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40



TO DIVERSIFY

THE HISTORY CURRICULUM

A PRACTICAL HANDBOOK

CONTENTS

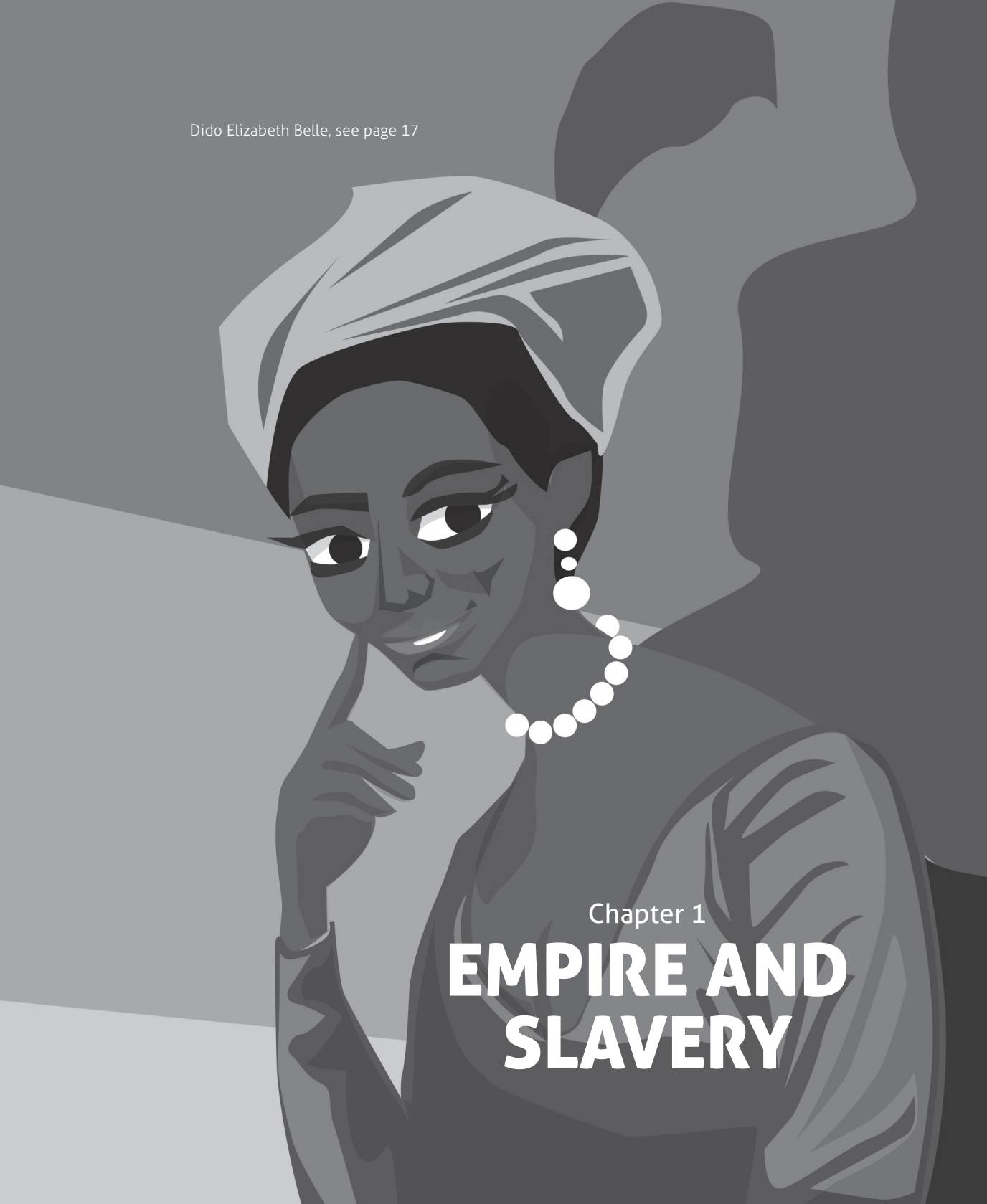
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Chapter 1

EMPIRE AND SLAVERY



INTRODUCTION

Perhaps more than any other topic or area of teaching, the British Empire has been the subject of significant revision and reappraisal in recent years. This reflects the profession's engagement with contemporary events and academic developments, as teachers come to recognise that existing frameworks for delivering lessons on empire and slavery are neither appropriate nor sufficient. There is an increasing demand for activities and case studies that serve, variously, to emphasise the role and agency of the enslaved in bringing about abolition (and not only through violent means), to underline the extent to which British/colonial wealth was facilitated by exploitation and enslavement, and to acknowledge the far-reaching, varied legacies of imperialism amongst formerly colonised nations and communities.

