

TTP After Abolition

How proud can Britain be of the Royal Navy's efforts to end the Atlantic Slave Trade in the 19th Century?

Rationale for Lesson Plans and Teacher's Notes

- 'After Abolition' is a neglected topic in the British schools' History curriculum and is in need of popularising.
- Given the pressure on curriculum time and all the competing topics, it appropriate to provide a relatively short and flexible teaching unit. As a result, the unit has been designed to offer two possible 'stand alone' lessons: - West African Squadron and the Marine intervention in the Congo.
- British schools tend to finish the story of transatlantic slavery at the 'abolition' point – either 1807 or 1833. This serves a rather self-congratulatory interpretation of our nation's involvement in the Slave Trade. Simply told, the post-abolition struggle to suppress the Trade re-enforces this; the objective of this unit is raise the more awkward questions, inviting students to engage with the controversial issues. Handled carefully this can be developed into an exploration of ethics in British policy, helping to illuminate the wider concept of 'Britishness': 'rule of law', fairness and humanitarianism.
- Furthermore, the topic has parallels with the international policing role in contemporary conflicts – e.g. 'war on terror' in Afghanistan – and can facilitate discussion in this direction.
- Care, however, must be taken. Judgments on past matters should be delicately managed in the classroom; they must be rooted in the context of the past, and this will be an important process in the enquiry.
- An opportunity to explore different interpretations will arise. To counteract a natural instinct to glorify a nation's past achievements, more critical opinions will be considered: e.g. Marika Sherwood [After Abolition] who criticises the Inadequate resources given to the West Africa Squadron and the 'hypocrisy' of retaining economic links with the illegal slave trade and the slave productive system.
- Documents will be used for stimulus and information extraction; there may be some scope for deeper source evaluation

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- The unit will hopefully be adaptable to KS5, but, as it stands, may favour KS3

Teacher's Notes

It is intended that the unit is delivered, in the classroom, around the Power Point Presentation; to facilitate this clear references to particular slides will be made in supporting materials like the lessons plans.

Lesson One

Lesson 1-Starter Activity – Map of anti-slave trade action

A discussion of similar, contemporary government operations, against large organised illegal trades would be useful. Students might suggest the drugs trade and could suggest measures governments take to stamp it out. This might range from full military operations in Afghanistan to customs checks to education programmes. A useful timeline of the war against drugs dating back to the 19th century can be found at: <http://civilliberty.about.com/od/drugpolicy/tp/War-on-Drugs-History-Timeline.htm> . Alternatively, the teacher might use a news film clip in the news, at the time of lesson delivery, of some such operation.

Students are likely to suggest: *Raids, patrols and blockade*

Less likely to suggest: *International Agreements, Laws, Economic sanctions, Slave Registration and Custom checks*

An alternative for lower tier ability students, or for all if they run out of ideas, would be to decide where on the map certain actions would be enforced [see Slide 7 Version 2]:

Patrols – Off west coast of Africa, particularly the mouth of key rivers which provide slave trading lines of communication with the interior; patrols could also be carried out in the wider Atlantic although practically it gave a much higher chance that slavers would go undetected

Raids – coast of Africa, targeting forts/factories and settlements involved in slave trading; in 1851 the British navy bombarded and destroyed Lagos.

Blockade – naval blockading of ports suspected of receiving illegal slaves

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Courts – Courts were set up to deal with those slavers caught. For instance, in 1819 a judicial commission was set up to handle the West Africa Squadron's captures in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

Laws – e.g. Punishments for slave trading/ 1824 Capital punishment enforced in Great Britain

International Agreements – e.g. January 1815, Portugal accepted British pressure to ban slave trade north of Equator and promised to begin progressive abolition of rest of trade to Brazil – made in Europe.

Registration of slaves – checking up on the existing slave population in the Americas/Caribbean

Customs – customs checks on incoming vessels in British colonies would provide a safe-guard against illegal importation

Education/Persuasion – governments or anti-slavery societies might try to educate the public at home to reject the slave trade, thus reducing involvement in the illegal trade. British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society formed in 1839.

Slide 8 helps to conclude this activity by locating, on the map, where action was taken.

Slide 9 provides the teacher with key points of information about the West Africa Squadron.

Slide 10 shows Source 1, the capture of the slaving vessel Henriqueta in 1827, which was adopted by the West Africa Squadron, renamed HMS Black Joke. A brief history of its service can be told. [[http://www.ask.com/wiki/HMS Black Joke %281827%29](http://www.ask.com/wiki/HMS_Black_Joke_%281827%29)]. As a 'Baltimore Clipper' it was a swift vessel, usually able to out-run Royal Navy vessels. As a WAS vessel it proved very effective – as illustrated by Source 2 (slide 11). However, its service life was severely limited, having to be destroyed in 1832 because of rotting timber.

Slide 12 sets questions on Source 2 – students can work in pairs to answer these, highlighting features in the document or writing answers on the document itself.

What evidence is there that the Atlantic slave trade continued? Each ship carried slaves; in total 2215 slaves were being carried on the six ships boarded by the Black Joke

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Which nations were most involved in the slave trade? France – 5 of 6 ships
What evidence is there that the Black Joke was successful? 6 slave ships captured in 5 weeks

What further questions could be asked to find out about how successful the Black Joke was as a Squadron patrol ship?

