



FOUNDATION CERTIFICATE

# Teaching Black Histories *in* Schools

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Module 1: An Introduction to Black History teaching?

## Lesson 2: Black History – a Critical Evaluation of the National Curriculum

This essay aims to explore the opportunities within the key stage 3 national curriculum for the greater and better integration of Black historical narratives into British and world histories. We will spend some time exploring the ethos that drives the history national curriculum and see how the inclusion of Black historical narratives can help educators and schools to fulfil that ethos.

### Learning Outcomes

In this lesson, you will learn:

- The ethos that underpins the history national curriculum;
- Using this as a guide, where Black historical narratives can be inserted into the teaching of British and world histories.

#### *Pre-lesson questions*

Without looking at the national curriculum, what African, Black British and/or any other Black historical narratives do you think are required or suggested by the history national curriculum at key stage 3?

### 1. Categorising histories in the national curriculum

There are seven broad topics required to be taught at key stage 3. We are going to focus on the three that offer the best opportunity to explore Black British narratives, which we can divide into the following three categories:

The **first** category we will call “internal British histories” and includes (i) *the development of Church, state and society in Medieval Britain 1066 – 1509*; and (ii) *the development of Church, state and society in Britain 1509 – 1745*.

The **second** category we will call “wider British histories” and includes *Ideas, political power, industry and empire: Britain, 1745 – 1901*.

The **third** category we will call “world histories” and includes (i) *challenges for Britain, Europe and the wider world 1901 to the present day, to include the Holocaust*; and (ii) *at least one study of a significant society or issue in world*

*history and its interconnections with other world developments.*

Taking each category in turn, let us explore what the curriculum is trying to achieve in terms of student knowledge.

## 2. Internal British Histories

### *Mapping the ethos of the curriculum*

These histories are intended to give students an understanding of how British society had developed from the Norman Conquest to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when modern processes of globalisation really began to take off.

The curriculum first highlights **religious history** as a key focus. The choice to use 1509, the year of the accession of Henry VIII, as the demarcation between “medieval” and “modern” Britain shows the importance that the curriculum places on the development of the Anglican church in shaping British identity. Understanding the unique nature of the Anglican church, its relationship with the crown and the state, and the changing nature of personal belief and worship in Britain are therefore central objectives of the curriculum.

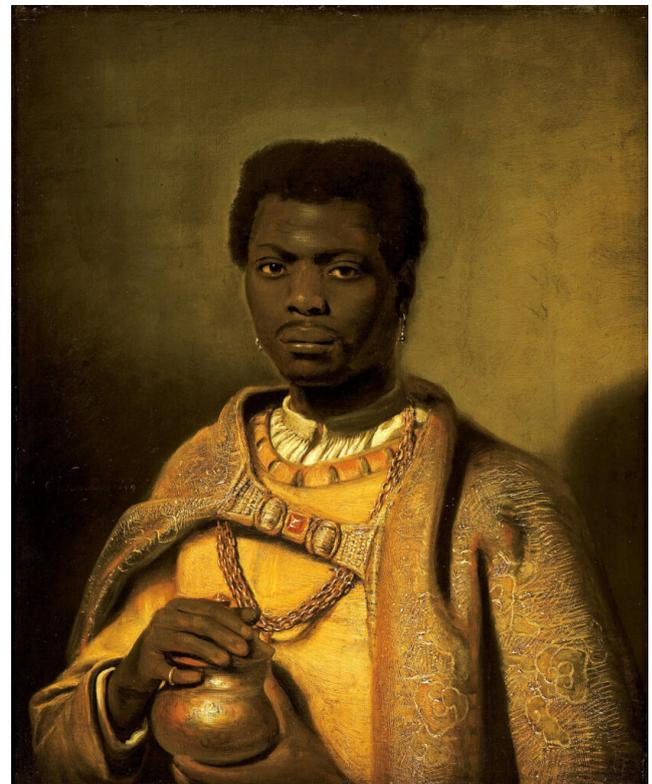
The curriculum then highlights **political history**, namely the development of the state, being the institutions of government - “crown, court and country” - and the changing relationships between them. The aim is that students should gain an understanding of the antecedents of our current liberal democratic political settlement and the processes that led us to this point.

Thirdly, the curriculum highlights the history of **British society**, being the history of various aspects of social development such as the history of labour, women’s history, urbanisation and the growth of political representation. The curriculum wants students to understand the principles that have come to govern our society, how societal norms have changed over time and how we are the net beneficiaries of the sacrifices and advancements made by others. When considered with the focus on religious and political history, it is clear that the curriculum also intends that students gain an understanding of the changing

nature of the relationships between different groups in society.

