



Google Arts & Culture

BLACK BRITISH HISTORY: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Lesson plan
created with



Introduction

Black British History: A Brief Introduction

Join us and discover a forgotten history of Black British people which stretches as far back as Roman times.

This lesson is suitable for anyone but is recommended for students aged 14-16 years. The lesson is designed to support you as you explore Google Arts & Culture stories related to the lesson topic.

You can complete the lesson on your own working at home, with a group of friends, or in your classroom. They are designed so that you can work through them at a pace that suits you.

If you get stuck, you can talk to a teacher or parent.

Throughout the lesson you will have tasks to complete and questions to answer, so that when you reach the end you will have used a range of skills to create something of your own that demonstrates your knowledge and understanding of the subject.

All you need to get started is any device with internet access.

Are you ready to learn about Black British history?

Things you'll need to complete this lesson.



Tablet, laptop or computer with access to the internet.



Paper, or a notebook and pen, to make notes as you go.



Drawing materials such as coloring pens, pencils, paper etc.



Scissors, glue, scrap paper, and general stationary items.



Art materials, specifically paints and brushes.



A printer would be beneficial but not necessary – why not draw instead?

Explore & Discover

Black British History: A Brief Introduction

What can you expect to learn?

The history of African and West Indian people in the UK is a long one, much longer than many people realize. In this lesson you will travel through 1,800 years of Black British history to learn about African soldiers in Roman Cumbria, discover how Slavery came to an end, and learn the story of the 'Windrush generation' who were invited to come to Britain after the Second World War to help rebuild the country.

Activities to complete

1. Create a timeline chronicling Black British history.
2. Write a news story reporting on the abolition of slavery.
3. Design a graphic to inspire people to recognize and support the end of racism.

Outcomes you will achieve

- Discover the relationship between Britain and the people of African origin.
- Understand the history of the trade in enslaved people and its abolition.
- Consider what it was like to be a West Indian immigrant in 1950s Britain following the World War.

Look out for the following tips which tell you what to do when during the lesson.



Key information to remember and help guide you through the lesson.



Estimated time to complete a section or activity within the lesson.



Optional headphones to listen to videos and audio recordings.



Explore online content. Discover videos, stories, and zoom into pictures.



Activity - time to design, make or write something of your own.



Vocabulary

Words to look out for in the lesson

abolition, accommodation, benefits, Black Lives Matter, Black Power Movement, campaigner, Caribbean, citizenship, colonies, colonisation, committee, commodities, commonwealth, communities, controversy, discrimination, diversity, deported, detained, economy, emancipation, empire, employers, enslaved, equality, heritage, Home Office, indigenous, immigrants, imperial, legal, nationality, Parliament, poverty, Quaker, racism, resident, slave, slave trade, society, subjects, sub-standard, trade, transatlantic, wealth, Windrush



Please note, as this lesson uses sources from history, some of the terms you may hear or see may be considered offensive. However, at the periods in time in which they were used, no matter how distasteful today, they were classed as 'normal'. They are a part of the stories and the journeys of the people you are learning about.



Black Lives Matter protest, Manchester, Jake Hardy, 2020, People's History Museum

What is this lesson about?

Explore and discover some historical events that have shaped British culture today. Find out about the enduring relationship between Britain and the people of African and West Indian origins. Learn about how the trade in enslaved people ended and explore significant events in Black British history.



This lesson will take around 120 minutes.

BLACK BRITISH HISTORY: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Elements of the Lesson

Black people have lived in Britain since Roman times (before 410 AD). This lesson will cover a small selection of significant events from Roman times through to the present day. During this period in time, the topics you will investigate will provide a story of discrimination and ongoing work to drive improvements in our society.

In the first part of this lesson, you will explore the history of Black British people. You will learn how African soldiers reached high ranks of command during Roman times and how Black British sailors helped the British fleet win one of its most famous victories.

In the second part of this lesson, you will learn about the enslavement of African people and their journey across the Atlantic to America. You will also discover the efforts which led to the Abolishment Bill of 1807, which when formalized led to the freedom of all UK African enslaved people in 1833.

In the final part of this lesson, you will explore three significant events in modern Black British history including the story of the 'Windrush generation' who were invited to come to Britain after the Second World War to help rebuild the country.



[Click here to visit places of significance to Black History in Britain.](#)



LDN WMN artwork of Olive Morris,
Rene Matić, 2018, Mayor of London



Ignatius Sancho illustrated timeline,
Kingsley Nebechi

Black and British: A Forgotten History

Explore the enduring relationship between Britain and the people of African origin.



This chapter will take around 40 minutes.

From Ancient Rome to Victorian Times



The Romans

[Small silver coin of Septimius Severus,](#)
[Black Cultural Archives, 0193](#)



Tudor Britain

[Portrait of Henry VIII,](#)
[LIFE Photo Collection](#)



Nelson's Navy

[Lord Horatio Nelson, 1901,](#)
[LIFE Photo Collection](#)



Queen Victoria's
Black Protégée

[Queen Victoria, 1897,](#)
[LIFE Photo Collection](#)



The Romans

Black British history is much older than you might realise. It stretches as far back as the 3rd century AD, when Britain and North Africa were part of the same Roman Empire.

