

Virtual Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery trail on Slavery

These difficult themes may make you feel uncomfortable and uneasy and we want to make you aware of this at this point. The objects that we are going to look at may look harmless, but they are the result of atrocities committed by Britain that took place from 1562 – 1838, the trade of enslaved humans. This worksheet is the beginning of the conversation and we encourage you to research further after you have attempted the questions below. We have included some links at the end to help spur further reading.

Britain's involvement in the trade of enslaved humans across the Atlantic Ocean began in 1562. Plantations or farms were established in the West Indies and America, most commonly growing sugar cane, but also tobacco and other products. The production and refinement of these materials were very labour-intensive. This led to increasing demand for enslaved people, especially those from Africa, who were more immune to diseases such as malaria and yellow fever. Enslaved humans were not treated as people, but rather as commodities or animals.

The British transported from Africa over six million people (over 12 million were transported in total), who toiled and died to produce luxury foods that today we take for granted. Many enslaved people would end their journeys in Virginia (America), where they had a huge enslaved population for the growing of tobacco. The conditions were appalling – at least 12-hour days in intense heat – and an enslaved person's life expectancy could be as little as four years. Many European traders and landowners became very rich in the process.

Follow the virtual trail below to discover objects that reveal this history and demonstrate attitudes in Britain at the time.

The objects range from tea sets to oil paintings and can all be found on display in Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery. The final section of this worksheet covers objects that relate to the abolition of the trade in enslaved people in 1807.

We have included links to Google Maps ([the underlined blue words](#)) which put you in front of the object. Once you have clicked on the link, found the object and read the description, please have a go at answering the questions.

Answers to questions can be found at the end of this document, along with a glossary of terms and links for further reading.

Click on this link to [view our Slavery information panel and display case](#)

NB. Some of the text is not readable on Google, so please try your best matching our description to the picture.

Can you zoom in and spot the following objects?

- a) Dish that held samples of tobacco at a Norwich grocery. It depicts an enslaved man on a tobacco plantation in Virginia. Life expectancy for an enslaved person there was four years.
- b) Mug made for the Black Boy Inn in Beccles showing an enslaved person on a tobacco plantation with a pipe.
- c) Teapot showing an enslaved person working in Britain. The enslaved people that worked in Britain usually worked as servants but had few rights.
- d) Sugar box advertising the East India Company's sugar plantations. This company transported enslaved people from Madagascar to India.

e) Pipe bowl moulded as the head of a Black man. Black men, women and children were forced to cultivate the tobacco plant used in this pipe.

Q1. What do these items tell us about attitudes to slavery in East Anglia?

Q2: What sort of person do you think owned these objects, like the teapot which was made in the 18th century?

Q3: Using these objects, make a list of the produce that enslaved people were forced to harvest.

Q4: Who would use the teapot, where would they use it and why?

Q5: Why do you think teapots, plates and mugs were popular utensils to illustrate the lives of enslaved individuals?

Q6: Why were enslaved people shipped to farms in the Americas, rather than Britain?

Q7: Why do you think the average life of an enslaved individual was four years? Write down three reasons.

Debate: Were people in Norfolk aware of slavery and the suffering involved? Use these objects to support your opinion.

The Paston Treasure

The Paston Treasure is a painting commissioned by the wealthy Paston family in the 1670s, and it shows off some of their collections from Oxnead Hall in Norfolk. It shows the earliest known image of an enslaved African in Norfolk. His name is unknown but enslavers in Britain at this time liked to call enslaved people classical names like Caesar and had them dressed accordingly. He is thought to be from Guinea or Benin. The Paston family became bankrupt in the 1670s and were forced to sell their belongings.

Q8. As there is no death record in Oxnead for this young man, what do you think happened to him?

Q9: By placing him alongside their extravagant and expensive objects, how do you think the wealthy Paston family viewed this enslaved young man?

Sugar

One of the common products that captives were forced to harvest was sugar. We have several items in our collection that were used to store and display sugar. In the 17th century the British set up sugar plantations on Caribbean islands such as Barbados and Jamaica.

