

What's my enquiry?

*“How can we find a way to communicate complex colonial histories to children?”*



Where's  
that  
*really*  
from?

# LOOK AROUND YOUR HOME.

The things you eat, use and wear all have stories hiding inside them.

Some of these stories have travelled a very long way, crossing oceans and centuries. They can come from a time when Britain ruled a huge empire\*.

It left behind things that are familiar and fun, but also things that aren't. Books you read at school sometimes overlook these links to the past, especially where difficult histories of conflict are involved.



They've been the **elephant** in the room (something that's too big to hide but is ignored because it seems too difficult to deal with). But it's really important to say that many people were treated unfairly and their stories matter.

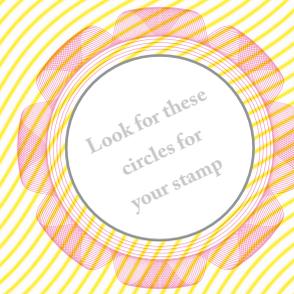
By knowing a bit about the British Empire, we might be able to shrink the elephant a bit and start to think about what it all means today. Do any of the things that happened then, still happen now?

With this book, you'll go on a hunt for histories though things you might find in your house. Grab an adult, and as you turn each page try and find the things on its pages. If you find one, use the stamp! (If you don't, read anyway!).

Look at them together and talk about what their hidden histories can mean to you. *(Adults! That means you too!)*

Ok, ready? Turn the page and we'll make a start...

\*An empire is a group of countries that are ruled by a single other country or government





You know that drink that helps adults wake up in the morning? No, not coffee, the other one.

Yep, a good old cup of 'Rosie Lee'.\*



Stamp here if you found some tea!

Tea first arrived in Britain in the 1600s, thanks to traders from China and (allegedly) a tea-loving queen, **Catherine of Braganza** (who was actually from Portugal, it's complicated).



Tea leaves were picked from a plant, dried and sometimes rolled or crushed, then packed up so people could put them in hot water to make tea. The hot water works like a bathtub, breaking down the tiny dried cells in the leaves.



\*That's Cockney rhyming slang, which is an old East London language, where "Rosie Lee" rhymes with "cup of tea". It was first recorded around 1925.



By the 1800s, the British were drinking millions of cups a day, which was expensive.

So they decided to grow their own, and set up plantations in places like **Assam** and **Darjeeling** in India and **Ceylon** (now Sri-Lanka).

You might have seen those names on the front of tea boxes in your kitchen or at the supermarket...



In 1848, The East India Company (a powerful English business founded in 1600) wanted to break the Chinese monopoly on tea (a monopoly is where you control something completely). So they sent a Scottish spy named **Robert Fortune** to China disguised as a merchant to steal tea secrets.

The Empire transformed tea from a luxury into a daily, affordable thing for everyone.

**BUT**, they did it by establishing big plantations that often didn't treat workers fairly...



Tea made Britain vast amounts of money and helped power trade, shipping routes and it was even supposed to cure stuff.

But there was a bitter side to this sweet drink.

Local plantation workers were often paid very little, worked 16-hour-days and had few rights (that's the stuff that should automatically come with your job to protect you and your workmates).

**Today**, we drink  
160 million cups of the brown  
stuff a day.

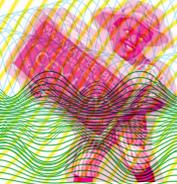
It is grown in many of the same places and shipped thousands of miles across oceans creating pollution. Some workers can *still* face tough working conditions *decades* later.

So when you see steam rising from a mug, think about where your tea comes from and how it got to you. You might want to ask who grows your tea now? Do workers earn enough? Can we choose to buy a brand that treats people fairly?



