

# TEACHING MIGRATION HISTORY TOOLKIT

A practical guide using primary sources

Co-produced by



# INTRODUCTION

Migration history provides rich and valuable learning opportunities for students, supporting them to understand who we are as individuals, as communities and as nations. Although it is often seen as a challenging and controversial topic, it is also enormously rewarding and enriching to teach.

The Migration Museum and British Library learning teams have collaborated to produce this toolkit. Developed with the help of teachers, it offers practical guidance about how to approach teaching migration history sensitively and how to develop practice that is underpinned by sound pedagogy.

There are, of course, countless positive and uplifting stories of migrants' contributions to Britain, which we encourage you to use in your classroom. But we've focused here on the most challenging aspects of teaching migration, identifying six topics, in response to teachers' feedback:

- ✳ UNDERPINNING TEACHING PRINCIPLES
- 01 CHAMPIONING LIVED EXPERIENCE
- 02 FACILITATING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS
- 03 NAVIGATING THE POLITICS
- 04 LANGUAGE AND TERMINOLOGY
- 05 DEALING WITH RACIST LANGUAGE AND IMAGERY
- 06 CHALLENGING MYTHS, NARRATIVES AND STEREOTYPES

"The students thoroughly enjoyed exploring migration stories and discussing topics so pertinent to current issues."

Teacher following a Migration Museum workshop

"All these migration stories and the background to why people came to Britain - I found it so interesting and I could relate it to myself."

Aylesbury High School student

Use this toolkit to discover how you can use historical sources to teach migration history with confidence. Discover practical tips from the Migration Museum's expert learning team, which are then modelled with primary source examples from the British Library's Discovering Historical Sources project to highlight potential teaching approaches. For each source there is an overarching question that could be applied to other historical sources, followed by sub-questions and discussion points specific to the focus source.

History can provide space for reflection. By exploring a range of sources and accounts we can explore similarities and differences. We can also consider how the past has shaped the present. This knowledge and understanding can be applied to contemporary discussions, empowering students with the skills they need to engage in real-world debates.

**Please note that the sources in this toolkit include content that may be considered discriminatory, offensive or distressing.**

# UNDERPINNING TEACHING PRINCIPLES

Things to consider when you are teaching complex topics such as migration, empire, race, identity and belonging:

Speak to your students to set your expectations at the beginning of a lesson. Tap into the values of your school. Go over the meaning of these, and explain clearly what behaviours and language are acceptable. This will ensure that you're all starting on common ground.



SETTING  
VALUES



LANGUAGE

Take time to talk to your students about any outdated or inappropriate language that appears in the historical sources. Discuss how these terms can reinforce stereotypes, spread misinformation and/or lead to the dehumanisation of migrants. You might want to explore how and why language has changed, and open a conversation about the power of words.

Check out the [Migration Museum's terminology resource](#) to stay up to date.

Contextualising sources and topics is essential. This may include taking extra time to offer explanations to students ahead of exploring a source. It's important to recognise the problems and limitations of the material. For example, some items may lack the perspectives of the subjects they're discussing or reflect racial prejudices.



CONTEXT



SPACE FOR  
REFLECTION

Talking about migration and related topics can cause emotional reactions in both students and teachers. We always recommend creating space for reflection and decompression. One way of doing this is with an emotional check-in at the start and end of your lesson.

# CHAMPIONING LIVED EXPERIENCES

Lived experience refers to personal, first-hand knowledge and understanding gained from experiencing a specific event, condition or social issue, as opposed to knowledge gained from second-hand accounts or theory. The lived experiences of certain groups of people, such as women, the working classes, people of colour and colonised peoples, have traditionally been excluded from historical narratives, formal research and statistics.

Primary sources that centre lived experience can give marginalised groups agency over how their stories are told, and can help uncover gaps or biases in more traditional historical narratives. This material can also provide opportunities to make connections between the subject matter explored in history classes and students' own lives and backgrounds.

## BEFORE THE LESSON

Foregrounding first-hand personal stories within your scheme of work exposes students to a greater variety of primary sources and perspectives. They can use their interpretative historical skills to explore these.

## BEFORE THE LESSON

Using sources that include lived experience gives you an opportunity to connect with stories of migration which might exist in your classroom. You can explore similarities and differences between these experiences.