Sugar casters in the Castle Keep

These sugar holders date from the 1720s. As far back as 1550, there were 3,000 small mills in the Americas, owned by Spanish, French, Dutch and the British. Sugar was a very expensive luxury and much loved by Queen Elizabeth I (when she visited Norwich in 1578 she was presented with a cone of sugar). Cutting sugar cane was back-breaking and dangerous, and between 1640 and 1713 there were seven recorded revolts by enslaved people on the British sugar islands.

Sucrier and cover in the Lowestoft Porcelain display on the Rotunda Balcony

'Sucrier' means 'sugar bowl'; this example held sugar lumps and was made locally in the Lowestoft porcelain factory. By 1750, sugar had surpassed grain as the most valuable commodity in European trade, making up one fifth of all European imports. The importance of sugar was evident in politics – in 1763, the French gave all of Canada to the English to keep their sugar lands in Guadeloupe.

Q10. Sugar holders like these would have been prominently placed on tables. Why do you think people did this?

Q11: How might people flaunt their wealth today? And can you think of any examples that are the result of exploited laborers?

Q12: What do you think happened when the demand for sugar grew in Britain? How do you think the merchants satisfied this new desire?

Coffee

A culture of drinking coffee, and visiting coffee houses, sprung up in the late 17th century – although women were excluded from such meeting places. A century later, tea overtook coffee as the nation's favourite hot drink.

The Smoking Party Teapot in the Teapot Gallery

Following the introduction of coffee plantations by the French in the West Indies, the consumption of coffee led to 'coffee houses' – the first of which opened in Oxford in 1650. By 1675 there were more than 3,000 coffee houses in England. Here, men of all classes mingled and talked about politics; one French visitor called coffee houses the "seats of English liberty". The London Stock Exchange, as well as Christie's and Sotheby's auction houses, were established in places like Jonathan's Coffee House in London.

Miniature Lowestoft Porcelain Tea Set in the Teapots Gallery

This children's tea set was made between 1770 and 1780 in Lowestoft. This would have been a very expensive toy, and reflects the European preoccupation with tea, coffee and chocolate, the latter having reached Britain from Central America around 1650. The growing popularity of these drinks also led to a rise in demand for sugar, causing even more work for captive people. Even today, it is estimated that 90% of cocoa farms still use some form of enslaved labour, knowledge and/or skills.

Tobacco

Tobacco was introduced into Europe by the Spanish around 1518 and became one of the primary products fuelling colonisation and a driving factor in the enslavement of Africans. Tobacco was first imported to Liverpool (a port central to Britain's trade in enslaved humans) in the 1640s. By the end of the century, Liverpool was importing nearly 610,000kg of tobacco a year. In ten years, this increased to over 1,400,000kg.

Still Life by Willem Heda (detail) in an art gallery not accessible via Google Maps:



In this 1638 painting by Dutch artist Willem Claesz Heda, we can see a twist of paper containing tobacco, amongst other expensive objects and foods, including oysters and salt. Like Britain, the Dutch traded extensively in enslaved people and tobacco; a product known as "brown gold."

A Norfolk man associated with the trade was John Rolfe, from Heacham, who sailed for Virginia in 1609. In 1614, he married the Native American princess Pocahontas, and was instrumental in the founding of the Virginia tobacco industry. The massive growth in trade from the Jamestown colony of Virginia led to the importation of the first Black enslaved people there in 1619. For more information about John and Pocahontas, [visit this website](#).

Clay pipe in a display of clay objects on the Rotunda Balcony

This earthenware clay pipe was made after 1600, when tobacco-smoking was a social activity amongst men in Europe, as it had been in the Americas. Before cigarettes became popular, tobacco was either taken as snuff (see below) or smoked in a pipe. Pipes comprised of a bowl, shank (stem) and bit (mouth-piece); and were first made in Shropshire, in 1575. Early pipes in the Americas are recorded as being made from corn cobs fitted with reed stems or goose quills.

Snuff Boxes in the Fitch Room

There were a variety of ways of taking tobacco. Snuff is fermented tobacco mixed with perfumed oils, that was grated into a fine powder and inhaled through the nose, rather than smoked. These little enamelled boxes could have been used for snuff or beauty patches. They mainly date from 1750-1800, and many would have been made in Bilston in the Midlands, being popular as souvenirs.