About a hundred Fairtrade tea bags were consumed in the production of this book

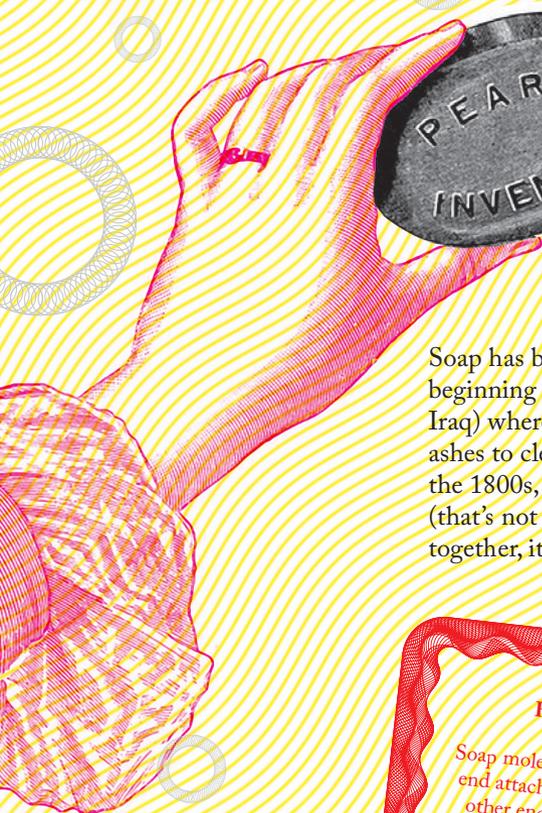
THIS IS  
HOW PEOPLE  
WERE SHOWN IN  
TEA ADS. WOULD  
THAT BE OK  
TODAY?



Green tea Remember me?

# SOAP

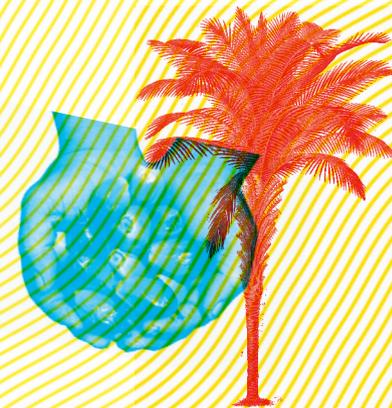
“WASH YOUR HANDS!”  
How many times are you told that every week? Perhaps at home before dinner, or in a lesson at school or after picking your nose in public.



Soap has been used for over 4,000 years, beginning in ancient Babylon (modern-day Iraq) where they mixed animal fats with ashes to clean tools. Bars of soap arrived in the 1800s, becoming a daily hygiene staple (that's not the metal thing for keeping paper together, it's a common, everyday item).

Stamp here if you found some soap!

One of soap's main ingredients is something called Palm Oil. It comes from a tropical tree with large, reddish-orange fruits. Oil is squeezed from these fruits and combined with something called sodium hydroxide and water to make solid soap. If you look at the ingredients on a bar of soap, you might see “sodium palmitate,” that's derived from these trees.



In the 19th century British companies like Lever Brothers (which later became part of Unilever) used ingredients such as palm oil from colonies in Africa. Ships carried it to factory cities like Liverpool and Bristol, where workers turned them into soap bars.

You might have seen these dispensers at home, or at school, or in the supermarket. They can be recycled, which is great (apart from the pump bit which has a spring in it).



### HOW SOAP WORKS

Soap molecules act like tiny magnets. One end attaches to dirt and grease, while the other end grabs onto water. When you rinse, the soap lifts the dirt and germs off your skin and washes them down the drain.

**BUT**, soap's history isn't all that clean after all. Yes, it made a huge difference in keeping people's hygiene, and that helped reduce disease, but there were other things behind just washing your hands before dinner....

**Today**, palm oil is found in about half of all packaged supermarket products, everything from biscuits to shampoo!

Palm oil itself is not a problem, but *how* it is grown is. Demand for it causes deforestation, destroying rainforests in Indonesia and Malaysia. This removes homes for endangered animals like orangutans and tigers. Forest loss for palm oil in 2022 (globally) equaled 11 football fields PER MINUTE!

But, by choosing products with certified sustainable palm oil, we can help protect it.

So next time you see soap bubbles, remember: they carry stories of history, science and nature from around the world.

Pretty deep for something that smells like strawberries, right?

