

TEACHERS NOTES

Samuel Sharpe

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.
- Britain as the first industrial nation – the impact on society.
- The development of the British Empire, party politics and social reform.
- Britain's Transatlantic Slave Trade: its effects and its eventual abolition
- The History of protest and/or civil rights movements.
- The lesson is also relevant to Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural SMSC development

The lesson gives students the ability 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 from the earliest times to the present day: Especially how the actions and views of people in Jamaica have shaped this nation.

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:

“What did it take for enslaved Africans to resist and rise up in Jamaica?”

The four-part structure outlines the story of Sam Sharpe and the events of Christmas 1831 on the Island of Jamaica. The lesson uncovers the role played by enslaved Jamaicans of African descent, to end slavery on the island. The lesson encourages students to understand the many different factors at play that led to uniting many enslaved people. Students have a chance to use an artist's interpretation of Sam to make some predictions and watch a poetry performance. There is extended reading to learn about the wider context. Students then categorise the reasons for Sam's success. Students then use the latest historical interpretations to assess the significance of the uprising.

On the following page is the text of the poem “Christmas Uprising” that is performed as part of this lesson.



Christmas Uprising

Rebellions and revolutions forced the hands of time
Bringing forth an end to this most abhorrent crime

For centuries the enslaved had been fighting for their freedom
While all from them was stolen by colonisers building a new kingdom

Samuel Sharpe was born in the Parish of St James, Jamaica in 1801
In the turbulent times just before slavery's days were meant to be done

Samuel Sharpe grew up to be an inspirational Baptist preacher
Who gained great status as an abolitionist anti-slavery speaker

Delivering sermons for freedom to his congregation
Preaching slavery must fall with no more segregation

Samuel Sharpe believed in God and the good in men
Due to his faith he felt he could summon them

To not fight but to stand for this just cause
To resist by peaceful protest, breaking unjust laws

After many meetings and debates it was finally agreed
That action must be taken if they were ever to succeed

Christmas 1831 Samuel Sharpe chose to start his peaceful protest
When the sugar cane was due to be cut so it would create much unrest

The peaceful protest began with strikes on plantations all across Jamaica
Causing the plantation owners to get whipped up into a state of hysteria

Word quickly spread that the protest had begun
A warship was called in to lay aim with its gun

Soon the situation exploded and grew out of hand
As people fought for their freedom in a stolen land

10 days the uprising lasted with over 60,000 of the enslaved involved
Fighting for their freedoms believing their actions should be absolved



In the aftermath Samuel Sharpe and over 500 others were brought to account
Many sentenced to be hung, their heads cut off and placed on a mount

The brutality of the punishments served had an escalating effect
It highlighted slavery's barbarism while undermining intellect

The abolition movement used the uprising to further their cause
It helped to accelerate the introduction of new anti-slavery laws

In 1833 the Abolition Of The Slave Trade Act was finally passed
Marking a victory for all who had laid down their lives in slavery's past

'I would rather die on yonder gallows than live my life in slavery'
Is the last Will and Testament to Samuel Sharpe's spirit and bravery.

Lawrence Hoo