

Uncovering Black British History

The First World War

History KS2



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History

Key Stage 2

Learning aims

- To learn about the contribution of Black people from Britain and its colonies in The First World War
- To understand the different roles Black people played in the war effort
- To learn about some of the discrimination they faced during and after the war

Curriculum links

- To understand the connections between national and international history and between military and social history
- To construct informed responses that involve examination of relevant historical information
- To understand how our knowledge of the past is constructed from a range of sources

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

British Subjects – people who lived in the colonies of the British Empire, were citizens of the empire and were British subjects

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

Colonial Power – a country in charge of a collection of colonies (other countries whose land, people and resources they control)

Enlist – to voluntarily join the armed forces

Conscription – where the law requires people to join the armed forces

Regiment – a unit of the army. They are often divided into two battalions

Battalion – a unit of between 300 to 1,000 soldiers commanded by a lieutenant colonel

Commissioned Officer – high ranking officers whose authority comes from having received a commission from the monarch



University Scholarship – an award given to someone to pay for their fees to study at a university

The Red Cross Society – a British humanitarian organisation established in 1870 to help people in crisis. During World War One, the Red Cross provided medical assistance to the wounded.

African Progress Union – a Black rights organisation set up in the 1890s

Race riots – the name given to fighting and civil disturbances involving groups of white people and groups of black people

Lynch law – common in the United States of America, particularly in the southern states, lynch law occurred when racist mobs would seize and murder black people

Repatriation – to return a person to a country they originally came from

Imperial/Commonwealth War Graves Commission – an organisation set up at the end of World War One to record and honour all of the British war dead, individually and equally, and to maintain their graves.

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 37 slides with the following learning points:

- Slides 1 and 2 establish the lesson focus: including the contribution of Black people from Britain and its colonies during World War One, and on understanding the discrimination they faced during and after the war.
- Slides 3 to 7 ask, what is a World War? (You can pose this as a Quick Question to the children). The Scramble for Africa meant that when Europe went to war, its colonies also became involved. We look at the various empires in the world in 1914, then specifically the French and German empires, and finally the extent of the British Empire.
- Slide 8 asks, how did Black British people become involved in World War One? We look specifically at four places: Britain, Africa, the West Indies and Canada. Slide 9 establishes that Black people already living in Britain tried to enlist but were not always accepted. Furthermore, army rules at the time were in place to restrict them from becoming officers.

Activity 1 (slide 10)

- Slides 10-14 focus on Walter Tull: Ask the children to look at the historical sources provided and answer questions about who Walter Tull was, what he did before the war, what his role was during the war and when did



he die? We present an overview of Walter Tull's life, including that he was a notable exception to the rules against people not of 'pure' European descent becoming commissioned officers.

- Slides 15 and 16 look at Dr John Alcindor: a talented black doctor who tried to join the Royal Medical Corps but was rejected. So, instead, he joined the Red Cross and was eventually awarded the Red Cross Medal for his service during the war.
- Slides 17 to 19 discuss The War in Africa: including the recruitment of African men to fight for Britain in Africa. The first British shot fired in World War One was fired in Africa, by an African of the Gold Coast Regiment during fighting in the German colony of Togoland. However, when the regiment was sent to Europe, they were not allowed to fight, but instead were made to do support jobs. Slide 19 establishes that this restriction was because although it was alright for African soldiers to shoot at other Africans in Africa, the colonial powers did not want black soldiers to shoot at white soldiers in Europe. The fear was that this might lead to black people feeling able to resist colonial rule.
- Slides 20 to 22 discuss other colonial regiments: including the role of Black British soldiers from the West Indies and the formation of the West Indies Regiment. Slide 22 discusses the role of Black British Soldiers from Canada, and the role of the No. 2 Construction Battalion supplying timber to the battlefields of Europe.