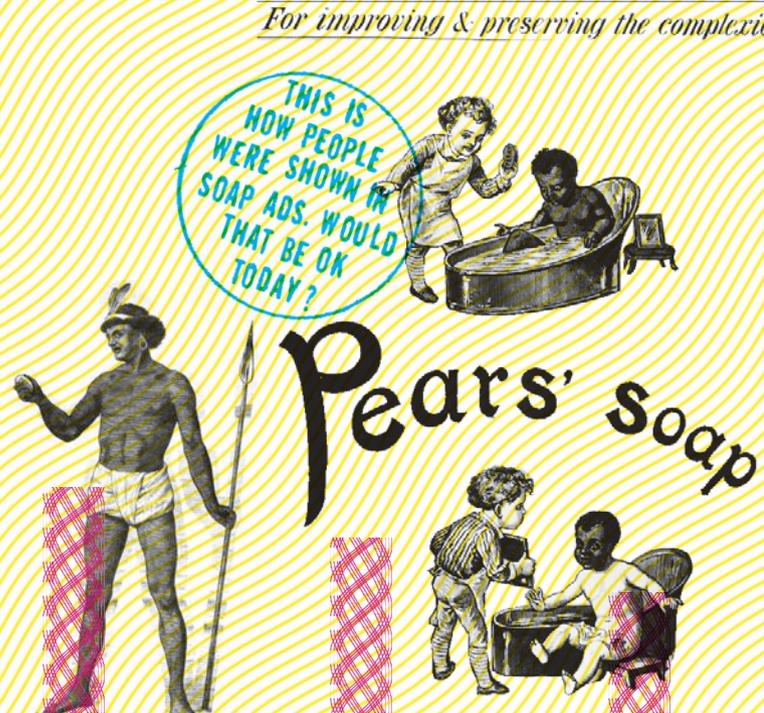
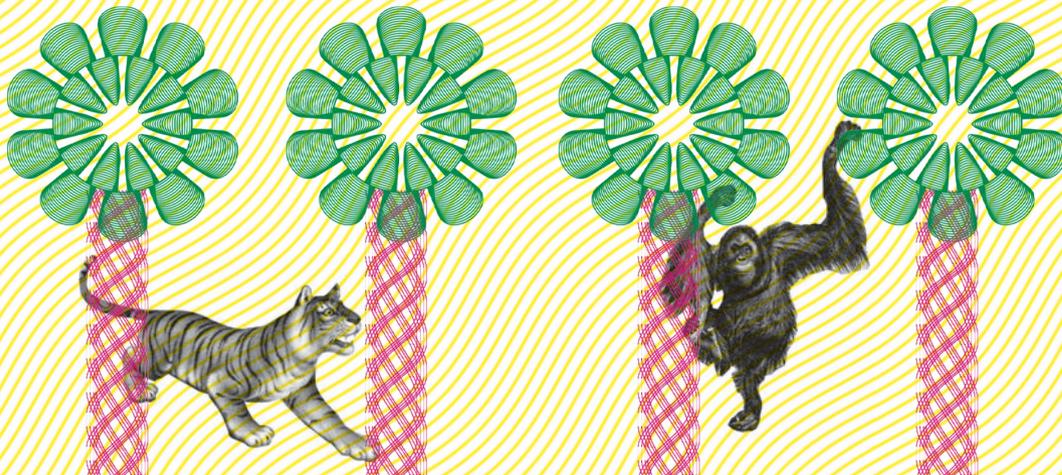


*Look for this logo on stuff in your bathroom, you might already be buying responsibly!*

During the British Empire, soap was promoted as a symbol of “civilisation,” linking being clean with being *better*.

Ads like these from Pears Soap showed non-European people becoming “clean” and therefore more “civilised,” reinforcing ideas of Empire while undermining local identity.

So when you buy things like this, choose ethically sourced stuff to protect the environment *and* the cultures of where it comes from.