In this context, the stated aim of the *History Programmes of Study: Key Stage 3* document – according to which, pupils are expected to develop an understanding of 'the expansion and dissolution of empires'¹ – seems problematic, placing too much emphasis on the experiences and achievements of the colonisers at the expense of the colonised. Indeed, the notion that 'Indian independence and end of Empire' might feature within a study of 'challenges for Britain, Europe and the wider world'² is even more troubling, lending the impression that it was the British who suffered the most damaging consequences of decolonisation. However, one aspect of the document does remain useful in light of new and developing approaches to the teaching of empire: namely, the stated aim that pupils 'gain and deploy a historically grounded understanding of abstract terms such as *empire*'.³ When planning lessons or schemes of work that focus, perhaps, on the growth of the British Empire and the emergence of slavery as a form of international commerce, it is important to build in opportunities for pupils to really engage with the concept of empire. Pupils need to understand the political, cultural, economic and intellectual processes that have underpinned empire; they also need to grapple with the historical peculiarities of contrasting empires, and to appreciate the diverse ways in which different kinds of people experienced the imperial project.

The case studies featured in this section are intended to highlight new or neglected aspects of empire and slavery. Each reflects the historical reality in the

1 Department for Education, *History Programmes of Study: Key Stage 3*, p. 1.

2 Department for Education, *History Programmes of Study: Key Stage 3*, p. 4.

3 Department for Education, *History Programmes of Study: Key Stage 3*, p. 1.

sense that the exploitation of colonial subjects and enslaved men and women is highlighted. However, the case studies aim to underline the agency and individuality of those featured. They linger in particular upon acts of resistance or moments of challenge – and they aim, fundamentally, to indicate ways in which we might complicate received ideas about the individuals who were caught up in the realisation of the imperial project.

EXHIBITING THE EMPIRE: SARAH BAARTMAN/THE HOTTENTOT VENUS

- **Suggested enquiry:** What can we learn from colonial exhibitions about attitudes towards the British Empire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries? (Similarity and difference/Consequence)
- **Alternative enquiry:** What is the best way for us to remember Sarah Baartman? (Significance)

The story of Sarah Baartman – who became known derogatively as the Hottentot Venus – offers an important cultural lens through which to explore conceptions of empire at a time when the British Empire was at its height. It also allows us to convey the highly gendered ways in which bodies (especially Black bodies) were understood in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as ideas of beauty, utility and ownership were shaped by ongoing debates about the moral rectitude of slavery.

Sarah (or Saartje) Baartman was born in 1789 in what is now the Eastern Cape of South Africa, at a time when the Cape Colony was under Dutch rule. Sarah was forced to travel to Britain when a Scottish visitor to the Cape – Alexander Dunlop – indicated that Baartman could be exhibited on the London stage as a curiosity. Curiosities (or, to borrow the more commonly used term, *freaks*) were a staple of popular entertainment at this time, with variety theatre bills regularly featuring *giants*, *dwarves* and *bearded women*. However, Baartman's particular appeal lay simply in her foreignness, and in her apparent exemplification of her race – particularly in her curvaceous physical appearance. In this respect, Baartman's appearance on the London stage can be situated within the context of a growing appetite for colonial exhibitions, which saw groups of *natives* imported from Britain's colonies to be displayed as living exhibits.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM COLONIAL EXHIBITIONS ABOUT ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE EMPIRE IN THE EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES? (SIMILARITY AND DIFFERENCE/CONSEQUENCE)

This enquiry might therefore begin with an examination of sources describing Baartman and her performances.⁴ Pictorial representations are shocking to modern audiences, although written reviews offer even more useful opportunity to dissect the language of racial superiority/inferiority. Subsequently, pupils might explore the court case surrounding Baartman's exhibition, which – centering on the claim that Baartman was being exposed in a near-naked state without her consent – called upon precedents set by the Slave Trade Act (1807) to affirm Baartman's exploitation. The fact that the court case was quashed demonstrates the limited progress made by anti-slavery laws and campaigners in altering public attitudes.