## DURING THE LESSON

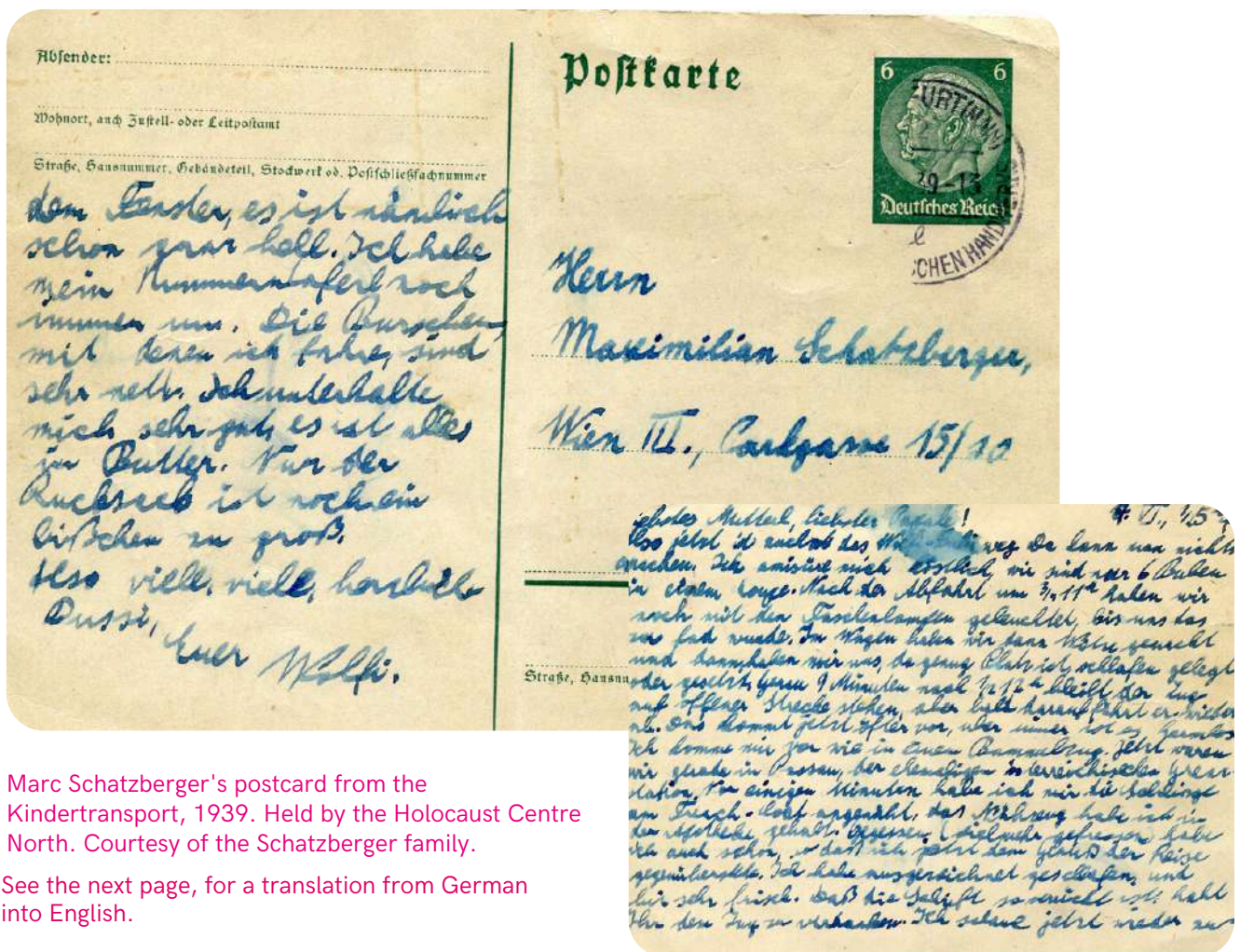
Acknowledge that everyone has their own story and experiences, both in the historical sources and in the classroom. Explain that personal opinions have a place in a dialogic classroom, but it should not overshadow historical interpretations.

## DURING THE LESSON

If accounts that centre lived experiences contradict traditional narratives of migration, then it is important to acknowledge the value of both perspectives. Exploring why and how differing historical accounts can co-exist is always helpful.

This source includes content that may be considered discriminatory, offensive or distressing.

This postcard dated 7 June 1939 was written by 12-year-old Austrian-Jewish Marc Schatzberger to his parents in Vienna. Marc was one of 10,000 children who escaped Nazi-occupied territories on the Kindertransport, ultimately finding refuge in Britain. Like many Kindertransport children, Marc would never see his parents again, as they were murdered by the Nazis.



Marc Schatzberger's postcard from the Kindertransport, 1939. Held by the Holocaust Centre North. Courtesy of the Schatzberger family.

See the next page, for a translation from German into English.

What is the value of learning about history through lived experience?  
 What are the challenges?

How do people write about their lives? How might their motivation for writing about their experiences influence the language they use?

How might a person's account of their lived experience change, depending on whether they're describing life in the present or looking back on an event from their past?

## TEACHING PRINCIPLES



SETTING VALUES



LANGUAGE



CONTEXT



SPACE FOR REFLECTION

To Maximilian Schatzberger  
Vienna, third district, Parkgasse 15/20  
Germany

[back side] Dearest Mother, dearest Papa!  
07/06, 4:30am

So now the Wolfi-Boy is gone too. Nothing you can do about it. I am having great fun, we are only six boys in the train compartment. After the departure at 10:45pm we shone our torches, until we got bored. In the compartment then we were joking around; and then, because there was enough space, we laid or sat down to sleep. Exactly 9 minutes after 11:30am, the train stopped between stations, but continued to go ahead shortly afterwards. This happens quite often now, but it is always harmless. I feel like I'm on a Bummelzug [a slow train]. We have just been in Passau, the former Austrian border control station. A few minutes ago I sewed the sling to my trenchcoat; the sewing kit was in my first aid kit. I have eaten (or gorged) too, so that I can now face the joy of the journey. I have slept splendidly, and am feeling fresh. That my writing is so crooked, you can thank the train for. I am now looking [front side] out the window again, because it is completely bright. I've still got the number plate around my neck. The boys that I am travelling with are all nice chaps. I am having good conversations, everything is fine. Only the backpack is a bit too big.