*For improving & preserving the complexion*



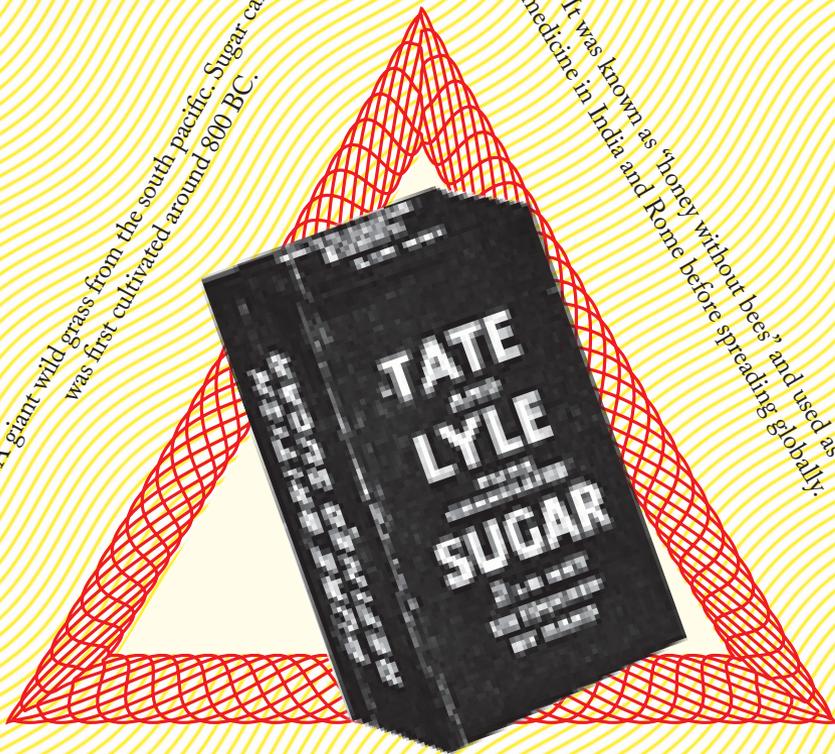
Did you find some? Sweet! Stamp it!



The cane was cut and quickly taken it to mills, where it was crushed and boiled. The sugar and molasses (brown stuff left over) were packed into barrels and sent from the Caribbean to places like Liverpool by ship, but the work had to be done fast because the sugar could spoil within a day.

A giant wild grass from the south pacific. Sugar cane was first cultivated around 800 BC.

It was known as "honey without bees" and used as medicine in India and Rome before spreading globally.



You might have found a packet like this at the back of your cupboard in the kitchen, or seen it at the supermarket. Tate and Lyle is the largest cane sugar brand in the UK. We use about 2 million tonnes of the stuff per year!



Back in the 1700s, the average British person ate about 2kg of sugar per year, but today people in the UK eat around 30–35kg per year. That's more than 10 times as much (no wonder dentists stay busy!)

Travellers helped it spread across East Asia, where traders discovered it and carried it to Europe.

It was a commodity so rare, its value equalled that of precious gems. So people would show it off like a fancy car. The Victorians made sugar sculptures 6 feet high made just out of sugar!

The sugar cube was invented by Jakob Christoph Rad, who patented it in 1843. In 1875, Henry Tate (the Tate part of Tate and Lyle) acquired exclusive rights to the technology and introduced cube sugar to the UK.

**BUT**, amongst all this sweetness, there was a *triangular* shaped problem...



Mr Cube, c. 1949

**Between the 16th and 19th centuries**, there was something called the Triangle Trade. No, it didn't trade in 3-sided polygons, it traded in people.

The first stage of the Triangular Trade was called the Manufactured Run where British-made stuff was taken to Africa to trade for captured African people. STUFF in exchange for ACTUAL PEOPLE.

The next bit was called the Middle Passage. Those Africans were shipped over to the Americas on ships like The Brooke, out of Liverpool in 1781, which could carry up to 609 slaves in awful conditions.

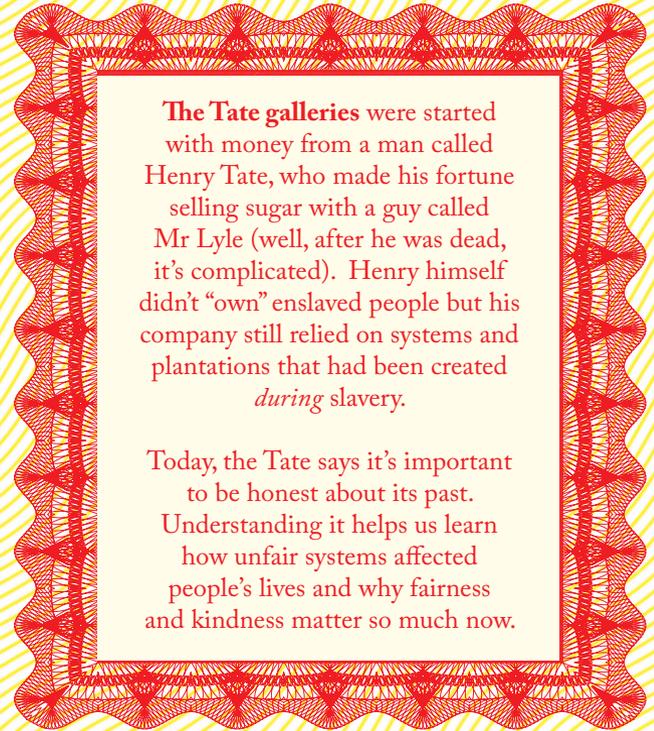
The final bit was called the Home Run. It brought goods created by those enslaved Africans such as sugar, rum, and cotton back to British ports like Bristol (have you been there?).