To summarise, the internal British histories of the curriculum want students to leave key stage 3 with a clear sense of how Britain arrived at the political and social settlement it had at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Intellectual, political and social histories are alluded to, showing that students should learn about how various thinkers, ideas and groups in society have shaped the national consciousness.

So how did Black Britons influence the religious, political and social developments in Britain before 1745?



*The African King Caspar by Hendrik Heerschoep, 1654*

### *Black Britons Before 1745*

From the 1640s, a large number of Africans began to be subsumed into the British sphere of influence. Many British people were involved, including various monarchs through the use of crown monopolies, in bringing these people under the ultimate jurisdiction of the British crown and parliament, principally through enslavement. Many of these early Black Britons also began to make their way to the larger cities of metropolitan

Britain and in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century communities of Black Britons began to appear in places like London.

These men, women and children were the citizens of Britain's extensive colonies in the Americas, and by the 1830s their descendants had secured emancipation, the right to a wage and freedom from enslavement and persecution. It would be another 130 years before their descendants would gain control of domestic politics and secure independence from the UK, though many former colonies would continue to be important members of the economic and cultural union known as the Commonwealth. As a result of this centuries-long connection, the British Isles were the country of choice for many of the descendants of those early Black Britons when they left their Caribbean islands in search of better lives in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

It is also important to note that right from the 17<sup>th</sup> century Black and white men and women began to have relationships. While many of these relationships were forced or unwelcome, there are many instances, particularly in metropolitan Britain, where free and consensual relationships existed. The number of Britons of mixed heritage began to grow at this time. In the UK today, people of mixed heritage are the fastest growing demographic in the country so understanding the experiences of this group in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries is an important part of our national history.

Another point to highlight is how Black Britons during this period were influenced by, and in turn influenced, the development of Christianity. Black Britons were converting to Christianity, some forcibly so, from the 17<sup>th</sup> century and there is evidence of Black Christians in London and even a Black church from this period. The fact that the former British colony of Jamaica has more churches per square mile today than any other country in the world shows the importance that Christianity had to Black Britons from the very beginning. Black Britons today are some of the country's most active church goers and Black churches of both African and Afro-Caribbean origin have the fastest growing congregations in the country. Thus, Black Britons' religious practice is greatly influencing the

practice of Christianity today, making an understanding of the roots of these churches an important part of our national history.

"A drive through the island features a fascinating exhibition of places of worship, constructed in Jamaica Georgian and Classic Gothic architectural styles that are uniquely Jamaican. With **more churches per square mile than any other country in the world** its not hard to see why many regard Jamaica as a Christian society. Our island is home to multiple denominations; Roman Catholic, Anglican, Baptist, Presbyterian, Pentecostal, Seventh Day Adventist, Moravian and Methodist being just a few that can be found here. While Jamaica's Christian roots hail from Europe, several other forms of Christianity are also practiced locally that are strongly marked by African influences namely Kumina, Pocomania, Zion and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church."

*From visitjamaica.com*

[\(https://www.visitjamaica.com/feel-the-vibe/people/faith/\)](https://www.visitjamaica.com/feel-the-vibe/people/faith/)

Thus, though the curriculum only mentions 'empire' for the period after 1745, it is clear that there were a large number of Black people under British suzerainty from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, with many entering metropolitan Britain, intermarrying and integrating into British society.

Focussing on the period 1509 - 1745, there are many important examples of the contributions of the ancestors of today's Black Britons to the development of British culture and society at this time.

An example topic for this period given in the curriculum is a study of "The first colony in America and first contact with India". A complementary example that would be more relevant to the history of Black Britons could be an exploration of society in Britain's early sugar colony in Barbados. The study of the founding of the colony, the early use of indentured British servants and the change in the second half of the century to the increased use of unwaged Black British labour ties in well with wider studies of demographic change in Britain, the problems of labour and vagrancy during this period and the economic and political effects of the civil war, including the growth of "free trade" economics. This topic will be the subject of our case study in Module 2 where we will show how such narratives can be integrated into wider social and economic histories of the time.

We hope from this example you can begin to see how Black British narratives can be seamlessly re-introduced into national social and economic historical discourses to show Britain's long

involvement in world affairs and how far British society has come in securing civil, human and political rights for its marginalised citizens, both those who are poor and those belonging to racial minorities.

Another example topic that is included in the curriculum for this period is a study of “society, economy and culture across the period: for example, work and leisure in town and country, religion and superstition in daily life, theatre, art, music and literature”. It would be wonderful to extend such analysis to include Black British communities in the Americas at this time and, to the extent possible, to the growing Black British community in London.