Many, many heartfelt kisses,

Your Wolfi.

Translation of Marc Schatzberger's postcard from the Kindertransport, 1939.

## How useful is this source for studying the Kindertransport?

Why did Marc write this postcard?

- First-hand accounts written by children on the Kindertransport are rare. Most accounts were written by adults reflecting on their childhood memories, with hindsight and the knowledge of what happened next.

Was Marc able to tell his parents how he was feeling at the time?

- Postcards are not private. How might this have affected what he wrote?
- As an adult, Marc confirmed that his upbeat tone was to reassure his parents that he was safe. For a child of 12 to feel this responsibility speaks to the trauma that Jewish people experienced under the Nazis.

What can we learn about the Kindertransport from this source?

- Marc mentions how the train kept stopping and starting, which must have been alarming to children fleeing persecution.
- Marc lists some of the things he travelled with, including a torch, food, a first-aid kit and the identification number around his neck.
- The postcard has been translated from German to English. How might that also affect our understanding?

# FACILITATING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

Teaching about migration, or any subject that can be seen as sensitive, polarising or challenging, means that you may have to facilitate difficult conversations. We know that attitudes relating to migration are often emotive, highly charged and racialised, which means that these conversations need to be handled with care.

## BEFORE THE LESSON

Take care to read through the materials and consider what might come up in the classroom. Be aware of any potential sensitivities that might produce a strong emotional reaction from students. If you feel unsure about anything, talk to colleagues and get advice.

## DURING THE LESSON

Acknowledge the complexity of the subject with your students - don't shy away from this. Nuance is an important part of learning about migration.

## DURING THE LESSON

Remember that students are not blank slates. They will have already picked up rhetoric and ideas from many other external sources. By engaging them in a conversation, you are recognising that there is space to learn and grow.

## DURING THE LESSON

If a conversation or comment crosses a line - for example if it is offensive, inaccurate or harmful - be prepared to draw the conversation to a close. Do this by addressing the comment not the speaker. This will minimise escalation and avoid shaming an individual.

## DURING THE LESSON

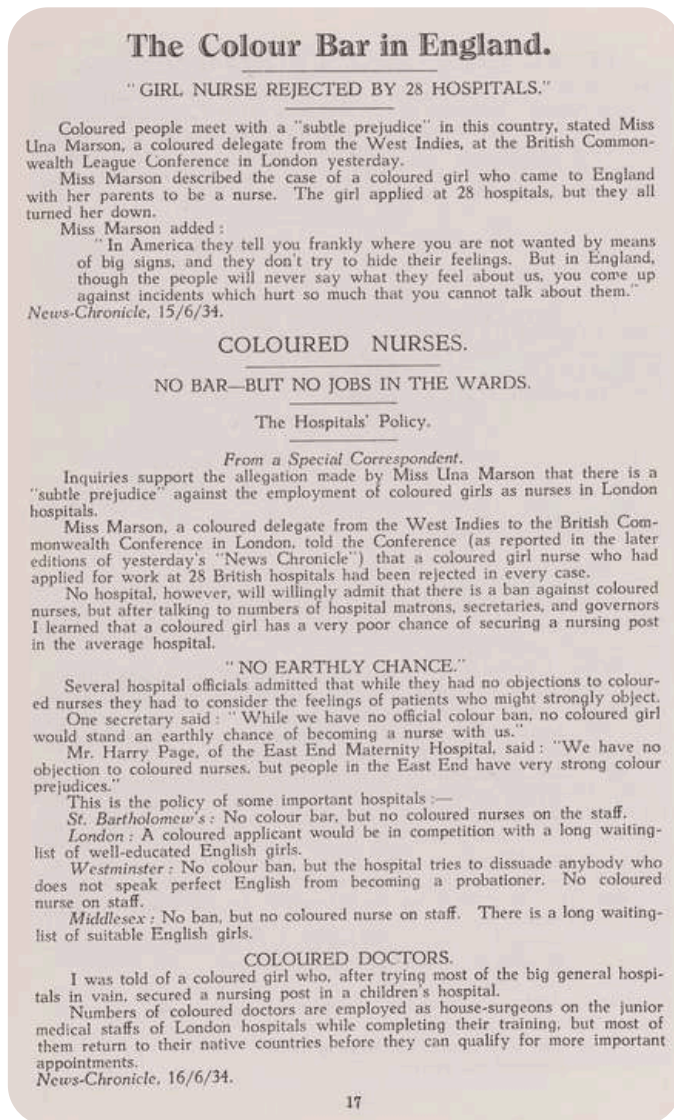
Acknowledge that people will have differing perspectives, and emphasise that that is OK. Normalise asking questions in order to understand someone else's point of view. Don't try to change their opinions - try to understand them. Once you are in a place of mutual understanding, you can start to bridge divides.