Q13: As well as sugar, coffee and tobacco, can you think of any other produce that enslaved people might have farmed?

Q14: How are sugar, coffee and tobacco farmed today? Use Google and YouTube to find the answers.

Discussion: Ask people that you live with what *they* know about slavery. Do they have new information not included in this worksheet? Share with them **one piece** of information that you have learnt so far.

The Abolition of Slavery.

The second half of the 18th century saw a change in attitudes in Britain. A number of people and groups began to speak out against the trade and slavery. In 1787 the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade was formed in London. It became a mass political movement, with women, poets, Quakers and Black people living in Britain playing a crucial role.

Although the trade in enslaved humans was abolished in 1807, it was not until 1834 that slavery was abolished in the British Empire - over 250 years since this trade began. It was to continue in other parts of the world, such as the USA for many more years.

Use the blue link above to find the following objects:

- a) Bust of Amelia Opie, Norwich-born writer and campaigner against slavery. For more information on this remarkable woman, [visit this website](#).
- b) Teapot with 'Freedom to Ye Slave' slogan. Many people were opposed to slavery and campaigned for its abolition. They were known as abolitionists.
- c) Jug with 'Am Not I A Man and A Brother?' on it. This was designed by Josiah Wedgwood to argue against the belief that Black people were not human.
- d) Jug featuring two boxers. One, Tom Molineaux, had been enslaved but bought his freedom through his boxing skills. To find out more about his fascinating story, [visit this website](#).

Q15: Some people in Britain were opposed to the Abolition Bill. Who do you think these people were and what were their arguments in favour of slavery?

Q16: Study items b and c. Come up with your own slogan opposing slavery and display it on a drawing of a household item.

Q17: Study item b. What movement do we have today that champions paying workers a fair wage?

Q18: Without modern technology, how did people spread the abolitionist message in the 18th century? And how would you share the campaign today?

And if you have time...

Q19: Have you seen any stories in the news recently that show there is still racial inequality today?

Further Reading/Watching:

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/slavery/pdf/britain-and-the-trade.pdf>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z732pv4/revision/3>

<https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/history-of-slavery/middle-passage>

<https://www.educationquizzes.com/ks3/history/the-slave-trade-01/>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3NXC4Q_4JVg

Glossary of terms:

Certain words are often associated with slavery and they require a bit of explanation. It's important to have an understanding of the following terms:

Colonialism: Acquiring control over another country and exploiting its people, resources and land. Europe had colonies (land that they owned) in the Caribbean and the Americas which they found was suitable for growing particular crops. To grow and harvest these crops they used enslaved people.

Imperialism: This is very similar to colonialism. This idea motivated countries in Europe in take political control of other countries.

British Empire: The collection of colonies that Britain rules, which included much of the Americas like Virginia and the Caribbean.

Enslave: The act of making someone a slave.

Slave: Human beings treated as property to be traded and forced to labour without any rights at all.

Discrimination: Treating someone differently based upon a negative view you have.

Diaspora: People that moved, forcibly or voluntarily, from their ancestral homeland.

Equality: Everyone in society having the same rights and opportunities no matter their race, sex, gender or disability.

Answers to questions:

1. It shows that slavery was accepted as a part of life.
2. Wealthy people.
3. Tobacco, tea and sugar.
4. The wife of a wealthy husband would use it in their home to entertain guests.
5. It shows where the food stuff came from and displays how far it has travelled.
6. Only the climate in the Americas was suitable for growing these goods.
7. 12 hours of day of intense heat. Enslavers had little incentives to keep them alive longer. They were not provided with suitable food and medical care.
8. Your own work.
9. He was also seen as an 'exotic' object to show off.
10. To show off their wealth.
11. Clothes produced in sweatshops or diamonds mined by enslaved people.
12. They shipped over more enslaved people.
13. Cotton and chocolate.
14. Using industrial machinery.
15. Traders and British merchants who made money from transporting enslaved people.
16. Your own work.
17. Fair Trade.
18. Pamphlets and public speeches. Today, we would use social media, 'Change.org' and public protests, for example.
19. Your own work.

Norfolk Museums Service is a partnership between Norfolk County Council and Norfolk's District Councils, funded through council tax, earned income and grants.