Slavery, including the capture and transportation of Africans to the colonies, is an important topic in the study of British history and the curriculum includes it as an example topic for the period covering the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. This is probably because there are more records for this period, and this is the period that saw emancipation. However, we would recommend any standalone slavery module begins in the 17<sup>th</sup> century to allow the historical narratives to be told more fully. In Module 2 we will explore how this part of British history can be taught in a more engaging, effective and integrated way.

### 3. Wider British Histories

#### *Mapping the ethos of the curriculum*

The second category in the curriculum that concerns us includes just one topic, “Ideas, political power, industry and empire: Britain, 1745 – 1901”.

Intellectual history takes pride of place here. This is the period that saw the ascendancy of empiricism, Darwin’s theories on evolution, and debates about the relationship between tradition and modernity. It is also the period that saw the birth of modern academic historical practice and the institution of primary and secondary universal education as we know it. The curriculum wants students to immerse themselves in the intellectual debates of the period and begin to see how they directly contributed to the development of the British liberal democratic sense of self that would

further shape British personality in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



*A Mother with her Son and a Pony by Agostino Brumias c. 1775*

The mention of “political power” in the curriculum alludes to the debates on representative government that were taking place at this time as well as international discourses on nationalism - in Europe, the Caribbean and Africa, intellectuals were debating the concepts of nation-statehood and the rights to self-determination of various peoples. In Europe in the aftermath of the French and Haitian revolutions, nationalism combined with liberalism and a rising socialism forced conversations on the distribution of power. The curriculum thus wants students to understand the tussle for power between various sections of society and where they came to land.

The mention of “empire” in the curriculum refers not only to the “older” empire of the Americas but to the “emerging” empire in Africa as, from their centuries-old trading stations of the coast, Britons pushed into the African interior, going to war with African nations and, over a period of 40 years from 1880, bringing large numbers of Africans under effective British economic and political administration. Here we see the second big subsuming of Africans into the British sphere of influence. Through a study of the

empire, the curriculum wants to place Britain firmly within the international realm as a central player in world affairs. By linking intellectual, political, industrial and imperial historical processes, the curriculum seeks to show the interconnectedness of these processes and how ideas affected policy and changed the place of Britain and Britons in world history.



*Toussaint L'Ouverture by George DeBaptiste c. 1870*

### *Black Britons, 1745 – 1901*

Black Britons are integral to all of these processes and their narratives provide some wonderful and engaging insights into British life and intellectual thought at this time.

By using some of the examples given in the curriculum, we can explore where some of these narratives can be inserted to give a fuller picture of the developments of British thought during this period.

One of the examples given is a study of 'the French revolutionary wars'. This provides a wonderful opportunity to explore Black historical narratives for a number of reasons. Firstly, issues around the inequities of the Black French experience in the colonies featured heavily in contemporary discussions around liberty and fraternity in the French National Assembly and in the press. The first Black MPs representing the colonies were elected to the French National Assembly, the Black Jacobin Toussaint L'Ouverture was elevated within the French revolutionary army and both Britain and France had to re-think the rights of their Black citizens

both in the colonies and in metropolitan Britain. The service of Black British troops in the British bid to capture French Saint Domingue is a brilliant topic to explore during this period.

Another example given is the study of 'the development of the British Empire with a depth study (for example, of India)'. A great depth study for Black British history would be the establishment of the colony of Sierra Leone which had an immense impact in recalibrating British trade away from slavery. In addition, with the creation of cosmopolitan Freetown, the emergence of the Krio people and the founding of a university at Fourah Bay in 1827, Sierra Leone had a profound impact on British intellectual debates on nationalism, imperialism and education reform. Sierra Leone was also the jumping off point for the eventual colonisation of the Gold Coast.

A study of the Gold Coast and the Fante Confederacy is analogous to the example topic given in the curriculum on the study of 'Ireland and Home Rule'. The Gold Coast became one of the UK's most important colonies and the British-Africans of that period are the ancestors of today's British-Ghanaian community, the country's second largest British African community. The study of the campaigns to establish the Gold Coast Colony allow for a consideration of the treaties of understanding concluded between Britain and her African partners, as well as the development of intellectual thought around nationalism in the British sphere of influence through a study of the ideas of political thinkers such as Africanus Horton.

As you can see, there are many fascinating and important historical discourses during this period that would be greatly enhanced by the re-inclusion of Black British historical narratives. We will explore some of these in more detail in Module 2.