## DURING THE LESSON

Give yourself plenty of time. Students often have additional questions and may need extra context, so we recommend not trying to fit too much into each discussion.

This source includes content that may be considered discriminatory, offensive or distressing.

Published on 1 July 1934 in *The Keys*, this article discusses an anecdote about a young Black nurse looking for work. The article's author Una Marson intended to draw attention to racist hiring practices in Britain. *The Keys* was a journal produced by the League of Coloured Peoples, a British civil rights organisation founded in 1931 to unite people in the fight against racism in Britain.



'The Colour Bar in England: "Girl Nurse Rejected by 28 Hospitals"', *The Keys*, 1934. Held by the British Library. Shelfmark: 5091.845. Public domain.




What is the difference between segregation and a colour bar?

Unlike race laws in the US and South Africa, racist segregation and restrictions were not legally enforced in Britain. However, as the article argues, a 'subtle prejudice' operated as an effective colour bar. This widespread discrimination limited the opportunities available to Black people and could make life in Britain very difficult and unwelcoming.

How can the language and ideas in historical sources be problematic?  
How can we address this sensitively in our conversations?

Language changes over time. It's important to acknowledge that while 'coloured' was an acceptable term in the 1930s, it is no longer appropriate as it is dehumanising. In 2026, a more appropriate term might be a person of colour as this centres the person. However, it is important to note that not everyone identifies with this term. Identity is very personal, and so are the labels that people feel comfortable using.

TEACHING PRINCIPLES

-  SETTING VALUES
-  LANGUAGE
-  CONTEXT
-  SPACE FOR REFLECTION

**How useful is this source for learning about racism in 1930s Britain?**

Who wrote this source and why?

- The League of Coloured Peoples published this article to report on their investigation into racist hiring practices in London hospitals. It was part of their wider campaign to oppose the colour bar across Britain.

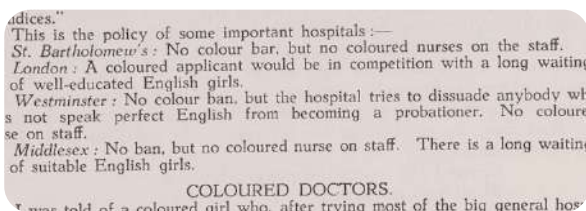
What does the language used in this source tell us about attitudes to race in the 1930s?

- The policy of Middlesex Hospital is described as, 'No colour ban but no coloured nurse on staff. There is a long waiting list of suitable English girls'. This implies that Black nurses were not suitable and reveals subtle racism.
- The use of the word 'coloured' dehumanises the Black nurses, 'othering' them and creating an 'us' and 'them' dichotomy with 'English girls'.

What does Una Marson mean when she says 'Coloured people meet with a subtle prejudice'?

- In the report an example is shared of a hospital that 'tries to dissuade people who speak less than perfect English' from becoming nurses.
- One nurse was turned down no less than 28 times, showing how racism was ingrained into hiring practices in British hospitals.
- The source describes how harmful racist discrimination can be, even when it is not built into the law as was the case with segregation.

How might the nurse involved feel about this experience of racism? How would you describe a system that enables exclusions and discrimination?



# NAVIGATING THE POLITICS

Migration is a central part of the human experience, but it is also a heavily politicised topic. Exploring this can be challenging, given the need to remain non-partisan as a teacher, but it is vital to give students the tools to understand narratives in society and to form their own reasoned opinions. By focusing on our history, facts and personal stories, we can present students with a lens to examine this subject critically.

## BEFORE THE LESSON

Do what you can to keep up with contemporary events relating to migration. While this can be challenging, there are some reliable places to look for information.

City of Sanctuary regularly updates its resources about asylum and sanctuary-seeking in the UK. The Migration Observatory run by Oxford University also looks in detail at migration trends and is a trusted source.

## BEFORE THE LESSON

Consider migration in the context of your own school. What attitudes and lived experiences (might) exist? What guidelines and moderation will you need to have in place during the students' discussion?

## DURING THE LESSON

Recognise the emotional impact that conversations about migration can have on people, and show students that politics affects every one of us.

## DURING THE LESSON

Much of the political debate around migration in the UK is closely linked to wider societal concerns, such as the economy and employment. It is important to recognise this with students.

# NAVIGATING THE POLITICS

This source includes content that may be considered discriminatory, offensive or distressing.

On 29 August 1972, the *Leicester Mercury* published its regular feature 'Your Page Four', in which letters sent in by readers were printed. Most of the letters in this edition comment on the recent migration of Ugandan South Asians to Leicester. Earlier that month, Ugandan president Idi Amin had ordered the expulsion of the country's entire South Asian population. Many people from this community held British passports and fled to Britain, with a significant proportion settling in Leicester, which already had an established South Asian community. This opened an intense debate about migration among Leicester's residents.