Tragically, Sarah Baartman died at the age of 26, without ever having been permitted to record her own feelings about her experiences. However, there are a limited number of other performers whose thoughts and feelings were recorded for posterity. The voices of these individuals can be extremely powerful, serving to disrupt notions of colonial passivity and reminding pupils that there were instances of resistance or defiance amongst the supposedly disempowered. For example, the writings of T. N. Mukharji undermined the neat categorisation of *natives* as colonial exhibits, challenging the notion – influentially expressed by theorist Edward Said in *Orientalism* – that 'the Other' could not 'speak'. Said described 'Orientalism' as a 'western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient': essentially, the Orient was prevented from defining itself.⁵ Mukharji was an upper-class Bengali deputed to London to assist in the

4 See Sadiya Qureshi, 'Displaying Sarah Baartman, the 'Hottentot Venus'', *History of Science* 42(2) (2004): 233–257. This article outlines contemporary attitudes towards Baartman, pointing towards a range of useful contemporary sources. A BBC article offers further information: see Justin Parkinson, 'The Significance of Sarah Baartman', *BBC News* (7 January 2016). Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-35240987>.

5 Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin, 2016 [1978]), p. 3.

planning of a *native* village set up at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886.⁶ Upon his return to India, he documented his experiences in the book *A Visit to Europe* (1889).⁷ Pupils might be asked to consider how organisers hoped that visitors might read the exhibitions of native people, by examining extracts from the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition's catalogue.⁸ Provide pupils with a grid to record their ideas: the first column can contain pupils' inferences from the catalogue about how visitors were supposed to interpret the native villages (pupils might need to be guided in coming up with these); the second column might give pupils the chance to note down ways in which Mukharji challenged these ideas. They might note, for example, Mukharji's observations of British society, and his intelligent reflections on British politics. When questioned about the apparently polygamous nature of Indian society, Mukharji good-humouredly informed a British waitress that he had killed his fortieth wife 'because one morning she could not cook my porridge well'; pupils might be guided to recognise this as evidence of Mukharji's frustration with ill-informed British stereotypes.⁹ Having completed this task, pupils ought to be more attuned to the problematic and, at times, deeply disturbing nature of British attempts to define and package natives for an undiscerning public.

Placing formerly silenced individuals at the centre of an enquiry into the British Empire is essential if pupils are to grasp the full ramifications of the imperial project for the colonised. The experiences of Sarah Baartman and T. N. Mukharji help to underline the mutually reinforcing relationships that existed between scientific and political ideas of empire and race and the public presentation of natives on the stage. As politicians, writers and (pseudo)scientists justified colonial subjugation on the grounds of physical, social and cultural hierarchy, entertainment impresarios helped to ensure that ordinary Britons understood natives as immutably inferior – and, therefore, deserving of their enslavement. Individuals like Mukharji serve to challenge these hierarchies in some ways – although an enquiry focused on the imperial project ought, fundamentally, to emphasise these individuals' powerlessness in challenging such a rigid and self-serving system as the British Empire.

6 For more about colonial exhibits, see Peter Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display: English, Indian, and Australian Exhibitions from the Crystal Palace to the Great War* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001).

Hoffenberg describes the colonial villages, noting that they transformed distant lands into 'a series of images expressed in an aesthetic grammar for observation and consumption', allowing British visitors to feel superiority over distant lands and their inhabitants (p. 71).

7 T. N. Mukharji, *A Visit to Europe* (Calcutta: W. Newman & Co., 1889).

8 Thomas Wardle, *Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886* (London: William Clowes & Sons, 1886).

9 Mukharji, *A Visit*, p. 100.

KEY POINTS

- Born in South Africa in 1789, Sarah Baartman was made to perform on the London stage as a curiosity act.
- Colonial exhibitions were popular in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with natives displayed as living exhibits.
- Some of those categorised as natives (like T. N. Mukharji) had greater agency than Baartman.
- Baartman's experiences in Britain exemplified British attitudes towards the colonised.

'NEITHER HANDSOME NOR GENTEEL': DIDO ELIZABETH BELLE

- **Suggested enquiry:** How accurately did David Martin's portrait represent the lives of enslaved and formerly enslaved people in Britain? (Interpretations)
- **Alternative enquiry:** How did attitudes towards slavery change during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries? (Change and continuity)

In the 1770s, the Earl and Countess of Mansfield commissioned a very unusual painting. The painting – a portrait – depicted their great-niece, Lady Elizabeth Murray, delicately clasping an open book as she perched on a bench (so far, so conventional). To the side of Elizabeth, however – and far less conventionally – was depicted a young Black woman, also dressed in the elegant finery of eighteenth-century polite society. Elizabeth's right hand extends towards her companion, the warm gesture indicating companionship and perhaps even a kind of dependence. The two women appear as near-equals; although Elizabeth is positioned slightly closer to the painting's foreground, the viewer's eye is neither drawn more to one woman or the other.