Around 12.5 million people were forced onto ships during this time and millions died because the journeys and conditions were so hard.

Sugar became very popular in Britain and plantations but used enslaved workers to grow it against their will. Companies like Tate & Lyle grew from this as well.

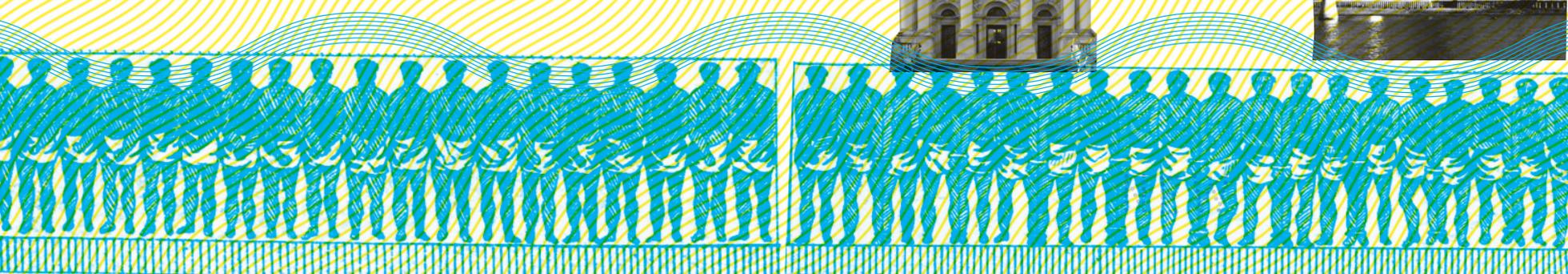
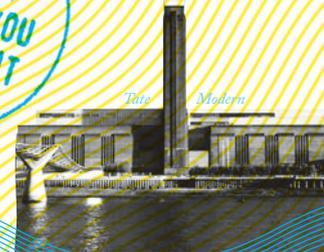
Today, many companies are looking honestly at their past and trying to improve working conditions in their supply chains (that's a kind of map of how something gets to you, it has nothing to do with actual chains. (well, not anymore anyway). As shoppers, we can help by choosing products with fair-trade labels like the one at the start of this book, which aim to pay workers properly and treat them safely.

So when you're eating your favourite choccy biccy that's LOADED with sugar, remember that its loaded with history too and that you can make kinder choices now. Who makes your biccy and are they an ethical bunch?



**The Tate galleries** were started with money from a man called Henry Tate, who made his fortune selling sugar with a guy called Mr Lyle (well, after he was dead, it's complicated). Henry himself didn't "own" enslaved people but his company still relied on systems and plantations that had been created *during slavery*.

Today, the Tate says it's important to be honest about its past. Understanding it helps us learn how unfair systems affected people's lives and why fairness and kindness matter so much now.