**No kind hearts?**

THE people who are so busily organising protests and demonstrations against British passports holders from Uganda coming to Leicester, should remember that it is human beings that they are talking about. How would they feel if they were forced to leave their homes and all their possessions and if, when they came to the country of which they are citizens and to a town where they have some relatives and friends who could help them, they were met with such hostility from local residents? ARE there no kind-hearted people left in Leicester?

**Must say 'No'**

WHEN school leavers can't get work, families have been on the housing list for years and the educational and national health services are already stretched to the limit, how can anyone justify the entry of thousands of immigrants?

The British Government have got to say "No." Enough is enough.

**M. EDWARDS,**  
Bralmar Drive, Leicester.

'Let us make it clear that we are happy to welcome these people', *Leicester Mercury*, 1972. Held by the British Library. Shelfmark: NEWS16326. © Reach PLC

How do attitudes towards migration in the past compare to those of today?

Studying migration history can help us to understand contemporary political debates about migration to Britain. By looking at moments from the past that have similarities to today we can explore change and continuity. The following source demonstrates how many of the attitudes and rhetoric towards migrants in the 1970s still exist today.

## TEACHING PRINCIPLES



SETTING VALUES



LANGUAGE



CONTEXT



SPACE FOR REFLECTION

## How useful is this source for understanding attitudes towards Ugandan South Asians migrating to Britain in the 1970s?

What language is used to discuss Ugandan South Asians? How do ideas of 'good' and 'bad' migrants come through in the letters?

- The language shows that there were very different attitudes circulating in Leicester. One letter mentions 'capable and industrious refugees' while another says the government should be focused on 'true fellow Britons'.

Why were people writing to the *Leicester Mercury* about Ugandan South Asians?

- The number of letters demonstrates that many people held strong feelings about this topic. While most people represented in the feature are not in favour of Ugandan South Asians settling in Leicester, others are more sympathetic.

MY concern is for my true fellow Britons already living here in slum conditions, the homeless, the million unemployed. Our senior citizens who have struggled all through their lives in real poverty are still having to struggle to exist decently. Britain's obligations begin right here at home not to thousands of Asians living here.

W.R.

It will not be easy to accommodate the victimised but capable and industrious Uganda Asians. But to shut the door will be to add horror to a world already full of it, to give international morality another shove towards barbarism.

How has the Leicester Mercury chosen to frame the discussion?

- The newspaper displays a range of different views and concerns. Some anti-immigration letters express openly racist attitudes or prejudice against Ugandan South Asians.
- Other letters are more sympathetic to the refugees' plight and highlight Britain's responsibility to help.

What connections are made between immigration and socio-economic issues?

- Most of the negative letters in this source framed their concerns around hardship in Leicester, highlighting homelessness, poor housing, poverty, unemployment, a lack of healthcare and schooling issues. The writers were worried about migrants stretching social resources, which were already under pressure, arguing that Britain's obligations should begin 'at home'.

What can you learn from this source about attitudes towards Ugandan South Asians?

- The article doesn't reveal the attitudes held by individuals in the wider community who did not write letters.
- These are only the views of people who live in Leicester. We do not know if attitudes were the same in other parts of Britain.

# LANGUAGE AND TERMINOLOGY

Many historical sources used language that is now considered inappropriate or outdated. This may be because certain terms are rooted in colonialism, because geographical place names have changed, or because groups of people have historically been described using language which they would not choose for themselves.

It's important to acknowledge this when exploring sources loaded with problematic language, and to understand what inclusive language we can use instead.

Check out the [Migration Museum's terminology resource](#) for useful definitions.

## BEFORE THE LESSON

Regularly review the language that you use in lessons, and sense-check it with colleagues or critical friends. This is especially important when referring to people from other areas of the world.

## BEFORE THE LESSON

Take care to identify and understand the colonial and historical legacy of the language used in the sources, so that you can explain this and are prepared for any questions which students might ask.

## DURING THE LESSON

Students may react strongly to certain language used in sources, particularly if it refers to nations or cultural groups that form part of their personal identity. Allow your students to self-identify when talking about these groups.

## DURING THE LESSON

Explore with your students the reasons why certain language might have been used in sources - think about who was using it and why. For example, language may have been used to dehumanise or subjugate a group of people, or to position them as different.

In the following source you could discuss the use of different labels and ask how students would choose to self identify. For example, Black, British or Black British?

This source includes content that may be considered discriminatory, offensive or distressing.

This image of lascars (or sailors) was printed in Joseph Salter's 1873 book *The Asiatic in England: Sketches of Sixteen Years' Work among Orientals*. Salter was a Christian missionary who co-founded the Strangers' Home for Asiatics, Africans and South Sea Islanders in Limehouse, east London, a charity that provided lascars with temporary accommodation. In *The Asiatic in England*, Salter tells the story of the Strangers' Home and those who lived there from his perspective.



*The Asiatic in England* by Joseph Salter, 1873. Held by the British Library. Shelfmark: 4192.bb.43. Public domain.

Why does terminology matter? Would we use the same language used in this source today?

