev. R. Nobbs said it was an honour to have the chiefs with them there, and wished them "God speed" and a safe journey home. Mr Lloyd interpreted the words to the chiefs. Then Mr. Nobbs asked those who agreed with what he had said, and who wished the chiefs success and prosperity, to stand for a moment. The congregation rose in a body, which, no doubt greatly gratified the visitors. King Khama, the head chief, was unavoidably absent.



Read the newspaper report about a visit of two of the kings to a church in Forest Gate in London. Why do the kings seem to be so popular?

Do you know who David Livingstone is and why the British people might be impressed about the connection between him and King Sebele?



The Black Poor

Read these adverts, placed in newspapers by black people who were looking for work.

A Respectable, well-educated Young Coloured Man, lately arrived in England, requires a Situation in a Mercantile Office, either now or in the beginning of January, 1877. Has a sound knowledge of bookkeeping and writes a fair legible hand. Can produce excellent certificates as to sobriety and honesty- Apply to Messrs, J, Curiender and Oo., 34 South John-street.

Liverpool Mercury, 18 December 1876

WANTED, by Coloured Young Lady, Situation in Bazaar or Playhouse, as Attendant. Address, C., 26 Orchel-road, West Kensington.

The Era, 10 November 1900

WANTED, by a Coloured Young Man who is willing to make himself useful, a Situation in Hotel, Billiard Room, or to go Messages for Offices, Shops, &c. Good references. Address X 90, Mercury-office.

Liverpool Mercury, 7 November 1876



Do you know:

What **'bookkeeping'** is?

What a **'bazaar or playhouse'** means?

What a **'billiard room'** is?

What does the presence of adverts like this in the newspapers,
tell you about the lives of Black people in Victorian Britain?



Why don't we see adverts like this anymore, where people who are looking for work, tell you what colour they are?

Read these adverts, placed in newspapers by employers who wanted to employ 'coloured' people in a range of jobs.

WANTED, a Steady Man as Animal Keeper. One that will enter the Lions' Den and give a Performance if required. A Coloured Man preferred. State wages required to Mrs READER, Menagerie, Annan, Monday and Thursday: Lockerby, Thursday.

The Era, 19 October 1889

WANTED, for hotel and pleasure gardens, young coloured WOMAN, who can sing or play piano preferred: to fill up her time in waiting. Must be attractive. Address Y 133, Mercury-office.

Liverpool Mercury, 29 April 1885



Do you know what a **'menagerie'** is?

Why do you think that this employer was specifically looking for a black man to take this job? What kinds of assumptions about race might this be reflecting?

Do you know what **'pleasure gardens'** are?

What does the presence of an advert like this in the newspapers tell you about the lives of Black women in Victorian Britain?



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Victorians 1837-1901: Keywords Flashcards



**West Africa
Squadron**

Anti-Slavery

Movement

Quaker

Segregation

**The Cotton
Famine**





Colonisation

**The
Scramble
for Africa**

**Social
Darwinism**

Protectorate

Digitisation



West Africa Squadron



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