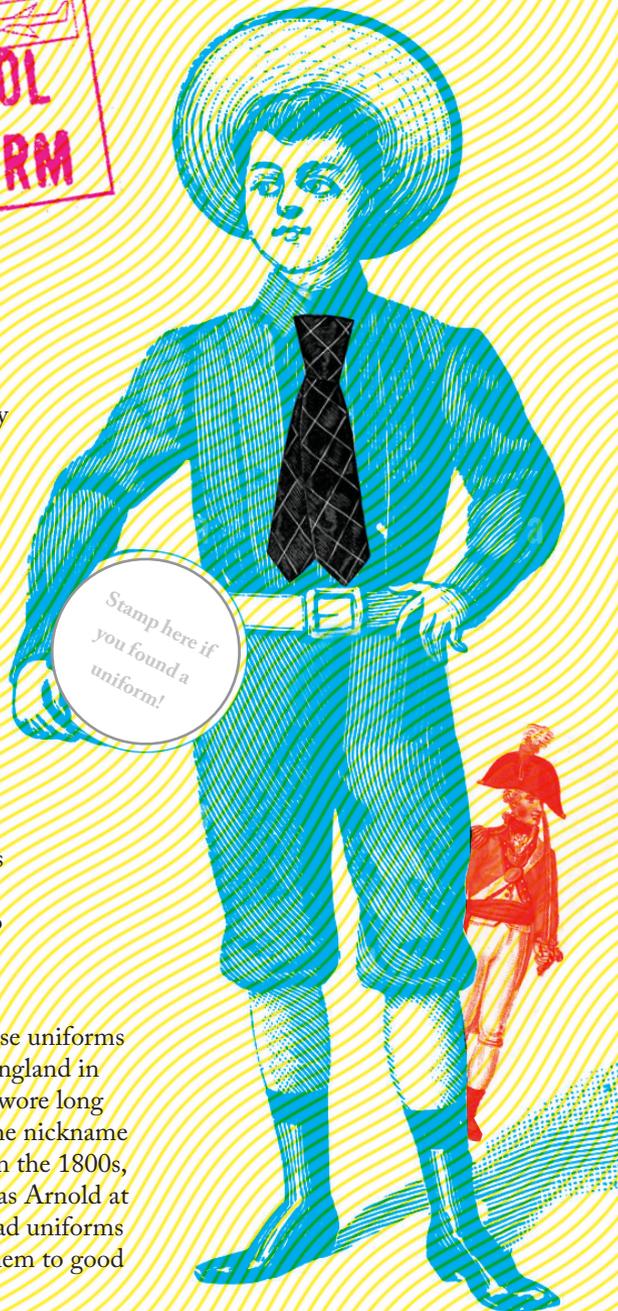
# SCHOOL UNIFORM

Here's a smart (and slightly itchy) history story about school uniforms!

They didn't start as a fashion choice, they actually grew out of military clothing (military is a term used to describe the army, air force and navy).

Soldiers wore matching outfits to show discipline and teamwork, and schools copied the idea because they wanted their pupils to seem that way too.

One of the first places to use uniforms was Christ's Hospital in England in the 1500s, where students wore long blue coats, earning them the nickname "Bluecoat School." Later, in the 1800s, famous headteacher Thomas Arnold at Rugby School helped spread uniforms to other schools, linking them to good behaviour and pride.



British-style schools were set up in colonies all over Africa. Going to school there was quite different from school today. Many kids wore neat uniforms like British students, and lessons were often taught in English, even if it wasn't their first language. The school day was usually strict, with rules about sitting quietly, standing for teachers and lining up before class. Some schools had assemblies with prayers or songs.

Your parents might buy your uniform from a supermarket like Sainsbury's, Tesco or Asda. It can cost £300 or more per child each year! (That's probably why you're always being moaned at for a dirty jumper or something). Specialist shops sell them too and many schools do second-hand swaps to save money.



Uniforms were meant to create order and show connection to British education. **BUT** they also sometimes did other things too...

Investigations in 2015 and 2019 revealed workers producing uniforms for Sainsbury's and Tesco in Bangladesh were working over 70 hours a week and earning as little as £51 a month, far below the recommended living wage.

There's also an environmental side. Globally, the clothing industry produces about 10% of the world's carbon emissions, which is more than international flights and shipping combined!

Fast fashion (cheap clothes made quickly) creates huge waste, about 92 million tonnes globally each year. Reusing uniforms or buying durable ones helps protect the planet.

So next time you put on a blazer or tie, remember: it's not just school clothing, it's linked to history, identity, and even the planet.

