

Teachers Notes

The Merchants

Links to the National Curriculum for Key Stage 3 History

Students will gain historical perspective by placing their growing knowledge into different contexts, understanding the connections between national and international history; between cultural, economic, military and political history.

This lesson would easily fit into schemes of learning on the following topics:

- Political power, industry and empire.
- The impact of European trade and colonialism in Africa
- The Transatlantic Slave Trade
- The Industrial Revolution
- The lesson is also relevant to Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural SMSC development

The lesson gives students the opportunity to be reflective about their own non-religious beliefs and perspective on life, their knowledge of, and respect for, different people's feelings and values.

It will build their understanding of the history of Britain and how the activities of the Merchants contributed to its wealth.

It offers the opportunity to develop reasoned views about moral and ethical issues. Giving students a chance to understand and appreciate the viewpoints of others on historical issues.

Lesson Structure

This lesson follows the enquiry question:

“Who were the Merchants and how has their influence shaped Bristol?”

The lesson explores the story of how Bristol Merchants traded in Africa and the Caribbean, and their role in establishing and sustaining the Transatlantic Slave Trade from the 15th century through to Abolition in the 19th century. The lesson includes three case studies of particular Merchants and some of the buildings and monuments around the city of Bristol which speak to the economic development which took place in Britain during that period. The lesson encourages students to consider how our built environment can tell a story and how the wealth that was created by the trade has shaped the Britain we know today.

This is a multimedia lesson plan, in which students have a chance to watch a poetry performance from a contemporary Bristolian poet. There is extended reading to learn about the wider context.

On the next page you can find the text of the poem “The Bristol Trade” that is performed as part of the lesson plan.

The Bristol Trade

Bristol built Colston's Hall a new extension clad in gold
Which reminded me of all the African Souls Bristol bought and sold

Edward Colston is hailed as the beacon for this trade
When the reality is that through it Bristol was made

Bristol profited in so many ways
To name them all would take us days

Trade, commerce and stature is to name just a few
Of how through the African people's suffering Bristol grew

It was called the slave trade
So that the people who profited could say their gains were legally made

But if we were able to talk to Milosevic, Pinochet or Hitler
They would say the same even though we know their regimes were sinister

What Hitler did was rightly called the Holocaust
Shouldn't the same be said for Africa when you see all she lost?

Through persecution, beatings, fear and death
People were enslaved till their last breath

People were taken from all over the great continent never to return
And over time many would forget everything they did ever learn

Imagine not being allowed to speak in your native tongue
Imagine not being allowed to educate your young

Then over time your ways are lost and your history is forgotten
You become part of a world where you belong at the bottom

How was it possible for people to absorb such pain?
How could they witness such horrors and not go insane

These are just a few of the things they had to endure
So that the people who made it legal could gain more

The people who did it said they were the civilised race
They keep rewriting history to make their case

But if we look at the facts and facts alone
Who was uncivilised and savage is easily shown

Lawrence Hoo