## **4. World History**

The world history topics within the curriculum include, firstly, a study of the 'challenges for Britain, Europe and the wider world 1901 to the present day, to include the Holocaust'. Covering the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the curriculum anticipates a consideration of WWI, WWII, the end of empire, the Cold War and race relations in the UK from

the 1950s, among other topics. All of these topics include strong Black British narratives whose study would act to better place these events in their global context.

The reference to ‘Britain, Europe and the wider world’ shows that the curriculum wants students to place events in their local, regional and global contexts, showing how national events can have global impacts and vice versa.

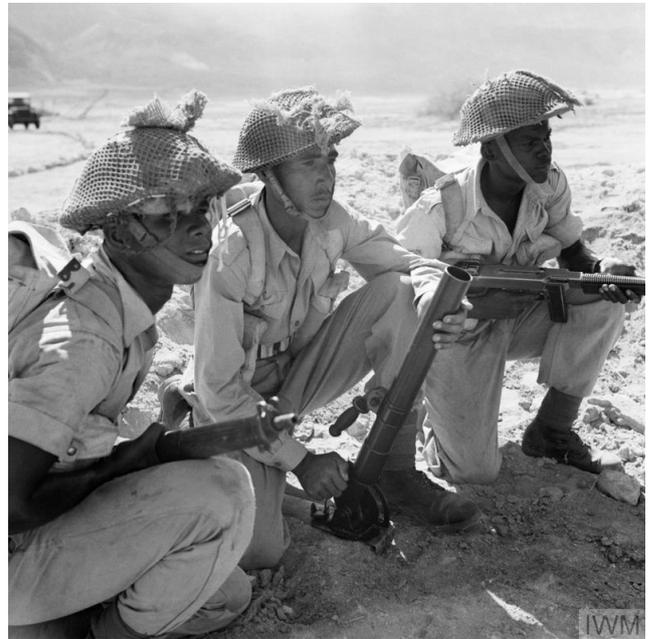
An example given in the curriculum for this period is a study of ‘the Second World War and the wartime leadership of Winston Churchill’. A study of the colonial theatres of war and the service of Black Britons in the global fight against fascism is an important part of our national history and an important part of world history as it would allow for an exploration of African and Afro-Caribbean contributions to global discourses on equality and self-determination.

Any study of the Home Guard should include a study of the British Colonial Auxiliary Forces where Black Britons fought to maintain British control of its colonies which supplied the raw materials and labour needed to finance its participation in the war. A study of the Auxiliary Territorial Service, which is often included within wider studies of women’s history, should include a study of the service’s Caribbean wing which, though it accepted men into its ranks, was a major source of women’s economic advancement in the colonies during this period.

Principally, the inclusion of the narratives of Black British soldiers would greatly help to strengthen the study of the fight against fascism and show that its condemnation was widespread. The financial contribution made by Black Britons is also an interesting area of study as savings stamps were marketed in the colonies and production output increased to raise revenue for the war effort.

The inclusion of Black British narratives into discourses on social reform after the end of the war are also an interesting area of enquiry given the example given in the curriculum for the study of ‘the creation of the Welfare State’. Black British intellectuals and political leaders were campaigning in the colonies for universal primary and secondary education, with the British government setting up a number of commissions

that included metropolitan and colonial Britons in conversations about education reform and wider civic investment in the empire. In particular, Black Britons contributed immeasurably to conversations on emerging theories of human rights and socialism.



*The Caribbean Regiment during WWII, 1945*

Another example given for this period is the study of ‘Indian independence and the end of Empire’. A study of the end of Empire in Africa and the Caribbean could be added to this. This allows for a comparative study of processes of decolonisation in places of ‘indirect rule’ such as Nigeria and places with large white settler communities such as Kenya. It also allows for the study of Pan-Africanism, the movement that worked to connect Black intellectual and political leaders in the United States, the Caribbean and Africa in the global fight for equality. The fifth Pan-African Congress was held in Manchester in 1945 and attracted eminent thinkers such as America’s WEB Du Bois, Jamaica’s eminent pan-Africanist Amy Ashwood Garvey, Jomo Kenyatta who would become Kenya’s first president, Hastings Banda who would go on to lead Malawi, and Kwame Nkrumah who would become the first prime minister and president of the Gold Coast (modern-day Ghana). The Congress was opened by the Conservative Lord Mayor of Manchester, Alderman W.P. Jackson and the secretary of the

Labour Party John McNair attended and addressed the conference. As you can see, Britons across the world were supporting each other in furthering the cause of liberty and self-determination. A study of the Congress and the ensuring decolonisation of Africa and the Caribbean are also in line with the curriculum's example, the study of 'Britain's place in the world since 1945' as the establishment of the Commonwealth, the successor to the empire, is part of this conversation.