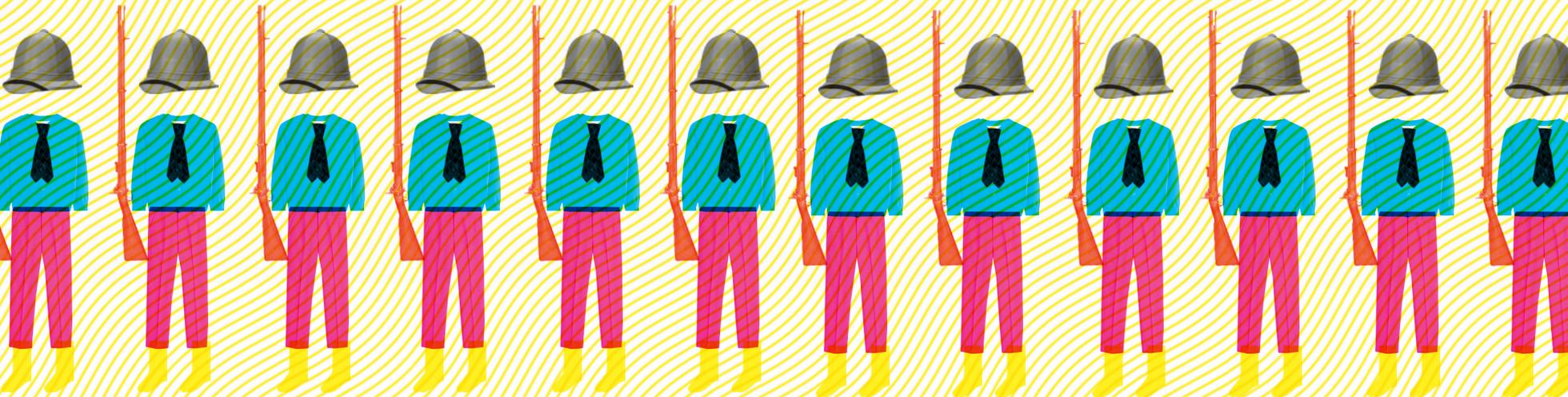
Also, at least everyone looks equally awkward on sports day.

**Today**, wearing a school uniform can be helpful because it makes everyone look similar, so you feel like part of a team and don't worry about fashion or brands. It can save time in the morning and sometimes costs less than lots of outfits.

But on the flip side, uniforms can make it harder to show your identity, like your favourite colours or styles. Some uniforms also treat gender in strict ways, which may not fit everyone. Since uniforms grew from colonial traditions, maybe it's time to reconsider them and design flexible, inclusive options that everyone can be proud to wear.

HOW DO YOU FEEL WHEN YOU WEAR IT?

*The hats you might have seen are called Pith Helmets*



**CRICKET**

Stamp here if  
you found a  
cricket bat!!



### HOWZAT?!

Cricket is a game played between two teams of 11 players. One team bats to score runs by hitting a ball and running between things called wickets, while the other team bowls and fields to try to get them out. Matches can last a few hours or even several days in traditional formats!



At first, cricket was mostly played by rich people in England, especially in private schools and clubs. But over time, it spread to both rich and poor communities, especially in colonies, where soldiers, teachers, and officials introduced it. It was especially popular in places like Australia and India.

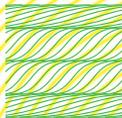
Around 2.5 billion people follow cricket now, making it one of the most popular sports on Earth. International cricket is also played by millions of people worldwide, with over 100 countries in the International Cricket Council.

From a British perspective, one of the biggest rivalries is between the England cricket team and the Australia cricket team. They compete for The Ashes, a famous trophy dating back to 1882, when England lost at home and a newspaper joked English cricket had “died.”

Huge tournaments like the Cricket World Cup attract billions of viewers.

Fun cricket facts: a cricket ball can travel over 150 km/h, and matches can last from three hours (T20) to five days (Test cricket)! The longest ever recorded cricket match lasted 14 days in 1939!

**BUT**, the “Gentleman’s Game” was more than running between 2 sets of sticks and hitting a (very hard) ball with another stick. It had a whole other use back in the mists of time...



Cricket was viewed by the British and their colonial counterparts as the perfect thing to help 'civilise' the people and the countries they took over.

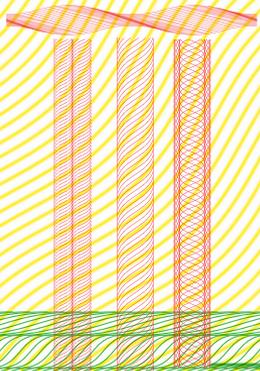
You might have read the word 'civilisation' earlier in your hunt for objects. To 'civilise' means *'to help people or societies become more organized, educated, and polite. It involves teaching better manners, creating fair rules, and improving how people live, work, and treat each other, moving away from a rude or disorganized state.'*

Just the same as soap being used to clean away local people's identities, this time sport was used to promote the ideals of Empire. Read about the first Australian Aboriginal cricket team on the opposite page.

