



drnraven · 1w



A PROJECT IS  
NOT A PLAN  
IT IS A POSITION  
YOU TAKE  
PP094/DR/04/04/26

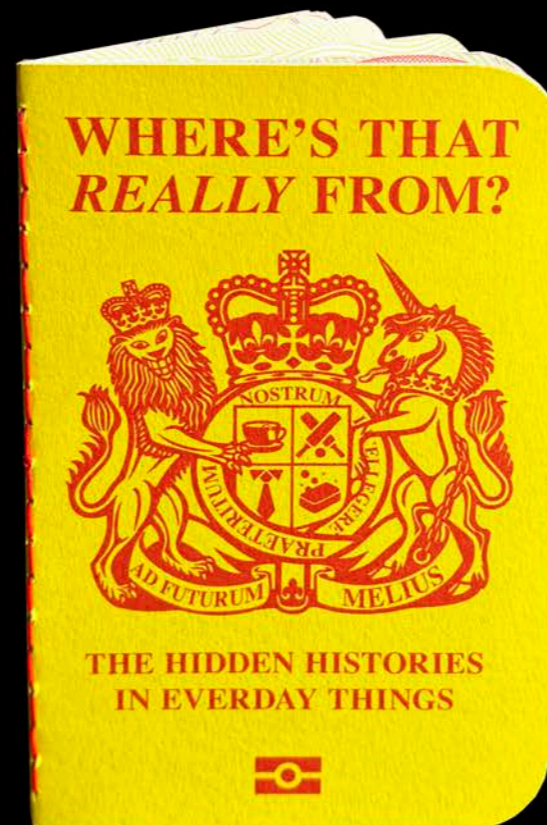
## **Rearticulated Enquiry:**

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

## **Intention:**

Reframe colonialism for parents *and* their children using the histories of familiar objects. Connect their origins in the British Empire with contemporary issues such as fast fashion and consumerism in a shared learning space at a politically polarised moment. Encourage acknowledgement and positive consumer habits. Compliment the national curriculum and address my own inherent biases using co-design with relevant parties, with a view to publish after MA.

# Point of departure for Projections<sup>2</sup>



DEFINED AUDIENCE: children (9-12) and their parents.

DEFINED CONTEXT: Users hunt for objects around a home that contain hidden colonial histories, including brand names such as Tate & Lyle Sugar. When they are found, the passport is stamped. Potentially issued through a school as homework.

The narrative contextualises the object today with issues such as fast fashion and deforestation, linking the histories with contemporary issues, in an attempt to encourage acknowledgement and ethical consumer habits.

Front cover, subverting and inverting a post-Brexit passport colour palette and national coat of arms. The latin reads 'Understand Our Past for a Better Future'. Printed on 120gsm white paper and 300gsm Daler Rowney Dresden Yellow card for cover. Saddle stitched in contrasting red with rounded corners using Vaesen corner cutter. The publication is brightly colored and oversized at 129 x 198mm, previous iterations have held a foil cover.

The publication is presented as an activity pack, including the passport publication, stamp and an introductory letter to parents. All presented in a clear plastic container reminiscent of airport security bags.





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'.\*

2 SUGARS PLEASE.



Tea first arrived in Britain in the 1600s, 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. PG, Tetley, Twinings were all born from the British Empire.



In 1848, The East India Company (a powerful English business) 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 onditions *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?

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

Stamp your answer here

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



# Audience: industry, school and local families



Esther Waller  
Publishing Manager

Chicken House Books, Frome



Tina Gaisford-Waller  
Manager and bookseller  
Hunting Raven Books, Frome



Gabby Offer, Head of English.  
Adam Reynolds, History Lead.  
Oakfield Academy, Frome



Samantha Williams  
Founder of BookLove.  
Multicultural Book  
Carnival, London.

**QUESTIONNAIRE** Beth + Bella

Please answer these questions together, it shouldn't take long. Thank you so much for your help!

What is the British Empire? Difficult countries ruled by Britain	Was the text easy to read? Yes
Did you learn about any of this stuff at school? Yes - slave trade - sugar - cotton	Was the picture clear? Yes
What do you think this book does? educates you	Would you like to look for more stuff? Yes
How does it make you feel? more educated	Would you like to write in the book itself, maybe have more stuff to do in there? Yes
Is it clear how to use the stamp with the book? Yes	What do you think this book's message is? Everything has a story and educates you about British history
Was the best good? Yes	What do you think of Empire now? they did not consider other people and rule.
Name one fact that you learned (no peeking): Each year in the UK people eat 30-35kg each year	<b>JUST THE GROWN-UP:</b> This book is intended to engage both you and a child in a shared space for learning about a tricky subject. Please write on the back whether you think it achieved this goal and any other thoughts you have. All feedback welcome!

Bella (12) and Beth

**QUESTIONNAIRE** Betty + Polly

Please answer these questions together, it shouldn't take long. Thank you so much for your help!