By its very design, the Roman Empire was multicultural. Through trade, logistical or military movements, and civilian migrations, the first African people travelled to Britain within the Empire. Work at Hadrian's Wall, conducted by English Heritage, identified that many units serving at the Roman site originated in North Africa, with many Africans reaching high ranks of command within the army.

Excavations beneath the streets of modern London have also revealed a diverse community over 1,500 years ago. The population of Roman 'Londinium' included people who were born in or had ancestral roots in places such as Asia and Africa.

In 1901 in York, a skeleton was discovered of a woman who is believed to have died during the second half of the 4th century AD. She was named the Ivory Bangle Lady due to the ivory bangles found amongst her possessions with which she was buried. Evidence suggests that she was originally from North Africa. Buried in a stone coffin her remains were found with bracelets, pendants, earrings, and other expensive possessions indicating that she held a high-ranking position within Roman York.



[Travel through 1,800 years of Black British history to learn about African soldiers in Roman Cumbria](#)

Tudor Britain

The Tudor world (1485-1603) we discover through text books and period dramas rarely includes people of color. Yet there were Black people in Tudor Britain, including at the highest levels of society - even at the court of the most famous of Tudor Kings, Henry VIII.

John Blanke was a royal trumpeter in the courts of Henry VII and Henry VIII, and remains the only Black Tudor for whom we have an identifiable image. While serving two kings, he bore witness to some of the great moments in British history and contributed to some of the greatest spectacles of the Tudor age.

In 1509, Blanke performed at the funeral of Henry VII, and soon after, at the coronation of Henry VIII. He also performed at a lavish tournament held in 1511 to celebrate the birth of Henry VIII and Katherine of Aragon's short-lived son. To commemorate the tournament, Henry VIII commissioned the Westminster Tournament Roll, a sixty feet long pictorial manuscript, which clearly illustrates John Blanke not once, but twice - once on the way from the court and again on the way back.

Blanke remains an incredibly significant figure in Black British history and is symbolic of the important but often ignored contribution that people of colour have made to our shared history.

Plaque celebrating Black trumpeter John Blanke, BBC, 2016, Black Cultural Archives



[Discover more surprising stories about Black British history from Tudor times to present day](#)



Nelson's Navy

Lord Admiral Nelson is one of the most celebrated commanders in British naval history. On 21 October 1805 he led the British fleet into battle against the combined forces of France and Spain off the Cape of Trafalgar.

Under his command were 18,000 sailors. What is often forgotten is that over 100 of them were Black. They helped the British fleet win one of its most famous victories, thwarting the ambitions of French Emperor Napoleon to invade Britain.

Records from the time suggest that there were at least 10 sailors of African descent on board the HMS Victory – Nelson's flagship. Some of these sailors were men from Africa, born into slavery in the British colonies, and others were Black Georgians, men who had homes, wives and children back in Britain.

In London, a bronze relief at the base of Nelson's column shows one of these Black sailors guarding the wounded Nelson on board his ship.



[Learn more about the Black sailors who helped the British fleet win one of its most famous victories](#)

Queen Victoria's West African Protégée

Sarah Forbes Bonetta was born in what is now Nigeria around 1843. She was enslaved at the age of four by African soldiers from the Kingdom of Dahomey and given as a gift to naval Captain Fredrick. E. Forbes, who was visiting King Ghezo of Dahomey as a representative of Queen Victoria on a mission to discourage the slave trade.

Upon her arrival in England, at just six years old, she was presented to Queen Victoria, who agreed to become Sarah's protector. The Queen paid for Sarah's education, undertaken by missionaries at Palm Cottage in Kent, and ultimately became the godmother of her first child, named Victoria.

While Sarah was in many ways very fortunate and lucky, her story is also a tale of a rather patronising social experiment. She was used to demonstrate that under British guidance an African could become educated, Christianised, and – in a key word for the 19th century – civilised.



[Find out how Queen Victoria came to take a Black girl under her protection](#)



[Stories, Sites, and Sounds: In Memory of Sarah Forbes Bonetta](#)



Sarah Forbes Bonetta, Camille Silvy, 1862, Black Cultural Archives



Activity 1

Chronicling Black British History



Use the internet to find examples of a timeline. Then, using the examples as inspiration, create a timeline which chronicles significant people or events in Black British history.