Chief A S Coker, a Nigerian Trade Union leader attends the Pan-African Congress in Manchester 1945

The second topic in this period is a pure world history topic that requires 'at least one study of a significant society or issue in world history and its interconnections with other world developments.'

This part of the curriculum highlights the desire that students gain an understanding of the world beyond their own. The inclusion of the word 'significant' shows that that histories chosen should have greatly influenced the social and political settlements of the peoples involved. The fact that both a 'society' and 'issue' are mentioned

shows that both the history of people and the history of ideas can be considered. The curriculum also stresses that the study of those societies and issues, as with the previous requirements in relation to British histories, should consider local, regional and global impacts. The aim is that students gain an appreciation of the contribution of other societies to global events.

There is a near infinite number of topics within Black history that can be taught here. The preference is usually to either teach West African empires before 1900 or to teach the American Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, both of which are excellent choices.

Here are a few more examples of Black national histories that could be taught:

#### **The Haitian Revolution, 1791-1804**

A series of conflicts between Haitian slaves, colonists, the armies of the British and French colonisers, and a number of other parties. Through the struggle, the Haitian people ultimately won independence from France and thereby became the first country to be founded by former slaves.

Adapted from <https://www.britannica.com/place/Haiti/The-Haitian-Revolution#ref726855>

#### **The Mfecane 1818-1840: The Rise of Shaka and the Zulu Empire**

The Zulus initiated the *Mfecane* under their mighty military leader Shaka. In 1818 he embarked on a great expansion of his realm in what is now the South African province of KwaZulu-Natal, and during the next ten years his campaigns evicted several other peoples from their lands, setting off large-scale migrations and ultimately resulting in the formation of several new kingdoms.

Adapted from (2010). *Mfecane*. In Gates, H., & Appiah, K. (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Africa: Oxford University Press*.

#### **The Ethiopian Empire 1845-1916, the end of the Zamana Masafent and the rise of Tewodros II**

For most Ethiopians, life during the Masafent, Age of the Princes, was difficult. Power had shifted from the central court to the courts of regional princes, and they vied with one another in battle. There were no significant changes in the social order, but the oppression of the farming

population increased as armies traversed the highlands, ruining the countryside and plundering the harvests of farmers. To the north, Kassa Hailu was in the process of ending the Age of the Princes. After serving as a mercenary in Gojam, Kassa returned to his native Qwara on the extreme edge of the western highlands, where he prospered as a highwayman and built a good small army. By 1847 he had monopolized the lowlands' revenues from trade and smuggling, forcing Gonder's leading magnates to integrate him into the establishment. Finally, in April 1853 at Takusa, Kassa defeated Ras (Prince) Ali, the last of a succession of the Oromo lords who had played a central role in the Age of the Princes. After defeating the ruler of northern Ethiopia, Kassa was crowned Emperor Tewodros II on February 11, 1855. Later that year he marched south and forced the submission of Shewa. His consolidation of power over the formerly separate states established the modern Ethiopian country.

*Adapted from <https://www.britannica.com/place/Ethiopia/The-Zagwe-and-Solomonic-dynasties#ref37707>*

## 5. Conclusion

By using the statutory and non-statutory elements of the national curriculum to map its ethos we hope to have shown that, though there are no examples of Black history topics given in the national curriculum other than the trans-Atlantic slave trade, there are many opportunities to integrate Black British narratives into the social, political and economic histories from Britain from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. Thus, we hope that you now have an understanding of where Black British historical narratives can be integrated into the study of British and world histories.

### *Pre-lesson question - Answer*

The national curriculum does not include any explicit reference to any Black or Black British histories in either the statutory or non-statutory sections. It mentions only 'Britain's transatlantic slave trade: its effects and its eventual abolition', the wording of which would not qualify as either national or emancipatory Black history under our definition. However, we hope in this handout to have shown that the curriculum does not impede the studying of these histories and analogies drawn from the examples given can be used to design curricula in line with the ethos and spirit of the curriculum.

## Reflection Exercise

After reading this article and the history national curriculum for key stage 3 and considering your school's ethos statement and your history department's ethos statement if there is one, draft a new ethos statement for the history department.

Think about the following questions:

- a) What are the principles that govern your department's approach to the selection of themes and case studies?
- b) How should the department think about the definition of "Britain", "Britons" and the "British experience"?
- c) In what ways do you want your students to be enriched by studying history?
- d) How will you act to ensure a balance of local, national, regional and global historical narratives?