The woman depicted alongside Elizabeth Murray was Dido Elizabeth Belle, the daughter of an enslaved woman and a British naval officer. Born into slavery herself, Belle was taken to England by her father and entrusted to the care of her great-uncle and his wife (the Mansfields). She grew up at the earl and countess' country house in Hampstead, where Elizabeth Murray (whose own mother had died) was also being raised. Though ostensibly employed as Elizabeth Murray's personal attendant, evidence suggests that Belle's relationship with her cousin was founded more in friendship than in duty. Additionally, the Earl of Mansfield served for over thirty years as lord chief justice (the most powerful judge in England), and he presided over several cases relating to the slave trade. Belle even

dictated some of his letters for him, so may have been privy to documents describing the experiences of enslaved individuals. In one significant case of 1772, Mansfield ruled that slaveholders were not able to send slaves in England out of the country to be sold in places like Jamaica.¹⁰ It is possible that this ruling (a key moment in the early abolition movement) was influenced by Mansfield's own relationship with Belle.

HOW ACCURATELY DID DAVID MARTIN'S PORTRAIT REPRESENT THE LIVES OF ENSLAVED AND FORMERLY ENSLAVED PEOPLE IN BRITAIN? (INTERPRETATIONS)

Portraits such as that of Belle and her cousin are a useful way of engaging pupils in the task of imaginative reconstruction. Of course, these images offer only a limited number of clues – some of which can be either intentionally or unintentionally misleading. However, examining these clues alongside other fragments of evidence allows us to piece together an understanding of what it might have been like to live in a particular time or place in history.

Pupils might therefore begin their study of Dido Elizabeth Belle by examining the portrait in question. Painted in 1778, the portrait has been variously attributed to Johan Zoffany and Joshua Reynolds, although historians now believe that the Mansfields commissioned Scottish artist David Martin to complete it. Pupils may be asked to consider why the portrait was so unusual for its time. It is important they are guided to recognise that it was not so much Belle's inclusion in the portrait that was unusual, as Black men, women and children often featured as liveried servants in late-eighteenth century family portraits. It was rather more unusual that Belle was depicted as a near-equal of her white companion, wearing clothing indicative of her own status and wealth. Features like Belle's turban and the bouquet of exotic fruits and flowers can be discussed, as can the fact that Belle is

¹⁰ Gene Adams, 'Dido Elizabeth Belle: A Black Girl at Kenwood', *Camden History Review* 12 (1984): 2. Available at: http://www.mirandakaufmann.com/uploads/1/2/2/5/12258270/dido-elizabeth-belle_-a-black-girl-at-kenwood.pdf.

pointing to her own face.¹¹ Some commentators have suggested that the artist wanted to draw attention to the subject's skin colour, whilst others have concluded that Belle was depicted pointing to her expression – a smile – as an indication of her happy acceptance into British society.

Subsequently, pupils can examine other clues relating to Belle's experiences, including information about her mother, Maria Belle, and about Belle's life at the Mansfields' country house, where – despite the gentle disapprobation of friends (she was 'neither handsome nor genteel', said American politician Thomas Hutchinson¹²) – she received an education, an annual allowance and many of the privileges of a free gentlewoman. It is useful to ask pupils to come up with four or five adjectives to best characterise Belle's life in Britain, as a way of cementing pupils' understanding. The final stage of the enquiry might see pupils develop a broader awareness of the lives of enslaved and formerly enslaved individuals in Britain towards the end of the eighteenth century. Provide a grid to help pupils organise their ideas. Themes for pupils to investigate might include working life, family life, acceptance and integration, and challenges. Having completed this activity, pupils are likely to realise that David Martin's painting is misleadingly optimistic; racist stereotypes remained highly pervasive and influential, shaping the lives of the free and the unfree alike.

Belle's story can therefore be used to add nuance and complexity to the study of slavery and its wide-ranging consequences for the enslaved. It allows us to complicate the story of abolition, too – a story so often recalled as one of inexorable progress, with the great and good of British society supposedly championing the freedoms of the oppressed. Indeed, the very atypicality of David Martin's portrait shows that most British elites were extremely reluctant to advocate for the rights of the enslaved or formerly enslaved, with the social and material benefits of the system far outweighing the admission of any moral qualms.