When creating your timeline, you should consider:

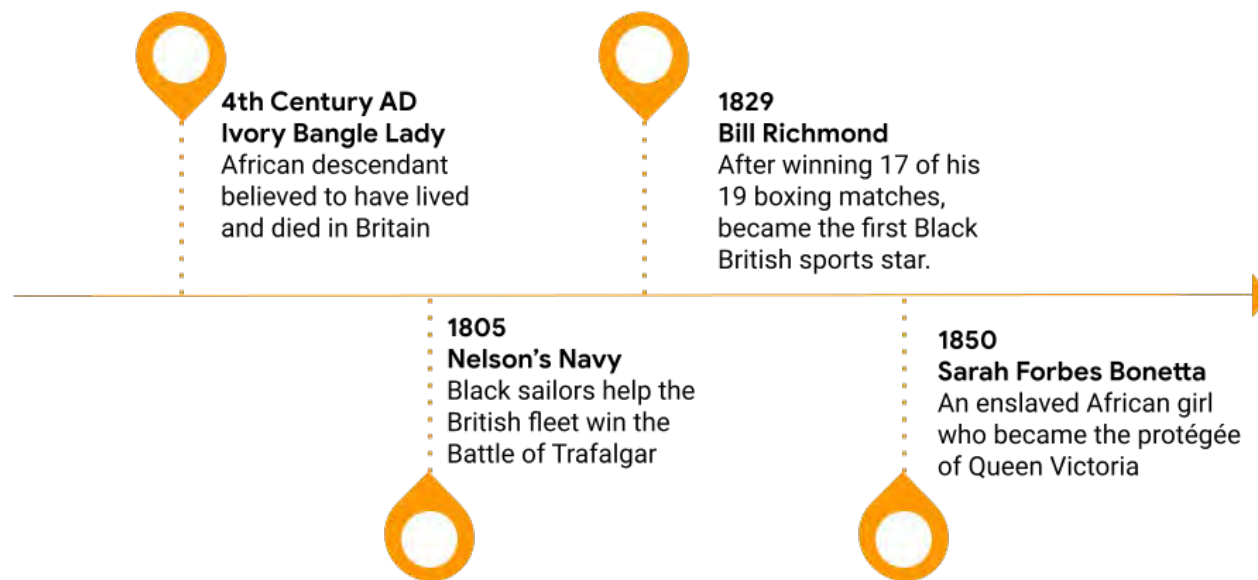
- Date
- Name of significant person or event
- Brief description of the person or event
- Supporting images



Extra Challenge

Using a computer, create an interactive timeline containing links to videos and images etc., about significant people and / or events from Black British history.

Black British History Timeline





ERECTED TO COMMEMORATE THE ABOLITION
OF SLAVERY IN THE BRITISH COLONIES
THE FIRST OF AUGUST A.D. MDCCCXXIV.

Detail of the Anti-Slavery Arch, Gloucestershire, Steve Baker, 2020, Historic England

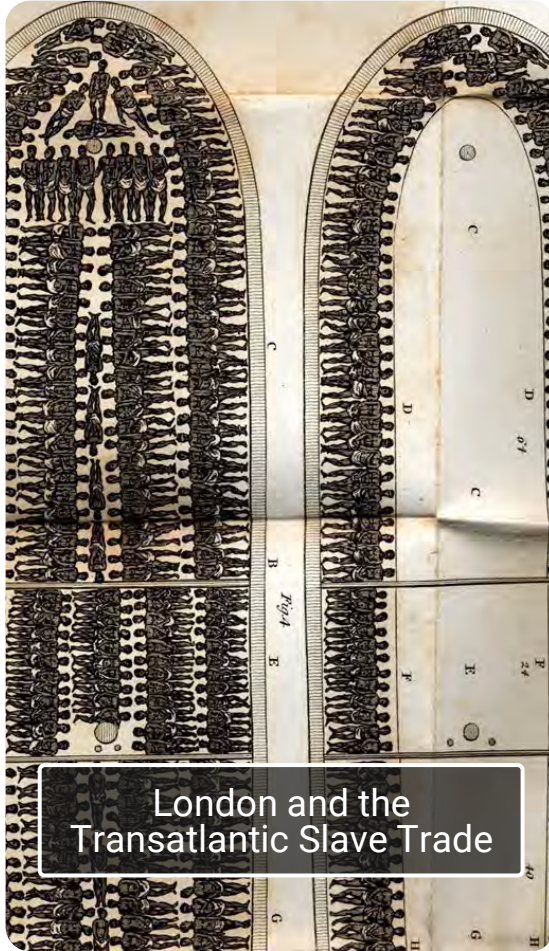
The Abolition of the Slave Trade

Slavery is part of British History, not just Black history.
So, what was the slaver trade and how did it come to an end?



This chapter will take around 40 minutes.