- 'Siamese' is an outdated name that was historically used to refer to people from Thailand. Siam was officially renamed Thailand in 1939.
- The words 'Asiatic' and 'Orientals' are outdated and offensive terms that refer to people from Asia.
- 'Surati' refers to a people from the Surat region of India, a term that is not commonplace today.
- 'Burmese' is a contested term, that is linked to the historical and ongoing political situation in Burma/Myanmar. The United Nations officially recognises the country as Myanmar but there is no national or international consensus on this issue.

## TEACHING PRINCIPLES



SETTING VALUES



LANGUAGE



CONTEXT



SPACE FOR REFLECTION



## How useful is this source for understanding how British people viewed South Asians in the 1800s?

What does the language in Salter's book tell us about his attitudes towards South Asians or about Western attitudes more broadly?

- Salter met many different migrants through his work and was interested in them.
- However, he clearly saw them as 'others', with the words 'Asiatic' and 'Orientals' in his book title homogenising and marginalising people from Asia.

How have the men in this image been represented?

- Salter does not name these men but labels them by region. The use of cultural dress and the grouping of the lascars as if they are 'on display' reinforces the 'exoticness' of those living at the Strangers' Home.
- We don't know if these drawings were sketches of people sitting for a portrait, or if Salter used creative licence.

Do you think that the men would choose these labels for themselves?

- Salter does not homogenise these men and tries to showcase the diversity of different groups of people.
- However, we don't know how these men would have self-identified or if they would have recognised these terms.

# DEALING WITH RACIST LANGUAGE AND IMAGERY

You will come across historical sources that include language and/or imagery that is racist and problematic. It is important that we prepare thoroughly and frame such sources carefully, to reduce the impact on students, but also to contextualise them.

It's also important for students to recognise the power of language and imagery. Racist terms and images were used purposefully in the past to dehumanise, segregate and suppress. Acknowledging this fact is essential.

## BEFORE THE LESSON

Recognise that for some students certain images or language might be deeply offensive. To help prepare them for this possibility, at the start of the lesson explain what you will be looking at, for example, by saying something like: 'In today's session we will be looking at a source that may be considered offensive and harmful due to the language/imagery used.'

## BEFORE AND AFTER THE LESSON

An emotional release is a natural response to learning about the experiences of migrants. Build in time for emotional check-ins, and don't force a student to engage with a source if they find it emotionally harmful.

## BEFORE THE LESSON

Racist and discriminatory sources are not always overtly or explicitly so, but they can still uphold harmful power dynamics, myths and stereotypes.

## DURING THE LESSON

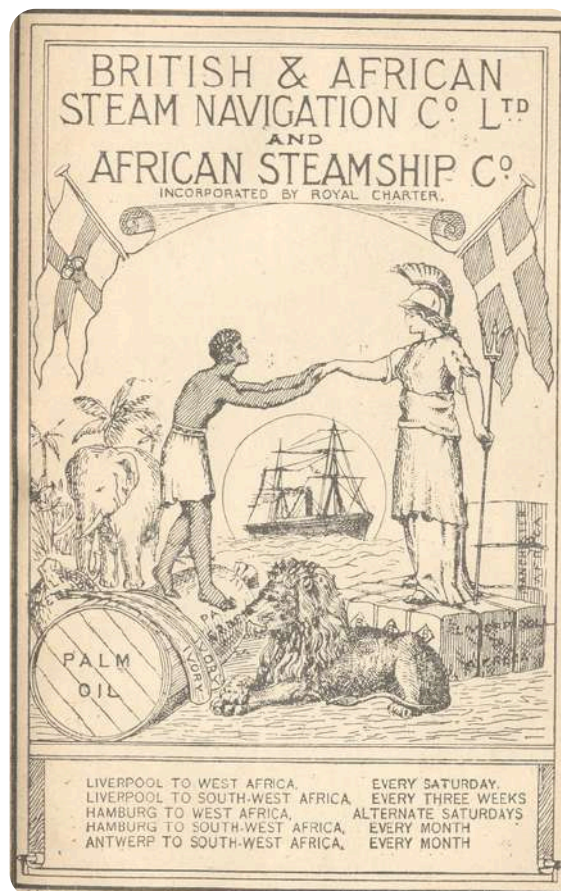
People often display unusual trauma responses when faced with racist or discriminatory material (for example, laughing). This may be inappropriate, but it's important for us as teachers to acknowledge that there may be a range of different reactions among students - we should not draw attention to any particular response.

## DURING THE LESSON

Before sharing any source material that includes racist language and imagery, it's important to set appropriate values and expectations with your students.

This source includes content that may be considered discriminatory, offensive or distressing.

This is an advertisement from 1891 for two shipping companies, the British & African Steam Navigation Company and the African Steamship Company. It advertises the shipping routes, schedules and goods that the companies used when travelling between Europe and West Africa. The figure on the right is Britannia who represents the Britain. On the left is an image of an African man who represents the African continent.



African Steamship Company advertisement, 1892. Held by the Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. With permission of 'Documenting the American South', UNC-Chapel Hill Library.

### How can the images used in historical sources be problematic?

Many advertisements from this time are overtly racist, but this example is surprisingly respectful in its depiction of Africa and African people. Nevertheless, studying this source helps us to consider how racial hierarchies and racist attitudes were reinforced.