KEY POINTS

- The daughter of an enslaved woman and a naval officer, Dido Elizabeth Belle was brought up in Britain by the Earl and Countess of Mansfield.

11 See Kenna Libes, '1778 – David Martin, Portrait of Dido Elizabeth Belle Lindsay and Lady Elizabeth Murray', *Fashion History Timeline* (3 August 2020). Available at: <https://fashionhistory.fitnyc.edu/1778-martin-dido-elizabeth/>. Libes offers context for Martin's portrait, giving particularly useful insight into late-eighteenth century fashion.

12 Adams, 'Dido Elizabeth Belle: A Black Girl at Kenwood', p. 1.

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- Belle was painted alongside her companion Lady Elizabeth Murray in a portrait by David Martin.
- Belle's story allows us to explore attitudes towards slavery and abolition in the late eighteenth century.
- Portraits help pupils to imaginatively reconstruct the past.

THE PORTCHESTER PRISONERS

- **Suggested enquiry:** What can we learn from General Marinier about resistance to colonial rule? (Change and continuity/Significance)
- **Alternative enquiry:** Why were enslaved men and women from the Caribbean imprisoned in Portsmouth in 1796? (Causation)

In the winter of 1796, around 2,000 men, women and children from the Caribbean island of St Lucia arrived at Portchester Castle (in Portsmouth Harbour, located in south-east England). They had been part of a garrison on St Lucia, defending the island on behalf of the French Revolutionary Army which had declared an end to slavery in the early 1790s. Britain (still a slave-owning nation at this point) claimed the garrison on St Lucia, and the captives became prisoners of war. The Atlantic crossing was long and uncomfortable; reports suggested that both crewmen and captives endured terrible sickness, and at least 268 prisoners died on the voyage. When the prisoners arrived at Portchester, they were in no condition to withstand the cold English winter. Some of the prisoners suffered from frostbite; a few lost their toes. Any warm clothes the prisoners did have were liable to be stolen – most likely by European men also imprisoned at Portchester, who considered themselves ‘as a superior race of beings to the unfortunate Blacks.’¹³ Eventually, the men, women and children were exchanged for captured British soldiers and were sent to France. Some of the men joined the 7th Royal African Regiment, fighting on France’s behalf in Italy and Russia. It is possible, too, that some of those imprisoned at Portchester were recruited into the British Army or Navy, as the British armed forces actively recruited prisoners of war as soldiers and sailors at this time.

This episode in Portchester Castle’s long history can be explored through a causation enquiry in which pupils examine evidence as they try to ascertain how and why the imprisoned men, women and children ended up in Portsmouth in the late eighteenth century. The enquiry is a useful way of highlighting the extent to which

¹³ English Heritage, ‘Black Prisoners of War at Portchester Castle’ (n.d.). Available at: <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/portchester-castle/history-and-stories/black-prisoners-at-portchester/>.

the slave trade – and the movements to bring about its demise – resulted in ordinary men, women and children being dislocated and displaced across the globe.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM GENERAL MARINIER ABOUT RESISTANCE TO COLONIAL RULE? (CHANGE AND CONTINUITY/SIGNIFICANCE)

Alternatively, an enquiry might be framed around General Marinier – a soldier of mixed ethnic background who had commanded French forces on St Lucia and who found himself imprisoned at Portchester in 1796. The enquiry might begin with pupils piecing together events in St Lucia, Britain and France. Pupils need to understand both the chronology and the geography, so asking pupils to plot the captives' activities onto a blank world map is a useful task. Next, pupils gather evidence about the experiences of Marinier and the Portchester prisoners. Provide pupils with a grid to help them record different aspects of the prisoners' experiences. The categories could be: *Actions of the resisters*, *Who were the resisters?* and *What happened to them?* Pupils learn how Marinier and his fellow prisoners' actions on St Lucia resulted in their capture, and they gain an insight into how the British treated captured Black men and women (who were conferred the status of 'prisoners of war' rather than 'slaves', although slavery was still legal in British-controlled territories). Pupils are encouraged to make inferences from sources including the recollections of the British ship's captain, the prison inspectors and the commander of the defences at Portsmouth, all of whom made reference to the Black captives at Portchester. The latter of these, General Pitt, apparently 'showed him [General Marinier] off to the local gentry, as if he were a lion':¹⁴ Marinier was exoticised; paraded around the prison's grounds as an exemplification of his type.