Activity 2 (slide 27)

- Slides 23 to 37 look at what happened after the war: and that Black soldiers were excluded from official celebration and remembrance events. Slides 26 and 27 examine the race riots of 1919. Ask the children to read the newspaper report of a race riot in Glasgow in January of 1919. What do they notice about how the story is told? How are the different groups of rioters dealt with by the police? Slides 28 and 29 discuss the race riot in Liverpool in June 1919 that led to the murder of Charles Wootton. 15 black men were arrested and charged with riotous assembly and assault. Slide 30 explains how the African Progress Union (co-founded by John Alcindor who we met earlier), paid for the esteemed black barrister, Edward Theophilus Nelson, to represent them in court, where he managed to get five of them acquitted. Slide 31 presents a newspaper report from 8th June 1919 which shows that the government response to the riots was not to try to support these black men, who had supported and fought for the country during the war, but to try to get them to leave the country instead. Slides 34 and 35 examine how the recent discovery by Professor Michèle Barrett, that dead black troops were not recorded and buried in the same way as white soldiers, led in 2021 to official apologies from the British government and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Useful links are provided on slide 36 for further information.



Walter Tull

Look at these historical sources and answer the questions:

LIEUT. WALTER D. TULL, the Northampton and Tottenham Hotspur football player, it is reported at Northampton, has been killed in action. He formerly played as a forward, and went to the Northampton Town Club in that capacity, but his abilities as a half back were there recognised by Mr. Herbert Chapman, the present secretary of the Leeds City F.C. Lieut. Tull was home on leave from the Italian Front a few weeks ago.

The Yorkshire Post, April 6, 1918

Tull. Lieut, Walter, Middlesex Regiment, killed in France; well-known as a member of the Cobblers' football team, to which he was transferred from Tottenham Hotspur. Enlisting two years ago, he gained his commission by his great ability and merit, which won for him mention in despatches.

The Northampton Mercury, April 12, 1918

TULL. – March 25th, killed in action in France, Second- Lieut. Walter D. Tull, Middlesex, youngest son of the late Mr. Daniel Tull, of Folkstone, aged 29 years. Deeply mourned by his brothers and sisters.

The Northampton Mercury, April 12, 1918



MIDDLESEX REGIMENT OR CORPS.

ROLL OF INDIVIDUALS entitled to the Victory Medal and/or British War Medal granted under Army Orders

5 of 1919
and 301

I certify that according to the Official Records the individuals named in this ROLL are entitled to the Medal or Medals as detailed above.

Place HANWELL.

Date - 5 FEB 1920

Signature and rank of Officer certifying:

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Who do you think Walter Tull was?

What did he do before the war?

What was his role during the war?

When did he die?



The Glasgow Race Riot of 1919

Read this report from The Evening Telegraph, January 24, 1919:

FIERCE RACE RIOT IN GLASGOW.

Alarming Street Scene.

Thirty Coloured Men Before Police Court.

During a fierce race riot in Glasgow yesterday afternoon between white and coloured seamen passions were roused to danger point.

Our Glasgow correspondent, having interviewed several eyewitnesses, states that the trouble arose over blacks being given the preference in signing on for a ship about to sail. The whites resented this, especially as the blacks accept lower wages. A scuffle began in a court adjoining the Mercantile Marine Office, where seamen sign on, and then became general in James Watt Street.

One big black fired a revolver, and injured a Glasgow seaman in the neck. This infuriated the whites, and they charged. The blacks fled, and took refuge in a close leading to a lodging-house where they reside. The police followed, and arrested the black with the revolver, and conveyed him to the lock-up amid considerable hostility.

The whites in some cases had revolvers. Others got bottles and stones. These were hurled into the close where the blacks were, and also at the windows of the lodging house. When police reinforcements arrived the whites were pushed back, and the police, entering the close, arrested all the blacks, the latter offering no opposition.

At the Central Police Court, Glasgow, today thirty blacks appeared, and were remanded until tomorrow. Three injured men- two whites and one black- were removed to the Western Infirmary. They are reported to be making satisfactory progress. None of them is in danger.



What do you notice about how the story is told?

How are the different groups of rioters dealt with by the police?

How reliable and fair do you think the report is?



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The First World War: Keywords Flashcards



**British
Subjects**

**The
Scramble
for Africa**

**Colonial
Power**

Enlist

Conscription

Regiment





Battalion

**Commissioned
Officer**

**University
Scholarship**

**The
Red Cross
Society**

**African
Progress
Union**

**Race
riots**

Lynch law

Repatriation

**Imperial/
Commonwealth War
Graves Commission**



British Subjects



The Scramble for Africa



Colonial Power



Enlist



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