### How can imagery be used to empower and disempower people?

Power dynamics can often be reinforced through language and imagery. When encountering problematic sources, encourage your students to think about who this would serve to empower and disempower. Britain and British values were usually depicted as morally superior to other cultures and countries.

TEACHING PRINCIPLES

- ♥ SETTING VALUES
- 📖 LANGUAGE
- 📄 CONTEXT
- 🗣️ SPACE FOR REFLECTION

**How useful is this source in understanding trading relationships between Britain and West Africa in the 1800s?**

Who is shown in this image? How are they portrayed?

- The figure representing Africa has outstretched hands and looks up towards Britannia. He stands in a deferential position, appearing thankful that she is willing to help him trade his goods.
- Britannia stands on crates destined for Britain. She holds one hand out to the man and holds a trident in the other to represent Britain's dominance over the seas.

What else can you see in the advertisement? What can we infer from this?

- The advertisement shows us the different goods being traded, including palm oil and ivory, highlighting that Africa was viewed largely in terms of its exploitable resources.
- While European cities are named, West Africa is viewed as homogeneous, with only the broad region referred to.

Who is benefiting from this trading relationship?



# CHALLENGING MYTHS, NARRATIVES AND STEREOTYPES

Part of studying the past means examining how history can be used to create myths, stereotypes and dominant narratives. Sometimes this might mean engaging with the sources that perpetuate these myths. While engaging in this process can be challenging, it can also provide opportunities to examine the reasons why we have held these assumptions and the impact they have had.

Understanding where a dominant narrative comes from and how it has been used to shape views of other people, places and communities, allows students to gain critical thinking skills and gain a better understanding of propaganda or misinformation.

## BEFORE THE LESSON

No two stories are the same. Using personal, first-hand accounts can provide an illuminating contrast to dominant historical narratives and social stereotypes.

## BEFORE THE LESSON

Exploring history thematically can help students to draw connections between different cultures and communities, instead of simply making broad and reductive associations.

## DURING THE LESSON

Have a conversation about what stereotypes are, why they exist and how we're all capable of both perpetuating and dismantling them. For example, a stereotype from which to start is that girls wear pink and boys wear blue.

## DURING THE LESSON

Students themselves might often use stereotypes because they see them as normalised or harmless. It's important to examine the negative impacts which these stereotypes can have, such as lack of representation, social isolation and the restriction of opportunities for those depicted.

Co-produced by

This source includes content that may be considered discriminatory, offensive or distressing.



Tailor's sweat shop in 'The Alien in England: The Immigrant Problem', *Illustrated London News*, 1904. Held by Mary Evans. Shelfmark: 10219371. © *Illustrated London News* Ltd. / Mary Evans.

This engraving is from an article written by Major Evans Gordon titled 'The Alien in England: The Immigrant Problem'. Published in the *Illustrated London News* on 30 April 1904, this article expresses support for the proposed 1905 Aliens Act, which introduced immigration controls in the UK. The engraving, drawn by H. H. Flère, is part of a series of images portraying what are described as 'scenes of the foreign invasion of the East End of London'.



Photograph of a tailoring shop in London's East End c. 1900-1910. Held by the Jewish Museum London. Shelfmark: G7-6. Public domain.

This photograph, taken sometime between 1900 and 1910, shows Jewish tailors in a workshop in the East End of London.

How did people form opinions of migrant communities in the past?  
How did stereotypes arise and what was their impact?

Powerful imagery depicting the overcrowded, unsanitary Jewish 'ghetto' of Whitechapel in East London was widespread in the late 1800s and early 1900s, contributing to a rising tide of anti-immigration sentiment among politicians, press and the public.

TEACHING PRINCIPLES



SETTING VALUES



LANGUAGE



CONTEXT



SPACE FOR REFLECTION

**How useful are these sources in understanding attitudes towards Jewish communities in Britain in the early 1900s? How might they support or counter these stereotypes?**

What can you see in these images?

- The engraving shows the workshop as a crowded, dark, dingy room. Some figures are working late into the night, others are in bed. One person looks sick.
- The photograph shows tailors in a workshop, with six women sitting around a table and two men standing beside a mannequin. Some of the women are smiling at the camera.

What similarities and differences can you see between the two images? Why might the two images differ?

- The engraving was probably based on loose impressions, rather than created from a real scene. The image supported Gordon's argument that England was suffering from an 'Alien Problem' and is likely a statement of anti-immigration sentiment.
- The photograph shows better working conditions. The setting may still be a residential property, but it is a tidy space and with its large windows letting in daylight, will have provided a better set-up for the tailors to work in. However, while we may assume that the photograph is more reliable, we don't know who took it or why.

How might these sources have shaped views of Jewish communities at the time they were produced?

- The language accompanying the engraving, such as 'The Alien in England', 'Scenes of the Foreign Invasion' and 'The Immigrant Problem', frame the arrival of Jewish migrants through a negative, anti-immigrant lens. However, Flère's engraving may also have been interpreted sympathetically, as it drew attention to the harsh working conditions endured by Jewish people.
- In the early 1900s, Jewish garment workers in London successfully fought to improve working conditions, reduce hours and increase wages. It could be that the photograph is an indication of these improved conditions.