What is the British Empire? Territories that Britain ruled traditions & products that they get others to make	Was the text easy to read? Easy to read but some small print notes were hard to read as well as the writing in the bottom of the stamp page. Yes straight away.
Did you learn about any of this stuff at school? Yes I have - far trade - included African - trading	Was the picture clear? Yes
What do you think this book does? It teaches you about secret history that ties British different subjects together.	Would you like to look for more stuff? I think if I were to do it again I would prefer it to be more of a challenge.
How does it make you feel? It makes me feel surprised and also a bit upset about the deforestation and slavery.	Would you like to write in the book itself, maybe have more stuff to do in there? Maybe some more questions about the subjects, if you were a soap maker how would you advertise your soap?
Is it clear how to use the stamp with the book? Yes it is	What do you think this book's message is? To learn about important history that are hidden but should be known.
Was the best good? Yes it was fun	What do you think of Empire now? I think that the Empire can be cruel towards the environment and also people like the slaves.
Name one fact that you learned (no peeking): The longest cricket game lasts 19 days and 14 hours & 39 minutes. Chopped 11 fastballs per minute.	<b>JUST THE GROWN-UP:</b> This book is intended to engage both you and a child in a shared space for learning about a tricky subject. Please write on the back whether you think it achieved this goal and any other thoughts you have. All feedback welcome!

Betty (12) and Polly

**QUESTIONNAIRE** Ella + Rosey

Please answer these questions together, it shouldn't take long. Thank you so much for your help!

What is the British Empire? A group of countries controlled by one.	Was the text easy to read? Yes it could be bigger.
Did you learn about any of this stuff at school? Yes and no. <sup>about the</sup> slaves but not the Empire.	Was the picture clear? Yes
What do you think this book does? To teach and show the impact of the Empire.	Would you like to look for more stuff? NO
How does it make you feel? not sure happened before I was born.	Would you like to write in the book itself, maybe have more stuff to do in there? Yes
Is it clear how to use the stamp with the book? Yes	What do you think this book's message is? To tell people about the empire.
Was the best good? Nice idea Yes.	What do you think of Empire now? Never really thought of it old fashioned / out dated.
Name one fact that you learned (no peeking): How much palm oil is used. 11 football fields per min!	<b>JUST THE GROWN-UP:</b> This book is intended to engage both you and a child in a shared space for learning about a tricky subject. Please write on the back whether you think it achieved this goal and any other thoughts you have. All feedback welcome!

Ella (12) and Rosey

**QUESTIONNAIRE** Ruby + Carly

Please answer these questions together, it shouldn't take long. Thank you so much for your help!

What is the British Empire? This book tells you more about everyday items.	Was the text easy to read? Yes.
Did you learn about any of this stuff at school? Yes.	Was the picture clear? Yes.
What do you think this book does? This book tells you more about everyday items.	Would you like to look for more stuff? Maybe a couple more.
How does it make you feel? It makes me feel quite shocked about how things used to be.	Would you like to write in the book itself, maybe have more stuff to do in there? Yes.
Is it clear how to use the stamp with the book? Yes its very clear.	What do you think this book's message is? Teach us about history.
Was the best good? Yeah.	What do you think of Empire now? Teach us about history.
Name one fact that you learned (no peeking): We drink 160 million cups of tea.	<b>JUST THE GROWN-UP:</b> This book is intended to engage both you and a child in a shared space for learning about a tricky subject. Please write on the back whether you think it achieved this goal and any other thoughts you have. All feedback welcome!