The Abolition of the Slave Trade



London and the
Transatlantic Slave Trade

[Illustration of the Middle Passage,](#)
[Black Cultural Archives](#)



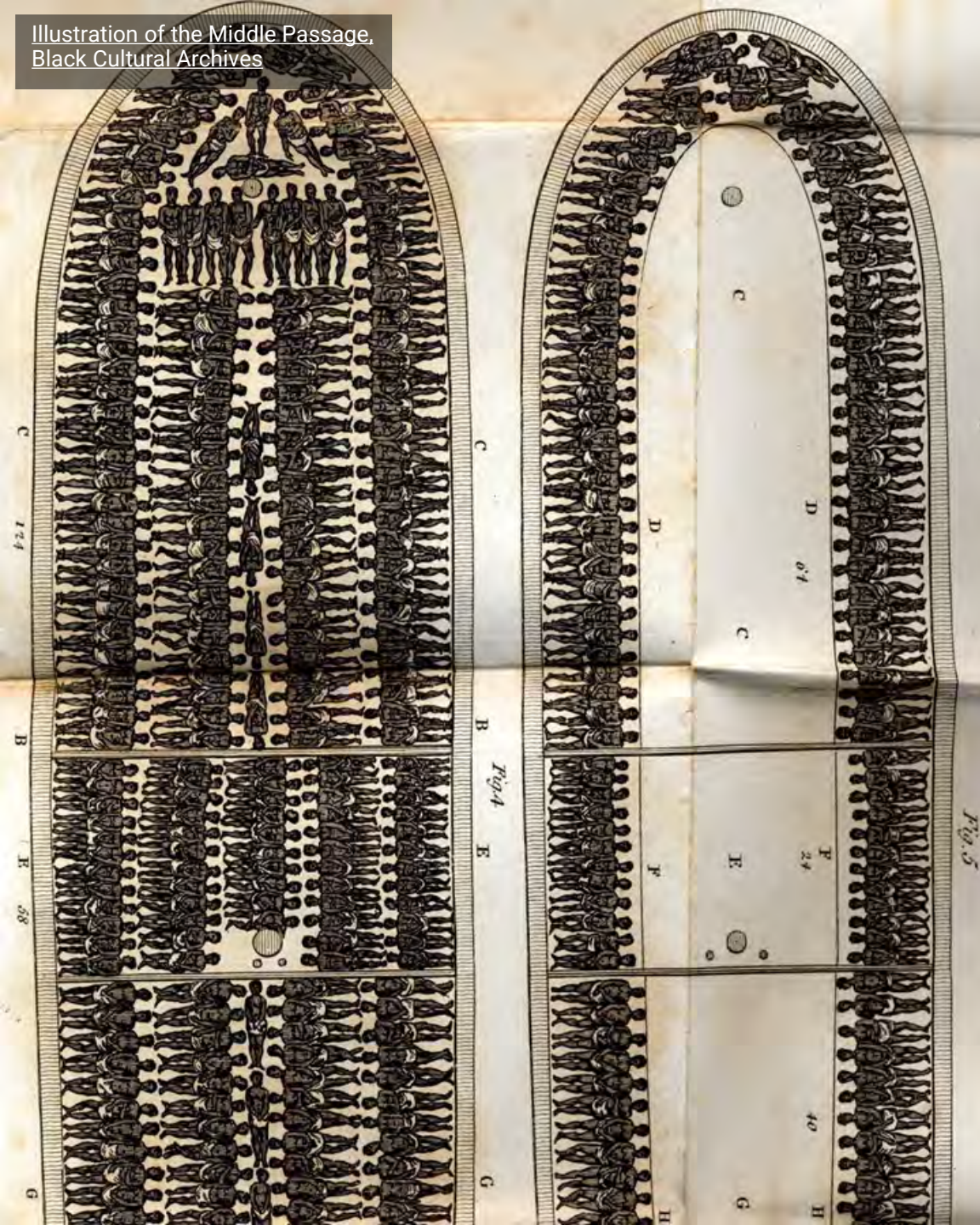
Olaudah Equiano

[Equiano's Autobiography Frontispiece,](#)
[Black Cultural Archives](#)



The Road to
Abolition

[Anti-slavery medallion, Josiah Wedgwood,](#)
[1787, The British Museum](#)



London and the Transatlantic Slave Trade

The start of this journey is not for the faint-hearted but must be explored by everyone in order to learn about a tragic period of human history, and to gain a perspective of its impact on people's lives today. Slavery has been a part of human existence for thousands of years and not just Black people have been enslaved. It is important to learn from the past to ensure that history doesn't repeat itself. Knowing this history will also help you understand modern day movements and the importance of civil rights.

The Transatlantic Slave Trade

The transatlantic slave trade was the largest forced migration in history. It was essentially a triangular route between Europe, Africa, and the Americas. Between 1500 and 1800, more than 11 million Africans were taken by force to be used as enslaved labor. The exploitation of enslaved people made many Europeans, including the British, extremely wealthy with London dominating the British trade in enslaved people.

After many years of petitioning by ex-enslaved people, religious groups, and ordinary citizens, Britain finally abolished slavery. Campaigns began to educate others of the plight of enslaved people, and people boycotted goods that involved slave labor. The Abolition Act itself was a significant change, but in reality, it still took 100 years before the trade in enslaved people finally ended.