**In Australia**, the first Australian Aboriginal cricket team toured Britain in 1868. They were talented athletes, but they were also displayed to crowds almost like a curiosity or attraction, which might feel uncomfortable and unfair today.

Modern cricket is biggest in countries that were once part of the empire, especially India, where it is almost like a national passion. India's cricket league is watched by hundreds of millions of fans, showing how a sport from empire times became something people made their own.

WOULD IT  
BE OK TO  
DO THIS  
TODAY?



## ARRIVAL OF THE BLACK CRICKETERS.

Since the late ingenious George Martin brought Deerfoot from his assistants to Europeans, and the only language of which they participate with so much curiosity and interest as that of the Black Cricketers from Australia.

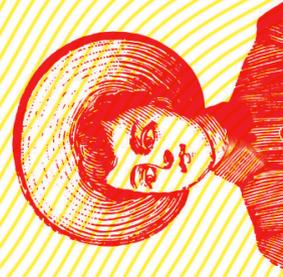
They are perfectly civilised, having been brought up in the bush to agricultural pursuits, and have a perfect knowledge of English.

# QUIZ!

1. How many cups of tea do brits drink a day?
2. If you wash your hands with soap, how much does it reduce the risk of getting sick?
3. How much forest was lost for palm oil in 2022 per minute?
4. How much can a family spend on school uniform per child per year?
5. How much sugar do people in the UK eat per year?
6. How many slaves could ship called 'The Brooke' carry?
7. How many tonnes of waste clothing does 'Fast Fashion' create each year?
8. When was the longest recorded cricket match?
9. In what year was the Aboriginal Cricket Team brought to the UK?
10. What was the first name of Mr Tate, the sugar guy?

# ANSWERS

1. 165 million cups a day.
2. 400%
3. 11 football fields PER MINUTE.
4. It can cost £300 or more per child each year!
5. Around 30-35kg per year.
6. 609.
7. About 92 million tonnes globally each year.
8. 14 days.
9. 1868.
10. Henry.



35  
MILLION  
SQUARE  
KM!

400  
MILLION  
PEOPLE!

This was the British Empire at its "height" on the early 20th century. And these are just a few of the things we found that have roots in histories, just imagine what else there is!

Keep exploring!



30-40  
TRILLION  
FROM INDIA  
ALONE



Why do all the maps you ever see have the UK at the centre?  
It's because the British were the first to mass produce them and wanted to be in the middle.

When you hear Middle East, Far East, Western/Eastern, it's all colonial language based on putting Britain slap bang in the middle.



Ever wondered where your stuff *really* comes from? Like, history-level back, before your grandparents were even born (and before phones were smart)?

Every time you wash your hands, eat a snack, or pull on your favourite hoodie, you're part of a giant story web without even noticing. Lots of the things around you travelled from far-away places, made by people you've never met. If your socks could talk, they'd probably say, "I'm toe-tally knackered".

Many of these stories began during a time called the British Empire, when Britain ruled over lots of other places for hundreds of years and, spoiler alert, it didn't always treat people very kindly. Those choices still affect the world today.

Now the world is more connected than ever. Music, games, trends, zoom across the planet in seconds. But can they also help us connect to the past?

In this book, you'll go on a journey without leaving your house, discovering hidden histories in the everyday things you barely notice.

Ready? Grab an adult (they're coming too) and let's go!

# Next iteration

Dear Parent letter?

Worth doing Riso in the next iteration or continue to refine content?

Is 5 objects enough?

More objects with more complex histories? (potato famine)

Refine narrative, make sure the structure of the tea spread is echoed elsewhere. Informal tone.

Dial up the 'passportyness' Sticker?

Boarding card, could that have a function?

ID section at the back

Swirly writing for intro?

Is the guilloche doing enough?

Needs colophon and referencing

Refine front cover, needs to be simpler, put a sans serif inside?

Corner punch at home (hard to access Publicatic...)

Perforation message?

Foiling - takes ages, maybe wait til Projections 2? (£££)

Presentation - ziploc of some kind to reference security airport bags? Colours if poss

Contrast old imagery with new, does it need it?



# Testing

To follow up with local school

Worth doing the market?

Depends on Projections 2

# References

Agreed to test