Ruby (12) and Carly

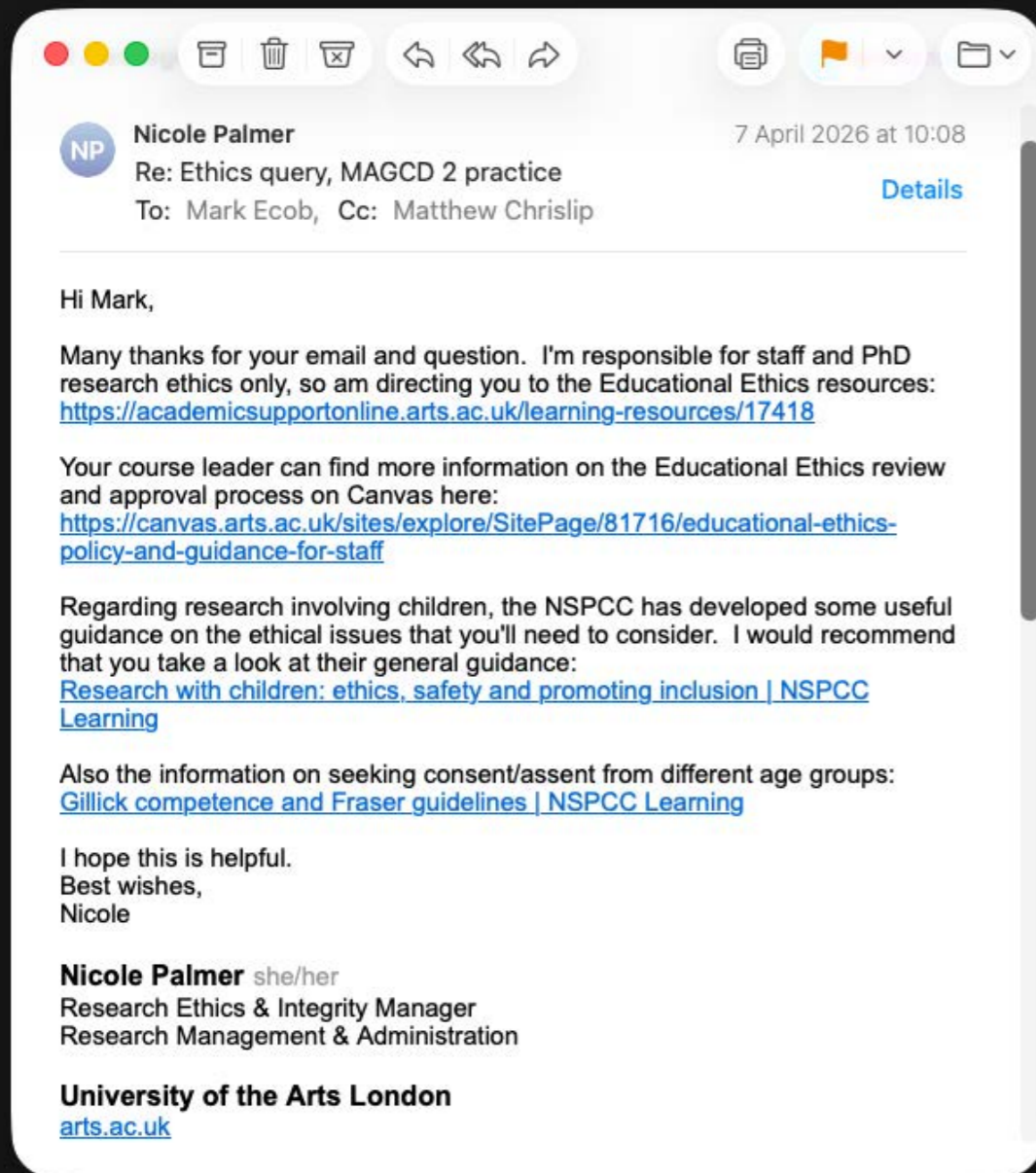
**QUESTIONNAIRE** Sam + Hazel

Please answer these questions together, it shouldn't take long. Thank you so much for your help!

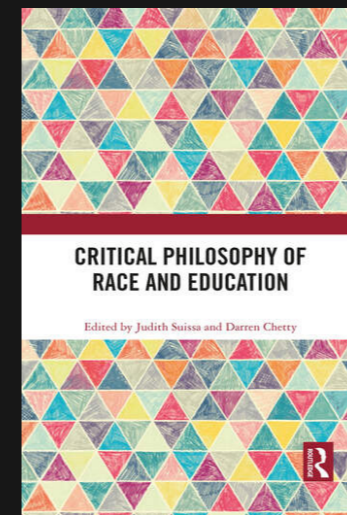
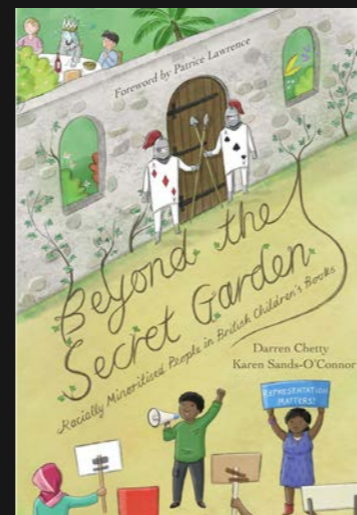
What is the British Empire? Collection of countries ruled by Britain.	Was the text easy to read? Yes! Good amount of facts on each topic. Liked how the second page was set up to describe the specific history but also what can be done - fair trade etc.
Did you learn about any of this stuff at school? Hazel learnt about the slave trade	Was the picture clear? We enjoyed the pictures! Think the design as a passport is great.
What do you think this book does? Makes you think, ask questions, be curious.	Would you like to look for more stuff? That would be good... e.g. more about the ingredients of our soap, or how at what time your tea is from.
How does it make you feel? A little guilty!	Would you like to write in the book itself, maybe have more stuff to do in there? By some.
Is it clear how to use the stamp with the book? Yes!	What do you think this book's message is? That its important to understand the history of others.
Was the best good? Yes!	What do you think of Empire now? Teach us about history.
Name one fact that you learned (no peeking): How much deforestation occurs in palm oil production every year.	<b>JUST THE GROWN-UP:</b> This book is intended to engage both you and a child in a shared space for learning about a tricky subject. Please write on the back whether you think it achieved this goal and any other thoughts you have. All feedback welcome!