[Take a tour around London and learn about the city's connection to the Transatlantic Slave Trade](#)

Olaudah Equiano

Olaudah Equiano was an African writer, abolitionist, seaman and civil rights campaigner who had formerly been enslaved. He was the most prominent Black anti-slavery activist and lobbyist in 18th century Britain and is popularly held to be the country's first Black political leader.

Enslaved as a child in Africa, Equiano was taken to the Caribbean and sold as a slave to a Royal Navy captain, Captain Pascal, who renamed him Gustavas Vassa. He was sold twice more before becoming a free man in 1767.

Equiano's autobiography, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*, was published in 1789. It became a bestseller and was translated into many languages, going through eight editions in his lifetime. He travelled around Britain and Ireland giving lectures and advancing the abolitionist cause by giving voice to the horrors of slavery.

Equiano was also a founding member of the group of previously-enslaved Black writers and activists known as the Sons of Africa, a small abolitionist group who campaigned for the abolition of slavery in the British colonies, as well as in Britain itself. Equiano led delegations of the Sons to Parliament to campaign for the abolishment of international slave trading.



Explore





The Road to Abolition 1760-1833

During much of the 18th century, few European or American people questioned slavery. Gradually on both sides of the Atlantic a few free-thinking individuals, some of them belonging to the Quaker religion, began to oppose it.

From the 1760s, activists in London challenged the morality and legality of the slave trade. They used formerly enslaved people like Olaudah Equiano and the abolitionist campaigners Granville Sharp and William Wilberforce to get their message across.

Although the British ended their trade in Black enslaved people in 1807, the trade continued in the British colonies until full freedom was achieved in 1833. An illicit trade continued across the Atlantic, and more than a million Africans landed in the Americas (mainly Cuba and Brazil) after 1807.

So, what led to the end of the slave trade? Did it end because it was no longer profitable? The economic data, and the unwavering support of the slave traders, suggest not. But is it plausible to see its abolition being brought about by outraged sensibility and religious sentiment? If it was seen to be wrong or in 1807, why not in 1707?

The Road to Abolition (continued)

What exactly changed in Britain and the Atlantic continent, and in particular in Parliament, between 1600 and 1807? There seems to have been a shift of opinion on a vast scale, showing that a small series of activist movements produced massive consequences. Proving that in a democracy, anyone can bring about changes as long as they are organized and can gather sufficient support for their cause.

William Wilberforce, MP for Hull from 1780, took up the cause of abolition after meeting a former slave trader, John Newton. Wilberforce would later become the Parliamentary spokesperson for the campaign. In 1787 a man called Thomas Clarkson became one of the original 12 members of the London Committee which included activist Granville Sharp, and was part of the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade.



[Explore the campaign against slavery](#)



Read the stories in the link above and write down notes about key information that you will need for a later activity.





Activity 2

Reporting the Abolition



Create a news story reporting on the abolition and the key events leading up to this momentous event.



You could imagine you are a journalist in 1833 and write a newspaper article about the abolition or imagine that TV or social media was around in 1833 and record a video to break the story.

When creating your report, consider the key events leading up to the abolition of slavery, the people who were instrumental in bringing about change, and the stories of those who were enslaved.



Extra Challenge

Create a visual (image, photo, sketch, etc.) to accompany your news report. Think about what imagery you might use to encourage people to engage with your story.

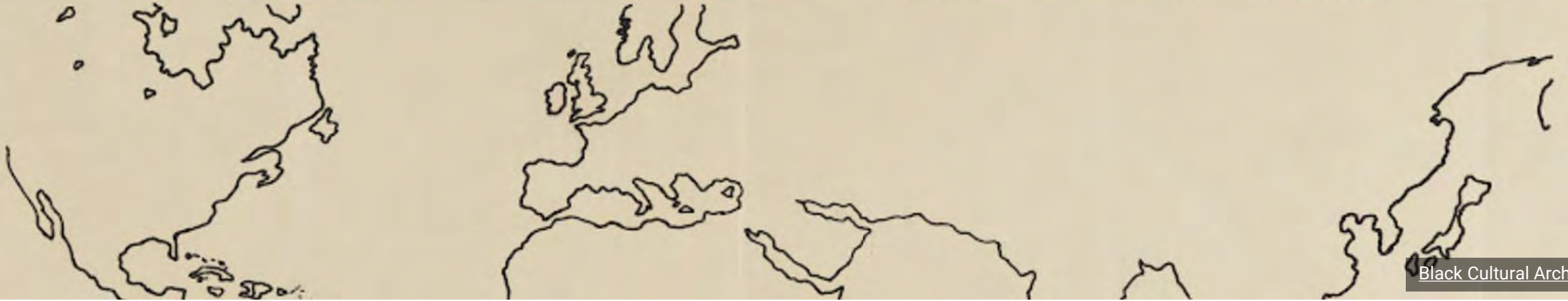


30 to 40-minute activity



Plaque commemorating the enslaved Africans liberated by the West Africa Squadron, BBC, 2016, Black Cultural Archives

**COMMONWEALTH CITIZENS:
IF YOU DON'T REGISTER NOW IT MAY BE TOO LATE...**



Black Cultural Archives

From Windrush to Present Day

The Windrush generation were invited to come to Britain after the Second World War to help rebuild the country. What happened next?



