

London, Sugar & Slavery

Misconceptions for KS2/3 teachers

This resource is designed to help teachers identify and address common misconceptions students may have before and during visiting London Museum Docklands and the London, Sugar & Slavery gallery.

We recommend using this resource in the lead up to your visit to prepare students for what they will encounter, to prompt critical thinking and to prepare for respectful and informed discussion during and after their time in the gallery.

Misconception: The museum building imprisoned enslaved people.

Clarification: The museum is housed in a former warehouse used for storing goods like sugar, which were grown and harvested by enslaved men, women and children. Although the building itself did not house enslaved people, the warehouse was built from the profits of labour of enslaved men, women and children.

Misconception: Enslaved people did not resist.

Clarification: Enslaved people resisted in many ways, through rebellion, escape, cultural preservation and testimony.

Misconception: Historical racist language reflects current acceptable use.

Clarification: Language changes. Terms used historically may now be seen as offensive or dehumanising.

Misconception: The impact of the British trade in enslaved Africans is entirely in the past.

Clarification: Its legacies continue to shape our society today, especially through inequality, racism and the wealth that was gained.

Misconception: Londoners weren't involved in the trade in enslaved Africans.

Clarification: The London docks and warehouses, including the museum building, were directly linked to goods produced through enslaved labour. Ships were sent from the West India Dock to Africa and the Americas to be used in the trade in enslaved Africans. Many Londoners contributed to the trade in enslaved Africans through lack of action such as buying products that were created due to the labour of enslaved men, women and children without questioning how they were sourced.