Hazel (12) and Sam

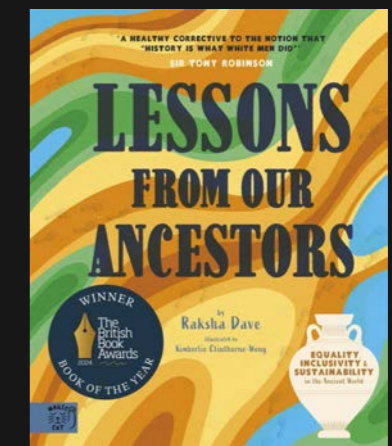
# Research over the Easter break



UAL Ethics Manager



Dr Darren Chetty,  
Author, Beyond the Secret Garden.  
Teacher, lecturer, writer and editor with research interests in education, philosophy, racism, children's literature.  
University College, London



Raksha Dave,  
archaeologist, TV presenter and  
president of the Council for  
British Archaeology

# Universal Findings

- Objects based concept working, approved by Publisher, Author, Bookseller, Users.
- Shared learning space works, makes parents reflect as well as the kids.
- Offline printed 'passport' is appropriate, taking kids away from a digital activity and engaging with physical objects in a familiar space.
- Governing principle should be kids ENGAGING, hopefully with parents. Enough of an enforced moment. The fun end of homework!
- Layout is engaging. Reconsider font size and legibility against the background for young dyslexic readers.
- *'Informality that I think works really well for the tone of the text'*
- Include the note for parents WITHIN the publication itself.
- 'Then and now' approach that links issues as a result of Empire, is viable. Shopping example. Could be reinforced.
- A common thread of wanting to go deeper, increase the number of objects or broaden the range of activities. The publication's explicit positions on environment and consumer responsibility made one parent suggest that further investigation of the objects' labels could encourage deeper engagement and more ethical buying habits.
- Positioning - should this be a commercially available book, a guerrilla publication for kids, or produced through schools? Each pathway will have ethical, practical and legal considerations. To approach school for their advice.
- Consider opposite audiences who may be reading this, left or right politically, young or old, what is their heritage? Language needs to be carefully considered to avoid backlash but also fair. For example, description of Bangladesh, inclusion of people of colour in vintage adverts. Be conscious of unintentional 'othering' using visuals, for example camels to represent Egypt. Example of my unconscious bias.
- Reevaluate slavery triangle terminology, as it's under debate at the moment. 'Trafficking' for example, may not be appropriate. Hints at commodifying people.
- Remove sensitive advert images in there, like Pears soap. Other historical imagery ok. Lean into collage/comedy?
- Include further reading or links or interesting places to visit for readers who want to dig further into the history or issues raised.

Are there specific parts of the national curriculum it can tie in with?

- Copyright/trademark/legal/permissions implications of images used - especially crown copyright for coat of arms, the brands that aren't necessarily painted in a positive light, and Fairtrade logo etc.
- The text could do with a copy-edit and thorough proofread, 2 x typos
- Broad understanding in both children and parents of the purpose of the publication. Words like 'guilty', 'important', 'shocked', 'surprised', 'upset' and 'impact' were shared by the children, showing engagement with the historic weight of the subject.
- They also said that the stamping was 'fun', they wanted more activities and in greater depth.
- Ethics angle for any workshop. Permission through UAL could be lengthy, approached through Matthew and response was vague. Permission from school, lengthy for a six week project. Practical consideration
- Production depends on the intention. Should this be cheaply produced if sent to schools, using just a school printer, folding etc. Part of a pack?
- Commission stamps? What would they say? Expressions like 'you've explored the past, well done!'
- Consider another professional evaluation of this, just stick to industry contacts or produce next iteration and get it through the school? Book tokens as a reward, for example.

## SUMMARY

**The project is engaging, impactful, and well-received, with strong potential as an educational tool—but it needs refinement in accessibility, sensitivity, depth, and strategic positioning before moving forward.**

- Deepen content (more objects, activities, stronger "then vs now" links)
- Improve accessibility (font, readability) and remove unsuitable visuals
- Refine language and imagery for sensitivity and inclusivity
- Add engagement (interactive elements, further reading)
- Clarify audience and distribution (e.g. schools vs commercial)
- Check legal/permissions (images, logos)
- Decide production approach (low-cost vs high-quality)
- Proofread and test next iteration

