

# GLASGOW'S HIDDEN LEGACY: THE CITY'S CONNECTIONS TO THE HISTORIC TRANSATLANTIC SLAVERY TRADE

## TEACHERS' NOTES

### LOOK

The Doulton fountain was made by Sir Henry Doulton and presented to the city of Glasgow for the International Exhibition held at Kelvingrove Park in 1888.

The statues on the fountain were designed and built to represent the British Empire. At the top of the fountain is Queen Victoria.



### DISCUSS

Below the basin are four groups of figures representing India, Canada, the South African Colonies and Australia all of which were ruled by Queen Victoria at a time when the British Empire accounted to more than one quarter of the world's population. These figures in very stereotypical/idealised and romanticised attire are shown alongside various emblems relating to the industrial history of those nations, as well as the leading mineral, vegetable and animal products. They seem to be incredibly happy and proud to be colonised when in reality it would have been a very different story. The countries' inhabitants are reduced to what goods their respective countries can produce and have no identifying individual features.

Standing over the top basin are statues to represent a sailor belonging to the Royal Navy and soldiers representing the Grenadier Guards, the Black Watch Highlanders, and the Royal Irish Fusiliers. Note how they are positioned on top of the people of the colonies which makes them appear superior.

### DRAW

Throughout British rule, people in countries across Africa and Asia were being exploited, enslaved and murdered and the colonisers' political decisions often led to atrocities such as famine, civil war and massacres. An aesthetically pleasing and glorifying monument like the Doulton Fountain disregards the realities of people in countries living under British rule.

## LOOK

St Andrew by the Green ("The Whistling Kirk" as it had an organ playing ) is for the time a quite modern building - it almost looks like a grand mansion rather than a church. As more people lived in this area, they asked for better facilities, including churches so that they could meet and share their beliefs. St Andrew's by the Green is Scotland's oldest surviving Episcopal church and was built between 1750 and 1752. Its style with a lot of geometric shapes and symmetrical features followed the fashionable churches and architecture in London. Glasgow wanted to be seen as modern and dynamic. Glaswegians merchants were used to travelling and living in London to further their businesses, political and family interests. There are other "St Andrews" churches across the Caribbean including in Jamaica and Guyana that were founded and funded by Scots.

## Guidance - Who were the "merchants"?

The two main goods that Glasgow traded in were tobacco and sugar. From 1700 to the abolition of enslaved labour, these were goods produced by enslaved labour. So it needs to be made clear that the term tobacco lord/merchant = enslaver.



## DISCUSS



In the 1700s Glasgow would have been tiny and surrounded by rural land. There would not have been many big buildings, no pavements or tarmacked roads and the area you are going to walk through would have been the centre of the city.

St Andrews by the Green demonstrates how merchants built new buildings to demonstrate their wealth, and in doing so, changed the townscape. At this time the streets of Glasgow were dirt tracks and consisted of crammed unplanned chaotic tenements. The architecture of St Andrews on the Green is in direct contrast to this. This building is a display of the merchant's wealth and every day Glaswegians would have been in awe of the kirk.

The merchants wanted to assert their authority in displaying their wealth and justify their existence of self-styled "tobacco lords" although they weren't actually lords at all - see guidance above.

## LOOK



Although the two churches are similar in style and use the same architectural elements, this church is much more opulent than the first one

There are also of different denominations. St Andrew's in the Square is Presbyterian whereas St Andrew's by the Green is Episcopalian.



## DRAW



The church is built from marble. The interior is clad out with mahogany imported from the West Indies; again another tangible connection of the display of the merchants' wealth and their direct connection to the transatlantic trade of enslaved people.

## DISCUSS



The wealth of the tobacco merchants dramatically increased during a short time period. St Andrew's complemented the new Town Hall which was being built at the same time. Surrounding the church is a square of three-storey town houses, which housed merchants and other wealthy people. Glasgow was going through a period of rapid change and development, and for a short period, this area was one of the most fashionable and expensive places to live in the city.

## LOOK

In 1650, this area sold salt for curing salmon. There are still a lot of places selling fish there today.



## DISCUSS

Originally named Waulcergait, the area was associated with wool production, in particular the fulling (Scots waulking) of the cloth. In the 18th century it became a fashionable residential district, close to the Merchant City.