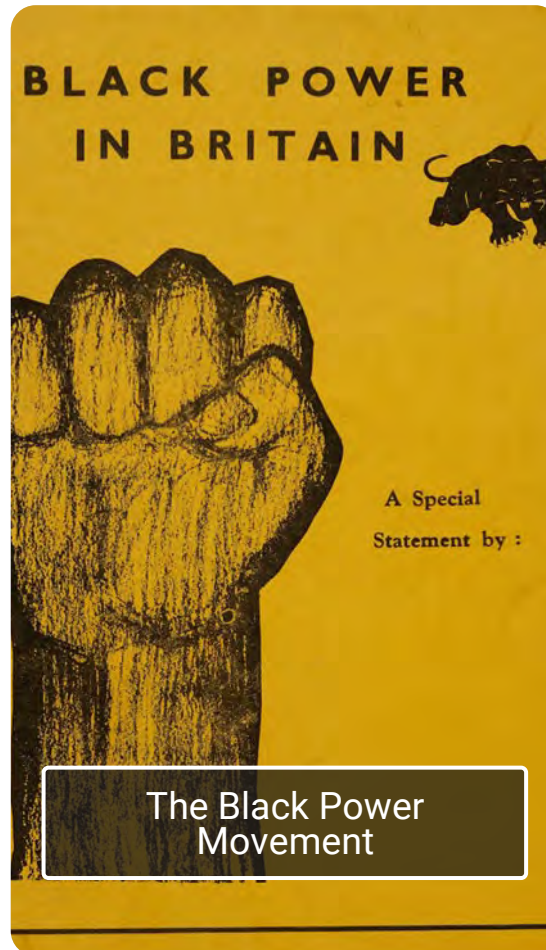
This chapter will take around 40 minutes.

From Windrush to Present Day



The Windrush
Generation

[Empire Windrush, 1990,
Black Cultural Archives](#)



The Black Power
Movement

[Universal Coloured People's Association, Black
Cultural Archives](#)



Black Lives Matter
Protests

[Black Lives Matter protest, Jake Hardy,
2020, People's History Museum](#)



The Windrush Generation 1947 – 1962

When the Second World War ended in 1945, the UK was in desperate need of labor to help rebuild the towns and cities that had been destroyed by German bombs. The total UK working population between mid-1945 and the end of 1946 had fallen by 1.38 million.

As such, the UK welcomed immigrants from all over the British Commonwealth. The 1948 British Nationality Act said that all Commonwealth citizens could have British passports and work in the UK. Many of the earliest arrivals were from the West Indies, South Asia, and Cyprus. The most notable appearance was that of people from the Caribbean, mainly from Jamaica and Trinidad, who arrived on the SS Empire Windrush in 1948. This is sometimes mistakenly referred to as the first arrival of Black people to the UK.

People left the Caribbean for various reasons, attracted by job vacancies in the UK, escaping poverty, or seeking new opportunities and a different life.

These post-war migrant workers made a huge contribution to the British economy and economic growth. Employers from key sectors actively began to recruit Black employees from across the Caribbean, rather than waiting for workers to arrive in the UK.