# Stuff to take forward

**Offline  
publication**

**Deeper  
engagement**

**Watch out for  
'othering' and  
subconscious  
biases**

**School  
framework,  
'instant  
ethics'**

**Objects  
conceit**

**Connection  
THEN and  
NOW**

**Shared  
learning  
space**

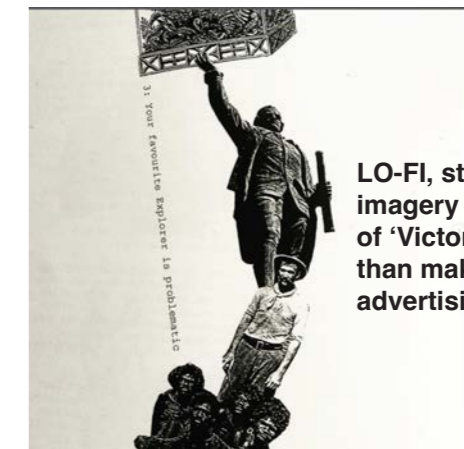
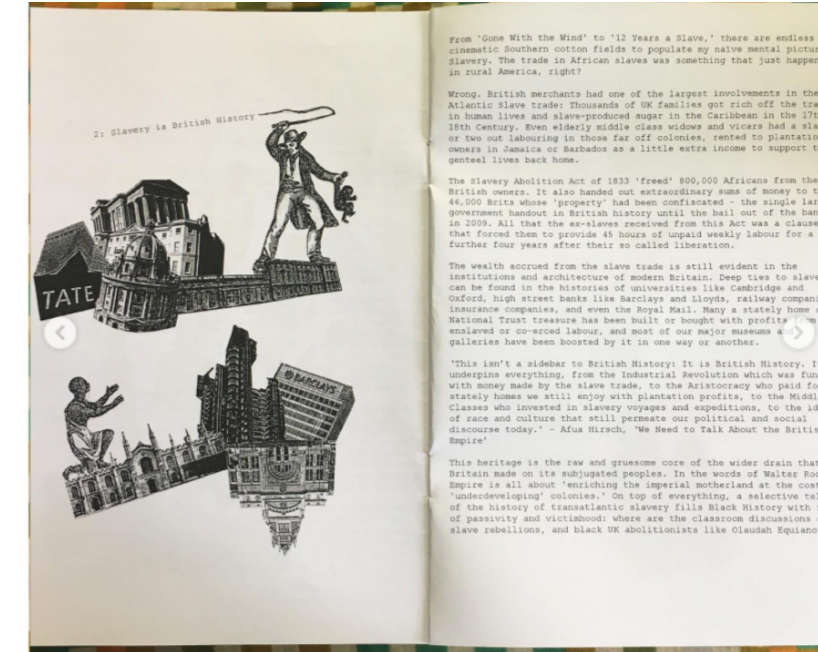
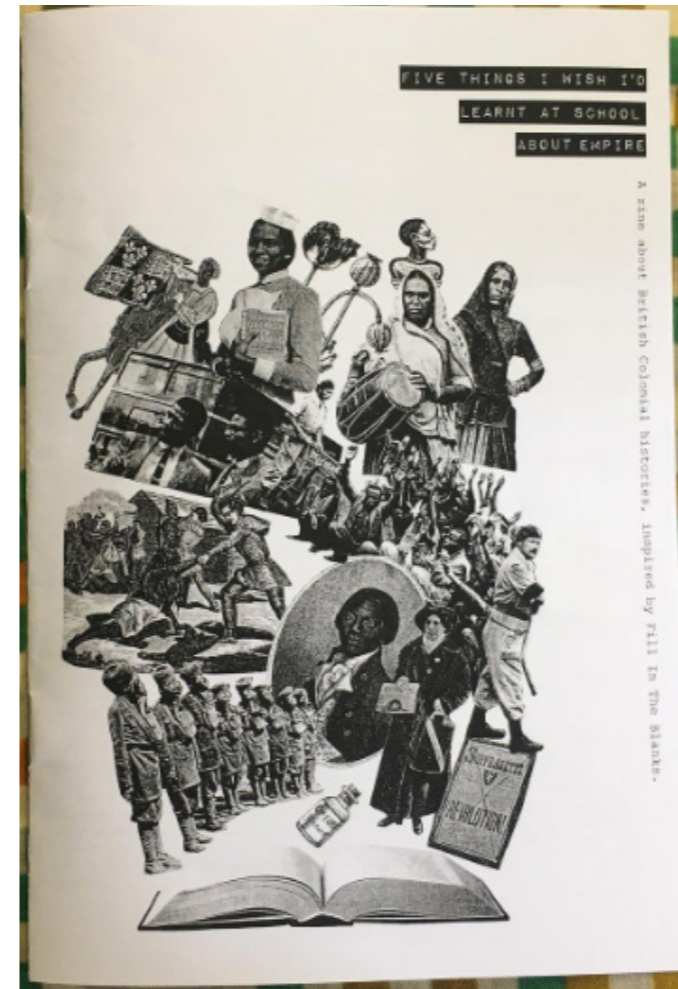
**Professional  
context**

# Projections<sup>2</sup> x 3\*

\*I don't want to push this somewhere new for the sake of it, let the findings lead the choices

## I. HISTORY HOMEWORK PUBLICATION for circulation through Oakfield Academy

- Refined iteration, taking in feedback, simplified, deeper engagement
- Take in feedback and circulate through local school, **ready made ethics process!**
- Consider wider circulation and costs to schools, could this be lo-fi and low cost? Photocopied? Much simpler design, more like a foldable zine that's cheap and easy to produce.
- **Keeps shared learning space**, which is important for generational learning (this was the starting point)
- Travelling through time to knowledge theme reinforced
- Testing and evaluation **framework already established**
- Time-friendly. Offline. **I think this will do more good.**



Irregular Zines. (2020) "Five Things I Wish I'd Learnt At School About Empire" [Instagram]. 2020. Available at: [https://www.instagram.com/p/B\\_9q-1SA9Sw?hl=en&img\\_index=1](https://www.instagram.com/p/B_9q-1SA9Sw?hl=en&img_index=1) (Accessed: February 2026).