In its earliest days, Glasgow was a small fishing village by the shallow river Clyde and it remained this way until the sixth century when Saint Mungo founded his monastery. During the centuries that followed, the small township gradually spread southwards along the line of the burn and eventually linked up with the fishing village by the river. Due to the flourishing ship building industry and trade heavily relying on the waterways, a lot of people from Glasgow were involved in all stages of slavery as investors, owners of enslaved people as well as overseers and bookkeepers on plantations.

A more critical discourse has been taken place in recent years with people being more aware of the fact that the British empire was not all good and that Scotland was also majorly involved - in 1800, Scots owned 30% of plantations in Jamaica. With access to more diverse academic research, public opinion has included more vocal criticism of the glorification of British rule.

We need to be mindful that the British empire does not always evoke positive connotations. What most people in Scotland have been taught about the British empire in the past has been disseminated from a white, Eurocentric viewpoint, disregarding other narratives.

## LOOK

Tolbooth Steeple was the 17th Century equivalent of the City Chambers. The building, finished in 1627, marked the arrival of the merchant classes to the city and housed the town clerk's office, council hall and city prison. The imposing structure is meant to make you feel small and inadequate and re-enforced the authority of the ruling class.

## DISCUSS

Glasgow traded tobacco, sugar, cotton and enslaved people. There are 19 recorded voyages which left from Glasgow's satellite ports of Greenock and Port Glasgow over a sixty year period from 1706 and 1766 - with these direct voyages estimated to have carried around 2 to 3,000 people directly into slavery.



## LOOK

Virginia Street was home to one of the largest houses in Glasgow, the Virginia Mansion (now demolished). Like most street names in Glasgow it reflected the wealth and power of enslavers with estates and plantations in America. Street names such as Virginia Street and Jamaica Street celebrate rich families and their interests in colonial plantations. Virginia was a state in British North America that was directly involved in the triangular slavery trade. The sign you can still see today refers to the Glasgow West Indian Association which was a pro-slavery group.

## DISCUSS

62 streets in Glasgow are named after enslavers who made their fortunes on tobacco plantations. Eight statues in Glasgow as well as 11 mansions and buildings have been identified as representing people connected to the transatlantic slavery trade. In 2020 anti-racism campaigners renamed streets in Glasgow city centre that have links to slavery. In several streets, signs with a black background and white font have appeared alongside the originals when activists replaced the names of tobacco merchants and enslavers in favour of black campaigners, enslaved people and those who died in police custody.

## LOOK

The Glasgow slavery audit found that gifts inherited from those linked to the slavery trade were valued to be worth £30m today.

## DISCUSS

In 2018, the University of Glasgow announced that it would begin a programme of 'reparative justice' regarding the city's dark past after the discovery that the institution had benefited from the equivalent of between £16.7 million and £198 million from the profits of slavery (via gifts and bequests) in the 18th and 19th centuries.

## LOOK

William Cunninghame of Lainshaw built this mansion in the 1780s. It would have been paid for from Cunninghame's fortunes coming from tobacco, sugar and the slavery trade. It stopped being used as a home in 1817 when it became a Royal Bank of Scotland branch. From 1826 to 1830 Glasgow Council decided to add to the building a new exchange for businessmen to use. The foundation was laid by James Ewing of Strathleven, who was a sugar merchant and enslaver with plantations in Jamaica. Despite the abolition of slavery acts, he and others kept investing in plantations in Brazil until the abolition of slavery there in 1888.



## DISCUSS

There is no right or wrong here. Acknowledge feelings of shame, anger, helplessness.

## **DRAW**



Think about the historic street and place names and how you could possibly rename them. Also think about the British empire and its legacies in general - the Duke of Wellington just outside GoMA was involved in the colonial suppression of both Ireland and India. The pictorial plaques surrounding the statue's plinth depict scenes of colonial violence at eye level, while Wellington, on his horse, towers high above.

Also think about how interconnected everything is - wealth from India was invested into land, factories, houses, and farms, as were the profits of slavery. But they also found their way into cultural institutions, museums, schools, universities, and galleries that are still around nowadays.

Think of how you want to design your plaque; any powerful symbols, images or quotes.