# RESOURCE LINKS



## **Teaching Migration History Toolkit: teaching resources**

Explore the primary sources that feature in this toolkit and discover other materials to support your teaching of migration history.

## **Migration to Britain, 1750-1900: teaching resources**

Learn about Black, Irish, South Asian, European and Jewish people who moved to Britain with resources from the British Library's *Discovering Historical Sources* project. These include an animation, a timeline, historical sources and articles written by historians.

## **Migration to Britain, 1900-1980: teaching resources**

Learn about Jewish, Polish, Caribbean and South Asian people who moved to Britain with resources from the British Library's *Discovering Historical Sources* project. These include an animation, a timeline, historical sources and articles written by historians.

## **Migration Museum Resource Bank**

The Migration Museum team have searched widely and selected some of the best resources and useful websites on these themes. Use our simple search boxes to locate the right resource for you and your pupils.

## **All Our Stories activity pack**

Use the Migration Museum's story disc template to collect migration stories from your school or community. These can be used with children and adults alike, and this pack gives more information on the different activities you can do with the story discs.

## **Migration Terminology Resource**

This terminology resource defines some of the key language you will be using when teaching about migration and related topics, and gives explanations as to why certain terms are preferable over others.

This pack was created by the Migration Museum in collaboration with the British Library. The text in the resource is available under a [Creative Commons Licence](#).

---

## COPYRIGHT CREDITS

Marc Schatzberger's postcard from the Kindertransport, 1939. Held by the Holocaust Centre North. Courtesy of the Schatzberger family.

'The Colour Bar in England: "Girl Nurse Rejected by 28 Hospitals"', *The Keys*, 1934. Held by the British Library. Shelfmark: 5091.845. Public domain.

'Let us make it clear that we are happy to welcome these people', *Leicester Mercury*, 1972. Held by the British Library. Shelfmark: NEWS16326. © Reach PLC

*The Asiatic in England* by Joseph Salter, 1873. Held by the British Library. Shelfmark: 4192.bb.43. Public domain.

African Steamship Company advertisement, 1892. Held by the Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. With permission of 'Documenting the American South', UNC-Chapel Hill Library.

Tailor's sweat shop in 'The Alien in England: The Immigrant Problem', *Illustrated London News*, 1904. Held by Mary Evans. Shelfmark: 10219371. © *Illustrated London News* Ltd. / Mary Evans.

Photograph of a tailoring shop in London's East End c. 1900-1910. Held by the Jewish Museum London. Shelfmark: G7-6. Public domain.

## With grateful thanks to the teachers and educators who have been involved in developing this resource:

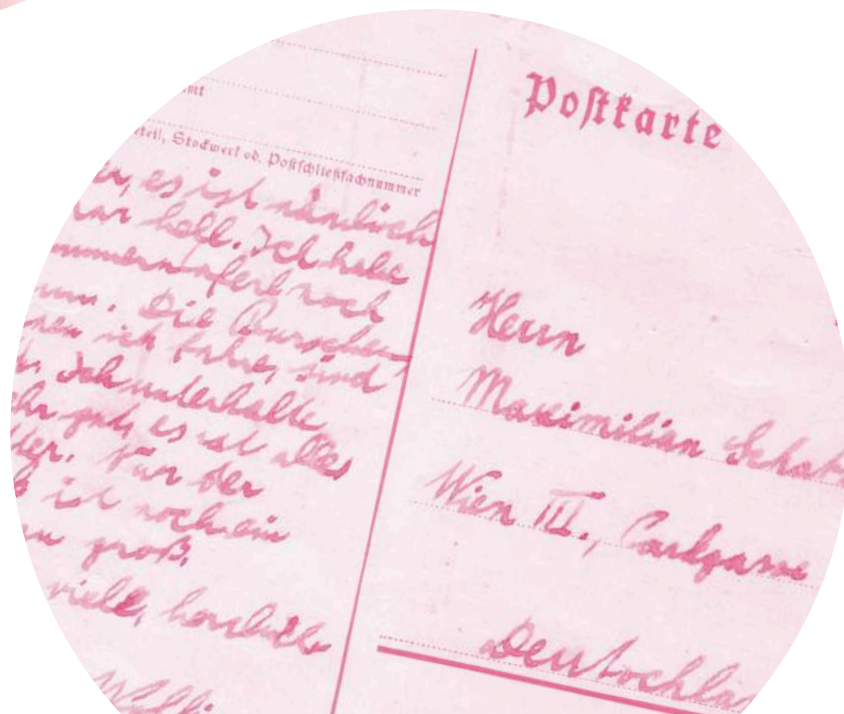
Becky Bailey, Executive Director of History, Westcountry Schools Trust

Clare Broomfield, Head of History, Villiers High School

Emily Marsh, Teacher of History and Lead Coach, Trinity Academy Leeds

Emma McKenna, Head of History at the King's School, Grantham

Abdul Mohamud, Lecturer in History Education at UCL Institute of Education, University College London and co-director of Justice to History



Co-produced by