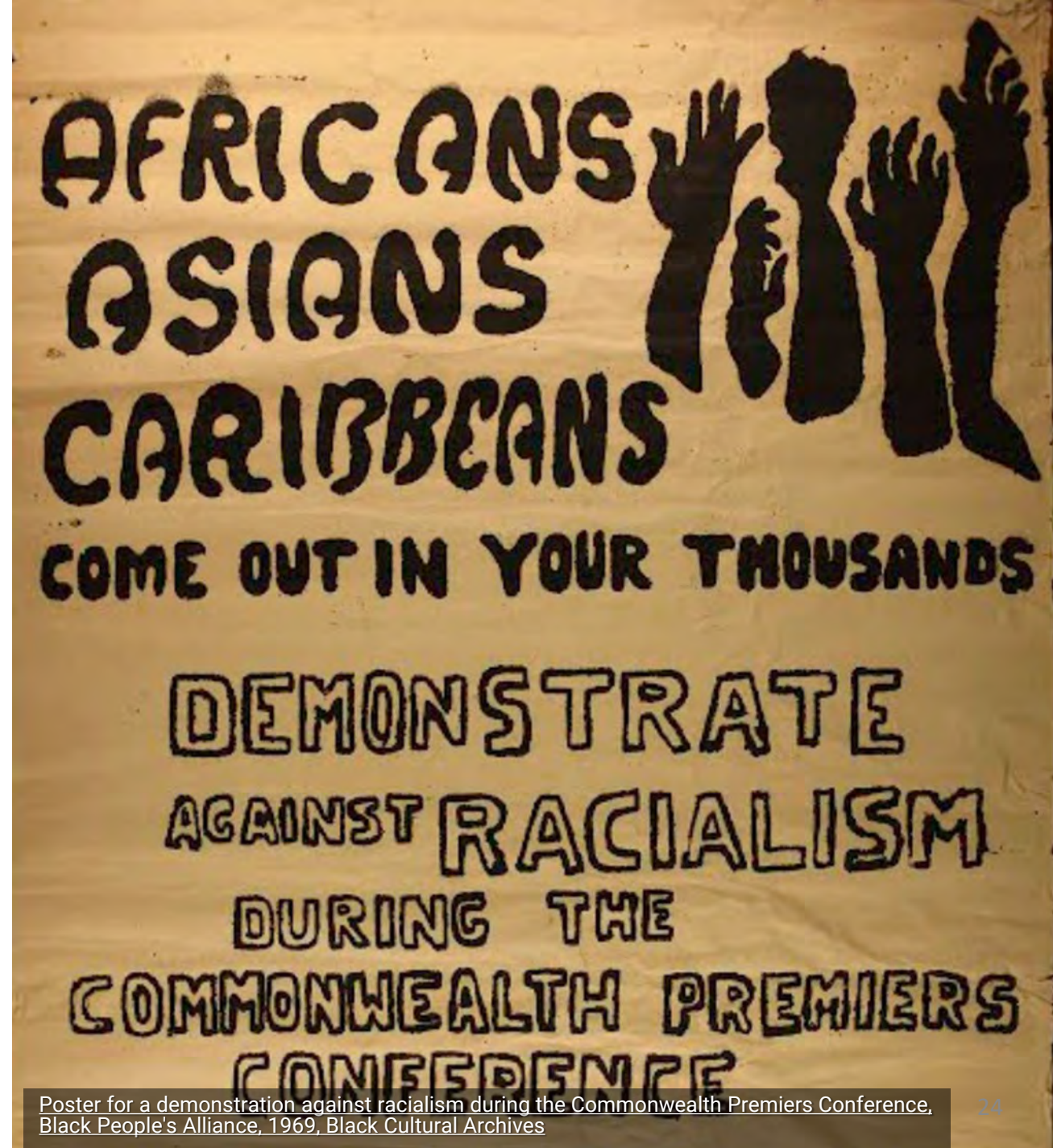
[Explore](#)

The Black Power Movement

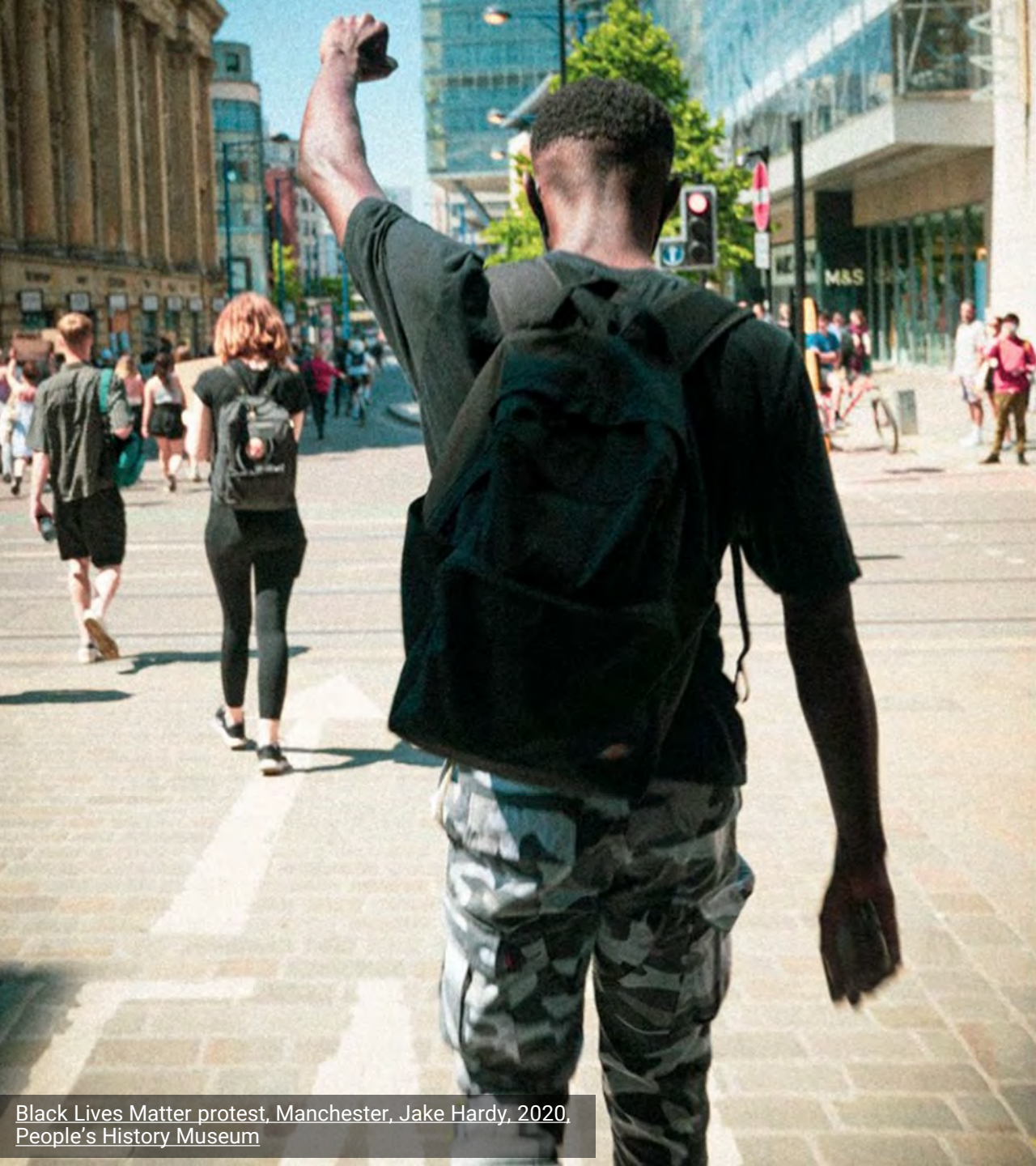
The British Black Power Movement of the late 1960's and early 1970's formed as a response to the racism experienced by the post-war generation of Black immigrants who came to Britain predominantly from the Caribbean and Southern Asia.

