

Essential Question

“Lick and Lock up done wid” When did plantation workers in Barbados truly become free?

Rationale

Many students will study the transatlantic slave trade up until abolition; they may even carry out an investigation on the reasons for abolition. However the majority do not follow the story much further. They may pick up the story almost one hundred years later when studying the civil rights movement – either later on in year 8 or 9 or as part of a GCSE/ A Level study. However, the majority of textbooks do not provide much information on what happened to the descendants of enslaved Africans in the British Caribbean, beyond pointing out that change did not happen overnight.

¹Studying this issue will help students to understand the process of change, that change is not always immediate. It will also help them to understand the roots of the civil rights movement in America and modern day inequalities better.

The aims of this resource will be to get students to use original archive sources in a number of ways:

- To use original sources to investigate the key features of a past society
- To develop an understanding of the nature of change
- To develop understanding of the causes and consequences of key events

This sequence of lessons will focus on the experience of plantation workers in Barbados in the late 1830s – during the apprenticeship system, and will then pick up the story nearly 40 years later with the Confederation Riots of 1876. The first two lessons will provide the opportunity for students to work with original documents and use them to reach conclusions. Students will be asked to consider changes and continuities during this time, the consequences of the slave trade, as well as who was responsible for the welfare of the workers. The cumulative task will be for students to produce a textbook page or museum gallery providing information on ‘what happened next?’

Some students will find it harder than others to comprehend both the handwriting and the phrasing of the original documents. Transcripts will be provided to make it easier to read the documents – although it would still be worth trying to see how much of the original document they can read, giving them a sense of being ‘proper’ historians. I have not chosen to provide ‘simplified’ versions of the documents because this would take something away from them, perhaps making them bland and ‘fail to excite interest’.² Glossaries have been provided for each document, and some phrases may need to be explained, but all students should be able to identify the message of the documents (some with more help than others).

¹ e.g. – Christine Counsell, Minds and Machines Britain 1750-1900, Longmann, 1999

² Richard Harris, “Does Differentiation have to mean different?”, Teaching History 118, Historical Association

The role play activity in the second lesson will help students to create a narrative from the documents, as well as gaining a clearer idea of the content of the documents through group collaboration. I have chosen to use extracts from the document for this lesson, simply because the second despatches document continues for several pages. The New York times report is interesting because it helps to provide an understanding of how the riots were reported in America and of attitudes towards those rioting.

The final task could either be completed as 'lesson 3' or could be a homework assignment. It will be a way of summarising the information gathered over the previous two lessons creatively. Whilst I dislike using the term 'differentiation by outcome', this is probably a case where it applies! Students will have the opportunity to consider what 'freedom' means to them, and how this applied to the plantation workers in Barbados. Designing their own educational resource will force them to make decisions about what should and should not be included in the story and why.

What will students have gained/achieved by the end of the sequence?

Conceptual What will have happened in their heads?	Concrete What will they be holding in their hands?
Analysis of the meaning of the song and when it could have been sung	Annotated copy of 'Lick and Lock up done wid' folk song
Understood the mechanisms of the Apprenticeship system and how this affected plantation workers.	List of advantages and disadvantages of the Apprenticeship system A paragraph explaining why 'lick an lock up done wid' was sung in 1838 not 1834
Identified the causes of the Confederation riots and the legacy of the slave trade	Presentations – role plays – on causes of the Confederation riots List of causes of the Confederation Riots
Identified changes and continuities in the lives of plantation workers in Barbados.	Summary conclusion on 'how free were plantation workers in Barbados by 1876?'
Established what is meant by 'freedom' and how this can be defined differently.	Textbook/ museum gallery design – When did plantation workers in Barbados truly become free?'