Having learned about the actions and experiences of General Marinier and the Portchester prisoners, pupils might be encouraged to draw comparisons with other instances of resistance and rebellion.¹⁵ This is an opportunity for pupils to learn

14 English Heritage, 'Speaking with Shadows: Transcript of Episode 2: The Caribbean Prisoners of Portchester Castle' (2019). Available at: <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/siteassets/home/visit/inspire-me/speaking-with-shadows/sws-episode-2/speaking-with-shadows-episode-2-transcript.pdf>.

15 See Judith Edwards, *Fighting for Freedom: Abolitionists and Slave Resistance* (New York: Enslow Publishing, 2017). Edwards provides a concise overview of the history of resistance movements amongst enslaved individuals.

more about individuals such as Toussaint L'Ouverture and Olaudah Equiano, as well as events such as the Baptist War, Tacky's Revolt and the Haitian Revolution. Pupils ought to consider how resistance manifested itself in different ways, as they compare the actions – and efficacy – of General Marinier and other resisters and rebels.

The story of the Portchester prisoners adds flavour to our understanding of diversity in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain. It also complicates widely held notions of the British as the heroes of abolition, or the bastions of moral rectitude, in an age of exploitation and enslavement. Exploring the experiences of formerly enslaved men, women and children at Portchester Castle literally brings the story of slavery, resistance and abolition home for pupils, allowing them to examine events that might otherwise feel somewhat remote (both in time and place) from their own lives. This enquiry provides a certain kind of proximity for the study of these larger narratives, underlining some of the global, national and local dimensions implicit within the histories of empire and slavery.

KEY POINTS

- In 1796, Portchester Castle housed 2,000 prisoners from St Lucia.
- The captives had defended St Lucia on behalf of the French Revolutionary Army (France having previously abolished slavery), but the island was seized by the British.
- General Marinier – one of those imprisoned at Portchester – is a case study in resistance to colonial rule.
- Enslaved men and women resisted enslavement and captivity in various ways; the story of the Portchester prisoners helps to underline this.

THE WHITE QUEEN OF OKOYONG: MARY SLESSOR

- **Suggested enquiry:** Does Mary Slessor deserve to be reinstated on the Scottish banknote? (Significance)
- **Alternative enquiry:** What can we learn from Mary Slessor about changing attitudes towards Africa? (Change and continuity)

According to an article on the Bank of England website, individuals are chosen to feature on banknotes by virtue of the 'important contribution' they have made to 'our society and culture'. In 2014, a new method for selecting these individuals saw an advisory committee select the field to be represented on newly issued notes – with 'innovation, leadership and values' representing key criteria in the selection process. Members of the public then nominated individuals within this field. This process resulted in the selection of artist J. M. W. Turner for the polymer £20 banknote, and scientist Alan Turing for the £50 note. The article also notes the Bank of England's desire for the individuals represented on banknotes to 'come from different backgrounds and fields',¹⁶ although the range of individuals to have featured so far does not entirely reflect the diversity of modern British society and culture.

Framing an enquiry around the question 'Does [insert individual] deserve to be featured on the [insert banknote]?' is a good way of encouraging pupils to think about significance. It is interesting to share the Bank of England's selection process with pupils, encouraging them to think about how they would make the decision; what makes people from the past important enough that they deserve this kind of recognition? Depending on the topic and period studied, pupils can compare the attributes and achievements of the individual currently featured on the banknote with other candidates, using significance criteria to help them make their judgements.

¹⁶ Bank of England, 'Choosing Banknote Characters', *Bank of England* (22 June 2021). Available at: <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/banknotes/banknote-characters>.

DOES MARY SLESSOR DESERVE TO BE REINSTATED ON THE SCOTTISH BANKNOTE? (SIGNIFICANCE)

In 2006, the Scottish £10 banknote featuring nineteenth-century missionary Mary Slessor was withdrawn, and a new issue featured poet Robert Burns as Slessor's replacement. Slessor had featured on the banknote since 1997 (ensconced in an *African* setting, with four Black children surrounding her – along with a map to indicate the region of modern-day Nigeria in which she worked), with an image of the missionary on the banknote's reverse. Slessor's work in spreading the messages of Christianity and safeguarding the rights of women and children in the Okoyong region of Nigeria was clearly judged significant enough to warrant Slessor's place on the banknote in 1997. So, why was she replaced by Robert Burns in the banknote's more recent issue? Does Slessor deserve to be reinstated?