LO-FI, still use historic imagery but make it kind of 'Victoriana fun' rather than making a point about advertising of the time

**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 things like conflict are involved.

They've been the elephant in the room (something that's too big to hide but is ignored because it seems 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?

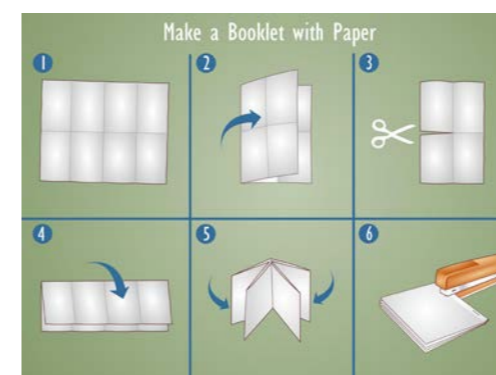
Look for these circles for your stamp

Ok, you're going on a hunt around your home for stuff like sugar, soap and school uniform.

When you find one, stamp in the circles, and read about hidden histories inside them.

SUGAR, TATE & LYLE SUGAR, TEA, CRICKET, PEARS INVENTION, SOAP, SCHOOL UNIFORM

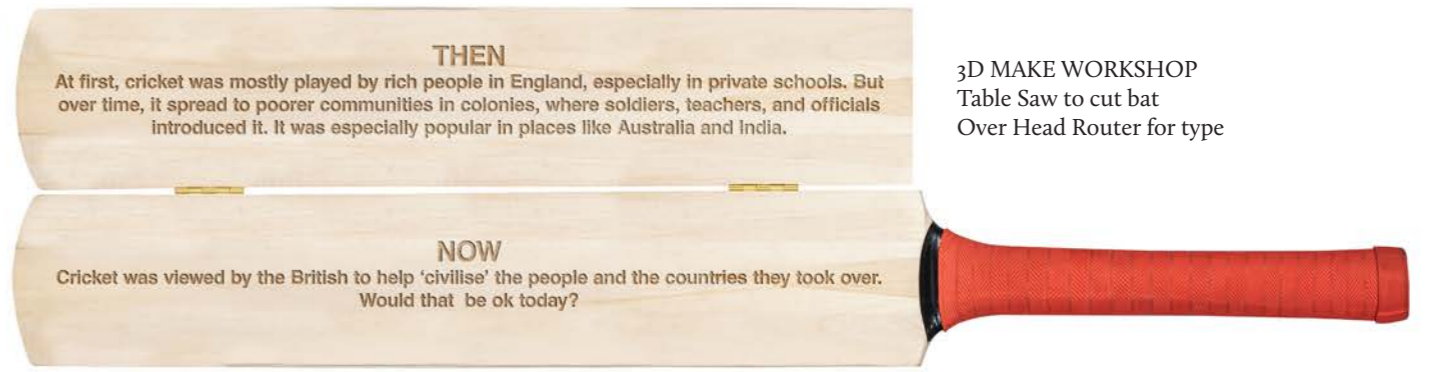
ADULTS – look at the objects together and talk about what their hidden histories can mean to you both. Ok, ready? Turn the page and we'll make a start...



Foldable passport? can it work so its copyable at a school, foldable, the kids can colour it fun, make it theirs?

## 2. SCHOOL WORKSHOP KIT

- Workshop kit for a school environment where objects are investigated by pupils around a classroom or hall.
- Familiar objects are embellished somehow with hidden labelling.
- Children investigate, find and record the knowledge and return to the teacher for a stamp. Passport is kept as a souvenir and record of the knowledge.
- This would be at the expense of the shared learning space, which is against the intent and would answer the question less effectively.
- Large map in the space.
- Ethics and permissions will cause delays here.



3D MAKE WORKSHOP  
Table Saw to cut bat  
Over Head Router for type



Iron-on transfer paper at home



Exhibition designers: <https://www.designpenguin.co.uk/portfolio/the-elephant-in-the-room/#:~:text=The%20display%20tackles%20subjects%20that,to%20provide%20thoughts%20and%20of%20feedback.>

Sequences, labels, informal language...

The Elephant in the Room (2026) [Exhibition]. Birmingham Museum, and Art Gallery. 10th May 2026 onwards. Available at: <https://www.birminghammuseums.org.uk/birmingham-museum-and-art-gallery/highlights/the-elephant-in-the-room> (Accessed: April 2026).



