

London, Sugar & Slavery

Gallery activity for KS3 school groups

1. Africa



Look at each of the images and maps on the 'Africa' display to the right of the entrance.

Explore the display

1. In the painting from 1795, how is Africa depicted?
2. How does the map of Africa from the 1700s compare to the modern political map of the continent? What is the same and what has changed?

Reflect and respond

The majority of the maps and images on this wall were created by Europeans, not Africans. The one quote written by an African person is by Ottobah Cugoano in 1787.

1. What is the message of this quote?
2. What reasons might there be why African perspectives are missing from these images and quotes?

2. Africans in London



Look at the portraits and read the information about Africans in London. This display is to the left of the entrance.

Explore the display

This information tells you about the many people of African descent living in London in the 1600s and 1700s.

1. Choose one of the people on this wall and tell someone in your group about them.
2. Explain what else would you like to find out about them and their life.

Reflect and respond

Many people today don't realise that by the 1780s there were about 15,000 people of African origin living in Britain, a small but significant community, mainly in London. Why is it important to learn about these people and raise awareness of how diverse London was in the past?

3. Sugar



Continue into the main gallery space to find the 'Sugar, the West India Docks, and the Triangle Trade' display.

Explore the display

The West India Docks and the building we are in were built with money made from sugar plantations.

Look at the mace (long stick) made of sugarcane and use the information displayed to answer:

1. What was the mace a symbol of and when would it have been used and displayed?
2. Why were the West India Docks built?
3. Why is the trade in enslaved Africans sometimes called the 'Triangle Trade'? How did the trade work?

Reflect and respond

What message do you think the West India Dock Company was trying to get across by using a sugarcane stick as a symbol of power?

4. From abolition to emancipation



Look for the portraits of the abolition campaigners on the right as you continue in the main space.

Explore the display

Many different people campaigned against slavery. Some who had been enslaved wrote about their experiences of the horrors of slavery.

Look at the portraits and information about these people. Read each one carefully:

- Olaudah Equiano
- Robert Wedderburn
- Ignatius Sancho
- Phillis Wheatley
- William Wilberforce
- Anne Knight

Choose one of these people and tell someone in your group about them.

Reflect and respond

Why is it important to read enslaved people's life stories in their own words?

5. Legacies



Look at the display case called 'Representations' with images and figures showing racist stereotypes.

Reflect and respond

The British trade in enslaved Africans was based on racism. Racism takes many forms and still exists today.

In this case, there are many images and figures showing racist stereotypes. These were often created by Europeans to spread harmful ideas about people from the continent of Africa.

Look at the display and discuss:

1. Why are stereotypes harmful and unfair? Were racist representations used to portray African people?
2. Why do you think that racist stereotypes persist today and what can we do to challenge them?

6. Reflections



As your time in the gallery comes to an end, reflect on what you have learnt.

Reflect and respond

What have you learned about London's role in the British trade in enslaved Africans?

Complete these sentences in as much detail as you can:

I have learned...

I feel...

I am surprised by....

I would like to find out more about...