Mary Slessor was born in 1848 and her childhood was a challenging one; Mary's father and brothers died of pneumonia, leaving Mary, her mother and her two sisters to struggle through life in the slums of Dundee. Slessor was raised as a devout Presbyterian and, inspired by the work of David Livingstone and other well-known missionaries, Slessor applied to the United Presbyterian Church's Foreign Missionary Board in 1876. She was sent to West Africa soon after. Slessor and her fellow missionaries arrived in Calabar, Nigeria, harbouring views typical of mid-Victorian society; Africa was held to be the dark continent, and Africans were considered unchristian – perhaps uncivilised – heathens who lacked the ability to govern themselves. Of course, these attitudes need to be unpicked; pupils ought to recognise the context in which such views came into being, including Britain's historic incursions into the region through the slave trade (which had necessitated an infantilisation of Africans as a means of morally justifying the trade's continuation), and the development of pseudoscientific ideas that depended upon the hierarchical classification of different human races. Still, Slessor's work was motivated by a genuine desire to help, as she undertook the education of men, women and children in the Calabar region and saved hundreds of babies who had been condemned to death due to the local custom of abandoning twins to either starve or be eaten by animals. She lived for fifteen years with the Okoyong people, learning the Efik language so that she could encourage local trade and settle disputes.

In Britain she became known as the White Queen of Okoyong and when she died in 1915 she received the equivalent of a state funeral in Nigeria. A statue to honour Slessor still stands in south-east Nigeria and roads, schools and hospitals in both Nigeria and Scotland bear Slessor's name.¹⁷

In the enquiry, pupils might gather evidence about Slessor's significance, recording their findings on a grid using these headings: *Challenges Slessor faced*, *Evidence of her impact at the time*, *Evidence of her longer-term impact*. Having done this, pupils ought to be equipped to answer the enquiry question. Pupils could write a letter to the Bank of Scotland, outlining their conclusions. Provide a word frame to help with this (and to encourage pupils to organise their ideas around clear points), i.e. 'To whom it may concern, I am writing this letter with the intention of suggesting that I have reached this conclusion because Therefore, I would like to see'.

Mary Slessor's story offers useful insight into Britain's changing relationship with Africa in the nineteenth century. Slave trading was coming to an end and Britain sought to establish itself on the one hand as a benevolent, Christianising force, and on the other as a contender in the European race to colonise large swathes of the continent. The enquiry raises important questions about the extent to which missionaries ought to be considered agents of British colonialism. With carefully selected sources and sensitively handled discussion, it is possible to paint a nuanced picture of both missionary work and of the Okoyong community that ultimately embraced Slessor and the values she stood for.

KEY POINTS

- Scottish missionary Mary Slessor arrived in West Africa in 1876, believing that Africans needed to be civilised through Christian education.
- Slessor saved babies who had been condemned to death, as well as encouraging local trade and settling disputes.
- Slessor's story complicates ideas about nineteenth-century missionary work.
- Framing enquiries around the individuals featured on banknotes allows pupils to explore the second-order concept of significance.

¹⁷ For an overview of Slessor's life and career, see Jeanette Hardage, *Mary Slessor – Everybody's Mother: The Era and Impact of a Victorian Missionary* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008).

THE THREE KINGS OF BECHUANALAND

- **Suggested enquiry:** Why was the visit of the three kings of Bechuanaland significant? (Consequence)
- **Alternative enquiry:** Why was Cecil Rhodes so worried about the three kings of Bechuanaland? (Significance/Causation)

The year was 1895 and the three kings in question were Khama III, Bathoen I and Sebele I. All were rulers from the Bechuanaland Protectorate in modern-day Botswana. Two years previously, Cecil Rhodes – who was serving as prime minister of southern Africa’s Cape Colony – had prevailed in the First Matabele War and had used his victory as an opportunity to extend control over native populations. It was clear in 1895 that the Bechuanaland Protectorate was Rhodes’ next target, as the imperialist sought to bring this region under the control of the British South Africa Company – a move that would entail a loss of political autonomy for the Bechuanaland kings. Khama, Bathoen and Sebele decided that their only chance of protecting Bechuanaland against this encroachment was to appeal directly to the British government; indeed, Khama proposed to convince ‘the Queen and the people of England’ of the rectitude of the three kings’ mission.¹⁸ In September 1895, therefore, Khama, Bathoen and Sebele embarked upon a tour of Britain, visiting Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, Edinburgh, Brighton and London, and meeting hundreds of local dignitaries along the way. In many respects, the tour was a triumph for the Bechuanaland kings – and a public relations disaster for Rhodes and the Cape Colony.