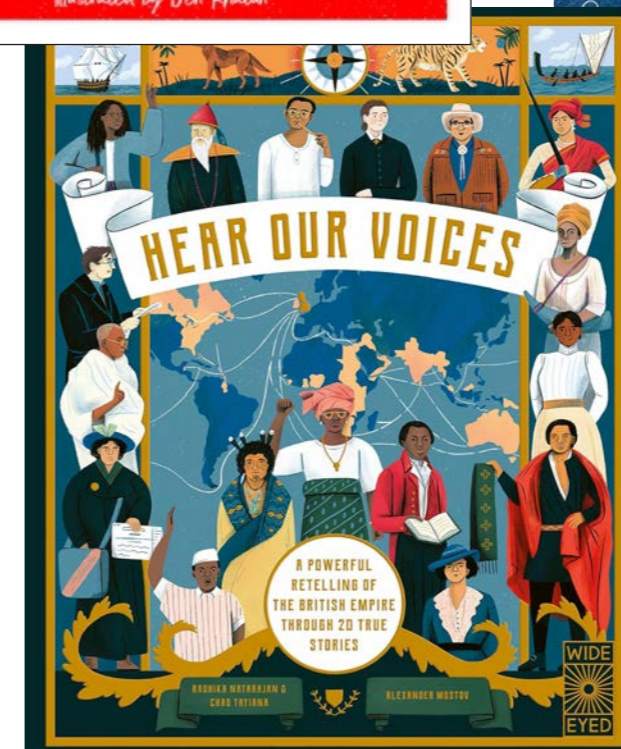
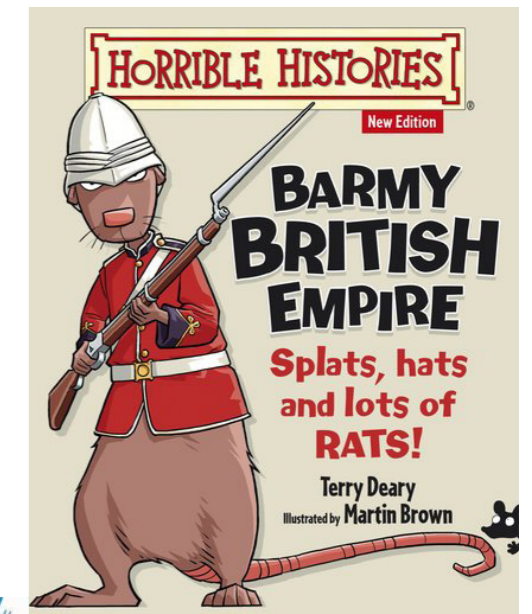
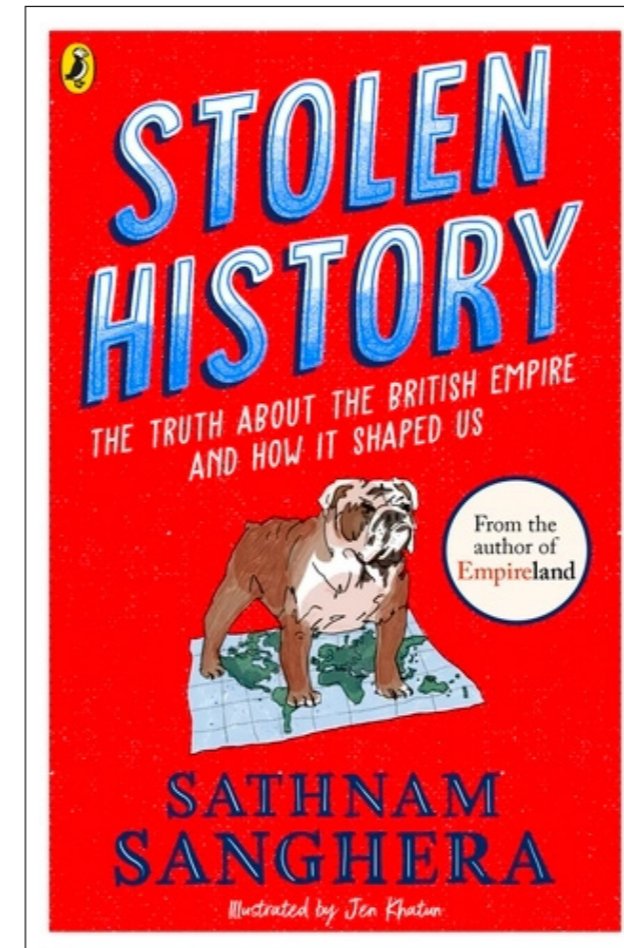
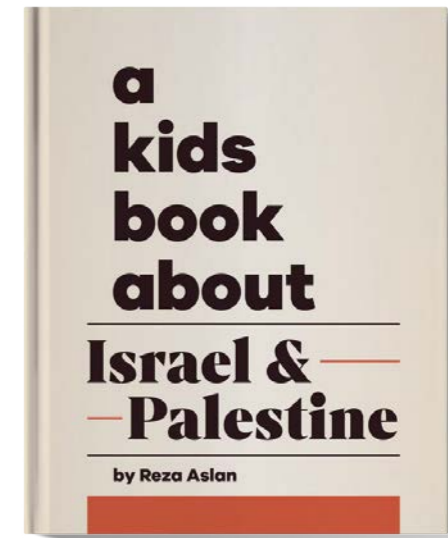
Could the space work around a map that gives the size of the objects' journeys?