Try to fill in gaps in the transcription using the original document

Slide 13 helps establish the activity analysing the strengths and weaknesses of the West Africa Squadron. This requires Worksheet 1 and Resource Sheet 1. Resource Sheets A and B offer a choice for differentiation purposes, version 'A' offering more detailed and complexity. Below is a guide to some 'strengths and weaknesses'

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• WAS strength grew over time• A lot of money was spent (£12.4)• 45,612 slaves freed• HMS Black Joke was a fast ship and had success	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use of old vessels, unable to catch fast slaving vessels• HMS Black Joke was not in service for long• Captured slave ships were often, unbeknown, sold back to slavers• Sometimes Slave cargoes were deliberately sacrificed• Crews of WAS vessels were in great danger of catching diseases• Contemporaries thought the Was a failure

For the plenary to lesson 1, preliminary discussion of how proud can Britain be takes place; see Teacher's notes for Lesson 2 for a full guide to this discussion.

Lesson Two

Slides 14 to 24 cover lesson 2.

The lesson uses documents relating to a Royal Marine mission to the Congo River area to carry out punitive raids against African leaders and settlements still involved in slave trading.

The get the best impact from these documents, start from a zero knowledge base and allow students to explore them and form their own hypotheses.

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Source 3 – Map of area of River Congo - Slide 17 poses the following questions:

- *Have a guess what the numbers represent?*
- *How do you think they got from 9 to 10 to 15? – as the numbers are connected by waterways (river and creeks), boats of some sort would have been a mode of travel. The map also shows over-land progress which we can assume was on foot.*
- *What other features are there on this map which you need to be explained? Slide 18 annotates the salient features on the map, supported by slide 19*
- *Does this confirm or weaken your guess about what the 'visits' are for?*

Source 4 (treaty with Anizanza/slide 20) alerts students to slave trading; the date might be noticed, helping to suggest that the earlier 'visits' in Source 3 were some sort of anti-slave trade search and check-up mission.

We therefore arrive at Source 5 still not sure what the 'visits' were for. Slide 21 presents some questions for students. At this stage students start to make the final connections between the 'visits' on the map and the actual destroy mission. Point out that the treaty came later, in April 1876. Invite some responses and discussion of this. Explore the ethics of this scenario: should British troops be intervening on foreign soil? Should negotiation come first, rather than violence? Does the existing small scale of the Atlantic slave trade warrant such moves? Slide 22 presents some historical and contemporary comparisons, Vietnam and Afghanistan Wars.

Slide 23 initiates the final activity of reflecting on what Britain can be proud of and what Britain might be ashamed of. Below can be found some guidance for teachers:

What Britain can be proud of:

- Launching and sustaining a long battle against the Atlantic Slave Trade
- Freeing 1000s of Africans destined for slavery
- Pursuing their own citizens involved in the illegal slave trade and using legislative penalties
- Royal Navy crewmen putting their lives at high risk
- Pressurising other slave trading nations to end the trade and co-operate with Britain to the police the Atlantic
- Providing the lead in patrolling, followed – less enthusiastically – by France and the USA

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- Carrying highly risky military operations on the main land of Africa to punish African slave traders
- Reducing the flow of slaves to a relative trickle by the last 4 decades of the 19th century

What Britain could feel ashamed of:

- The hypocrisy of having enjoyed the benefits of being the main slave trading nation in the 18th Century to depriving nations of that privilege after 1807
- Continuing to benefit financially from the sale of manufactured goods to foreign nations which would end up being used to purchase slaves in West Africa
- Continuing to provide investment capital to finance slave trading of ships under foreign flags
- The half-hearted nature of the commitment to the West Africa Squadron – i.e. a reliance on too few ships, that were inadequate for the task
- The naval effort and its expenditure being disproportionate to Britain's power and wealth
- The uncertainty of the fate of 'liberated' Africans and captured slaving vessels
- The arrogance, belligerence and innate racism of military raids such as those on King Anizanza in 1875.
- In the last quarter of the 19th century Britain embarked on massive empire building in Africa, an action which runs contrary to the spirit of abolition pursued in the previous part of the Century. This tends to call into question the sincerity of Britain's 'humanitarian' stance.

Lesson 2 – Plenary – slide 24 sets out a 'washing line'/continuum on which students can base their final verdict on whether Britain can be proud of the Royal Navy's efforts to end the Slave Trade in the 19th century. For further explanation of this teaching idea go to:

<http://www.thinkinghistory.co.uk/ActivityModel/ActModWashingLine.html>

Follow up assignment

The final outcome of the teaching unit will be either a Power Point Presentation or a Movie Maker Presentation. This can be adapted by the teacher if one is more suitable or preferred.

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A 12 slide maximum or 2 minute running time has been suggested, but this can be adapted accordingly.

Worksheet 3 (page 1) offers some practical guidance and 'Work Targets' [Assessment criteria].

The final presentations could be placed on the School's VLE or intranet. These presentations can be subsequently assessed by the teacher and/or peers.