The tour was documented by a British press eager to emphasise the strangeness of the three Bechuanaland kings. For this reason there is a wealth of source material that might be incorporated into lessons, from photographs and newspaper

¹⁸ Neil Parsons, *King Khama, Emperor Joe and the Great White Queen* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 51. For more about the visit of the three kings, see David Olusoga, *Black and British: A Forgotten History*, BBC [documentary] (2016). Part 4 of this series features the three kings’ visit.

reports to tour programmes and records of various speeches made along the way.¹⁹ It would be a worthwhile exercise for pupils studying the operations of the British Empire to conduct a close reading of these sources, if only to explore the ways in which the three kings successfully challenged some of the racist assumptions that underpinned the propagation of empire in the nineteenth century. However, the story of the three kings' tour offers a particularly fruitful opportunity for constructing a significance/consequence enquiry, in which pupils explore some of the ramifications of this seemingly minor event for broader developments in the Scramble for Africa.

WHY WAS THE VISIT OF THE THREE KINGS OF BECHUANALAND SIGNIFICANT? (CONSEQUENCE)

Pupils might start by examining some of the ways in which Rhodes and the Cape Colonists pictured the natives of southern Africa. Postcards and other illustrations produced during the British South Africa Company's 1891 expedition emphasise the supposedly primitive nature of the African people and were intended to justify the subjugation of Africa on both moral and pragmatic grounds. Such sources contrast well with photographs of Khama, Bathoen and Sebele that were taken during their tour of Britain, in which they appear (not unproblematically) as respectably attired Victorian gentlemen. Once pupils have studied the imperialists' vision of a conquered Africa, they can begin considering the significance of the three kings' unprecedented visit to Britain.

The significance model devised by Christine Counsell offers a useful framework for assessing the significance of the three kings' visit.²⁰ Pupils are tasked with identifying evidence from a range of sources that indicate the fulfilment (or otherwise) of Counsell's '5 Rs': *remarkable, remembered, resulted in change, resonant, revealing*. Provide pupils with a grid to record their information: the first column should contain Christine Counsell's significance criteria and the second should be blank to allow pupils to make their notes. Pupils might note, for example, that the

19 Many of these resources are available online, put together as a Black history teaching pack for schools. See Brighton & Hove Black History, 'African Kings in Brighton' (n.d.). Available at: <https://black-history.org.uk/project/three-african-kings-visit-brighton-in-1895/>.

20 Christine Counsell, 'Looking Through a Josephine Butler-shaped Window: Focusing Pupils' Thinking on Historical Significance', *Teaching History* 114 (2004): 30–34 at 32.

visit was very frequently *remarked upon* in contemporary newspapers and periodicals, with detailed reports of the three kings' visits to such sites as the Crystal Palace. They might also identify the construction of a huge memorial to the three kings in modern-day Botswana as evidence of the visit having been *remembered*; the visit is memorialised as a landmark event in the struggle for Botswanan independence. Finally, pupils are likely to recognise that the visit helped to engender further negotiations between the British government and Cecil Rhodes' British South Africa Company, ultimately preventing Rhodes' annexation of the Bechuanaland Protectorate and ensuring that the area remained under direct British administration until Botswanan independence was granted in 1960. It seems, then, that the significance of this short visit from three southern African kings during the latter years of Queen Victoria's reign can barely be overstated.

This enquiry sees pupils examine the role played by three individuals in ensuring the relative independence of the Bechuanaland Protectorate. It helps pupils to understand the British Empire not as one sweeping entity, but as a conglomerate of forces, ideas and personalities, some of which were becoming increasingly fractured. By exploring the influence exerted by the three kings at this critical juncture, the enquiry challenges received notions of British imperial domination at the turn of the twentieth century.

In light of the recent debates prompted by the Black Lives Matter movement, it might be useful for the enquiry to end with pupils exploring issues of commemoration and memorialisation in relation to Rhodes' statues in South Africa and Britain. Debate might centre upon the role played by statues in helping to shape certain ideas and narratives about the past – and the extent to which the history of the British Empire is best told through statues and monuments, or through other methods of commemoration.

KEY POINTS

- In 1895, three kings from the Bechuanaland Protectorate – Khama III, Bathoen I and Sebele I – arrived in Britain, seeking support against the expansion of Cecil Rhodes' British South Africa Company.
- The kings became celebrities and their visit was covered by the British press.