Whilst the term "Black Power" is mostly associated with the civil rights movement in the United States, which had a clear political focus on segregation and produced iconic figures such as Malcolm X and Martin Luther-King, the British Black Power Movement was a movement in its own right, fighting against institutional racism and an unfair justice system.

Although the Black Power Movement in Britain was relatively short lived, it played a critical role in the fight against the less visible problem of institutional racism in the police, the justice system, and the jobs market.



Poster for a demonstration against racialism during the Commonwealth Premiers Conference, Black People's Alliance, 1969, Black Cultural Archives



Black Lives Matter Protests

The Black Lives Matter movement started in 2013 in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman for the murder of Black teenager Trayvon Martin.

The movement returned to national headlines and gained further international attention in 2020 following the murder of George Floyd, an African-American man, by Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin.

George Floyd's death sparked protest marches in countries around the world, with hundreds of people gathering in cities across the UK – all marching in unison to campaign for justice, equality and an end to racism.


In Britain, several statues were pulled down or were defaced with anti-racism messages. These statues were generally of historical figures with links to the slave trade - for example, the statue of Edward Colston in Bristol. The protesters' actions have raised awareness of Britain's involvement in the slave trade and sparked debate around what should happen to other statues of controversial figures.




[Explore photographs documenting the Manchester Black Lives Matter protest that took place on 31 May 2020](#)



Bring About Change With Words

 Racism is still a very large issue in today's society. Recently, the phrase 'Black Lives Matter' has become recognized around the world as a call for change.

 **Extra Challenge**

Using a free word cloud generator, summarize the key words used in one of the stories you have just read.

25 to 30-minute activity



Quiz

End of Lesson Quiz

See if you can recall what you have learnt from this lesson.
How many questions can you answer?

1. What is the name of the person recognised as Britain's first Black political leader?
2. What name was given to the skeleton of a woman, discovered in York, who is believed to have died during the second half of the 4th century AD?
3. What was the name of the enslaved girl who was presented to Queen Victoria?
4. What was the name of the movement formed in the late 1960's out of the need for racial equality in a hostile Britain.?
5. What is the name of the London monument which depicts Black British sailors during the Battle of Trafalgar?
6. What was the full name of the ship that brought immigrants from the West Indies to Britain starting in 1948?
7. What was the name of the Black trumpeter who performed for Henry VIII?
8. What was the name of the activist group of which Olaudah Equiano was a founding member?
9. What was the name of the movement started in 2013 in response to the acquittal of African-American Trayvon Martin's murderer?
10. What year did Britain pass the Act for the Abolition of Slavery?



[arcade game: Computer Quiz Nutting Associates, 1968, The Strong National Museum of Play](#)





[Peterloo. Mural, 2019, People's History Museum](#)

Want to Learn More?



Now you've completed this lesson you may want to continue learning more about Black History in the UK with the Black & British hub. [This](#) is a good starting point to find out more.

Quiz- Answers

End of Lesson Quiz

Here are the answers to the quiz. How did you do?

1. Olaudah Equiano
2. Ivory Bangle Lady
3. Sarah Forbes Bonetta
4. Black Power Movement
5. Nelson's column
6. SS Empire Windrush
7. John Blanke
8. Sons of Africa
9. Black Lives Matter
10. 1833

