

Enquiry: What should be remembered about the victims of the slave trade?

The Purpose of this Enquiry

This enquiry intends to tackle the issues surrounding the memory of the slave trade and in particular, how slaves have been presented in monuments around the world. These lessons would be best taught at the end of a scheme of work as pupils have the opportunity to demonstrate their learning in the final summative assignment.

Monuments, in general, are useful artefacts and their ability to teach us about the past is often overlooked and unappreciated by pupils. By the end of this enquiry pupils will not only have a deeper understanding of how monuments can teach us about slavery, but also should have a greater appreciation of monuments in general. This concept could be developed by teachers as monuments could be studied from your local area and pupils could be encouraged to search for their deeper meaning.

Monuments to the slaves show how the memory of the slave trade has changed over time. Monuments in the late nineteenth century reflect the power of the white abolitionists and the depiction of the black slaves is often as subservient beings who are powerless in the process of the abolition. However, the focus of modern monuments tends to be the slaves themselves; the figures commonly reflect strength and dignity which clearly contrasts earlier representations. This shows that the way slavery is remembered has changed over time.

This enquiry, therefore, aims to use monuments to show how slaves have been remembered. Pupils will begin by examining existing statues, exploring their meaning and discussing their problems. Pupils will then be introduced to their final assignment which is to design and create their own monument to the slaves. In order to do this successfully, pupils will examine a selection of National Archive documents with the intention of pinpointing characteristics and events which could be shown in a monument.

Lesson 1- Why are monuments important?

This lesson aims to introduce pupils to the concept of using monuments as historical artefacts and provide the skills necessary to judge how successful these monuments are. The lesson will begin with a current controversy surrounding monuments in South Carolina which will show that slavery monuments still provoke debate and are a very relevant and current issue. The article from the History News Network will show that creating a monument to the slaves is not a simple process and that it is difficult to satisfy entire communities when dealing with such a sensitive issue. Pupils will then create a set of "monument success criteria" which will be used to judge existing monuments dedicated to the victims of the slave trade. Pupils must then use their criteria to examine slavery monuments and give them a score depending on their level of success. Teachers can either structure this as a paper based activity where pupils would examine paper copies of the monuments and add their comments or an alternative approach would be to structure this activity interactively

can then add interactive post-it notes containing their comments. In order to do this effectively, teachers must create a group and add the pupils who they wish to participate. The benefits of approaching the activity in this way is that each pupil can see the comments from the other groups and teachers can monitor the participation levels of each group.



Above is a screen grab from www.linoit.com. It shows the image of the monument and the comments which have been attached by pupils. By the end of the lesson, pupils will be able to answer the key question-why are monuments important? They should also have a secure understanding of how monuments, not only for slavery, but also in their local area can be used as artefacts to learn about the past.

Lesson 2- What should be remembered about the slaves?

This lesson incorporates the National Archive documents and aims to develop the pupils ability to make inferences and understand primary documents. Teachers should introduce the final assignment to the class in order to give pupils a clear direction and to ensure that pupils understand that the work completed in this lesson will be used in the final project. This lesson begins with a closer look at the Lincoln Emancipation statue which highlights the nineteenth century “memory” of the slave trade with the regal Lincoln standing over a subservient slave. This statue should be used as a way into a discussion about why some monuments have become inappropriate over time. The pupils should then be allowed time to examine the National Archive documents. Pupils should be encouraged to make inferences about characteristics which the slaves demonstrate or important events which should be commemorated. The documents have been chosen intentionally to show the diversity among the Africans and to teach pupils that the slaves were not always victims. By the

end of the lesson pupils should have a clear understanding of the characteristics which should be immortalised in their monuments.

Final Assignment- Design and create your own monument to the slaves

Teachers can structure the final assignment into a series of lessons or it can be completed as an assessed homework. Similarly, teachers can ask pupils to create their memorials from ordinary household items or if this activity is not appropriate, pupils can simply draw and annotate their monument. The aim of this project is for pupils to demonstrate their understanding of the slaves. Pupils can be issued with the assignment pack which contains the success criteria for the assignment, a write-up sheet for pupils to explain their design and an evaluation form where they can evaluate their efforts. The pack also contains a letter produced by the UN which provides details of a slavery memorial day and a proposed statue which is due to be unveiled in 2012. This letter can provide a broader context for this assignment as it shows that a similar design process is currently taking place in order to produce an appropriate memorial which will not diminish over time or offend any communities.