Interesting use of crates, wood etc to imply travelling and movement

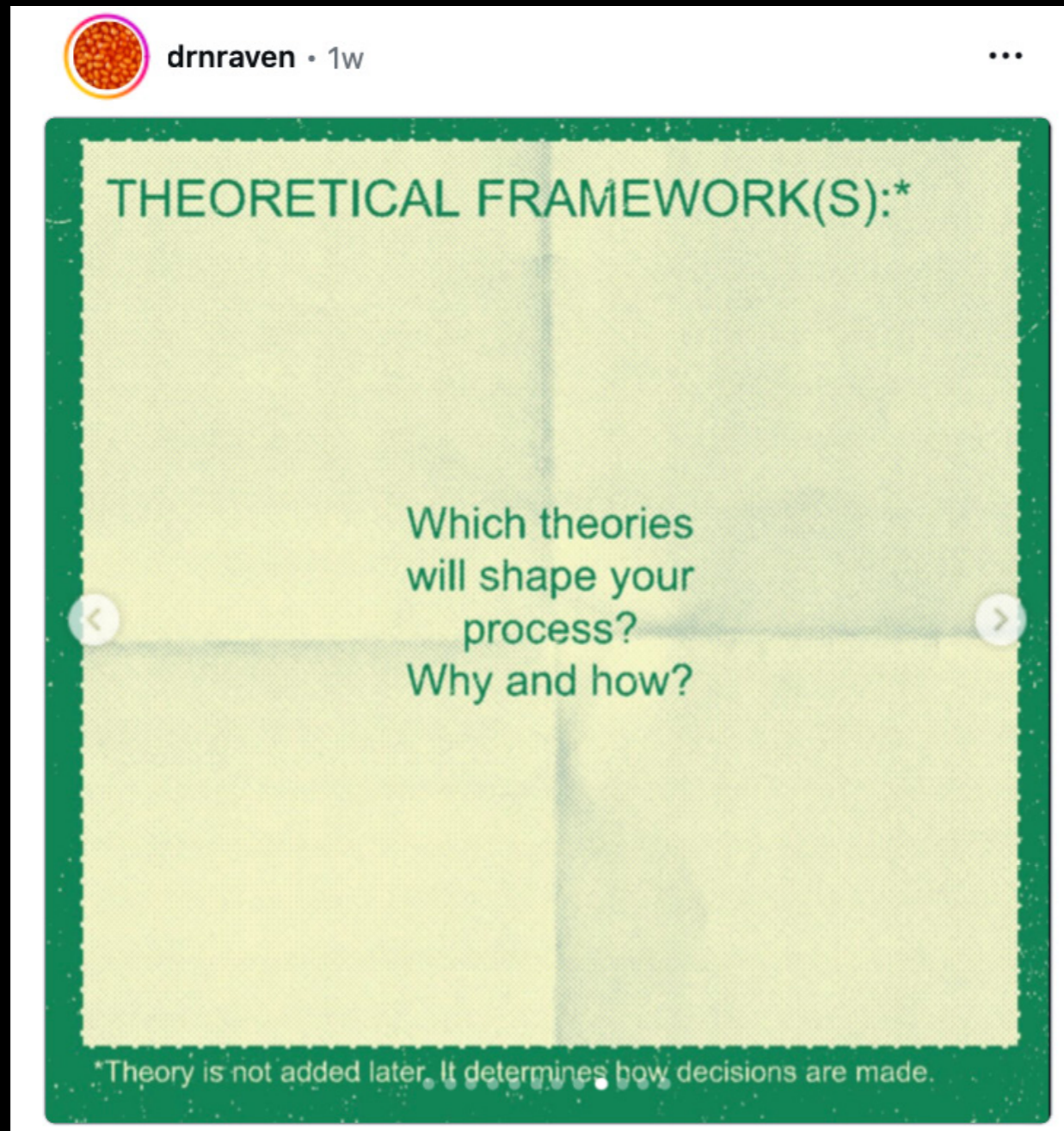


### 3. RESOLVED COMMERCIAL BOOK FOR PUBLICATION

- Encouragement from Industry contacts to publish
- Consider rights and copyright more specifically, *losing the soft activism angle*
- Consider commercial positioning, retail, high quality printing
- Longer and more integrated publication, hardback?
- High end production feels wrong, fluffing this up to be something that it protests against (consumerism, responsibility)
- Loses the shared learning space, would this direction be an ethical compromise?



# Some questions...



...do I go deeper with what I have, or change it up?