

Can we reframe colonialism for children and parents using familiar objects, to encourage critical thinking and ethical consumer habits?

Last tutorial:

- Step back from roughs before getting to the rest
- 2 more for next week
- Consider Riso again, will bring stamped, vibrant quality
- Add sections, need to be clearer
- Contents inside binder?
- Page numbers
- Number the publications?
- (• Mini reader draft and Proj. Contribution for next week)

Extra tutorial Matthew C:

- Prioritise design over production
- Add guiding information (contents etc), consider flow
- Its giving travel and atlas more than passport, could that be reinforced?
- Writing to focus on contexts of passport over its design



WHAT'S INSIDE?

1 - Intro

2-3 - History

4-5 - Investigate

6-7 - Connect

8 - Change

*That's Cockney Rgyming Slang, an old language from East London. So 'Rosie Lee' rhymes with 'Tea'. Get it?

TEA



Teachers!
Stamp
here!



You know that drink that helps adults wake up? Builders love it, you can dunk biscuits in it. No, not coffee, the other one. Yep, a good cup of 'Rosie Lee'.*

Tea is over 4000 years old and comes from China, where people drank it because they liked it and it was good for them. Traders brought it to Britain by ship in the 1600s where it became popular with rich people because of a royal influencer called Catherine of Braganza (she was from Portugal and loved her tea milky).



HISTORY

Many people think of India when they think of tea today, that's because it was a huge thing during something called the **BRITISH EMPIRE**. That was a big collection of lands and countries that were ruled or controlled by the United Kingdom many years ago (check the Glossary Pass at the front of the folder if you're unsure of what that means)

IT LASTED OVER 400 YEARS

BIGGER THAN THE ROMAN EMPIRE

25% OF EARTH'S SURFACE

458 MILLION PEOPLE

WORTH £35 TRILLION



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** (modern day Sri Lanka). You might see those names on the front of tea boxes in the supermarket.

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). They even went to war over it, twice. And then they sent a Scottish Gardener (?!) named Robert Fortune to China in disguise (in between the wars) to literally steal tea plants.

You could say he was a **Tea Leaf***.

After that, the Brits took the tea to grow it in places they controlled in the Empire. They made loads of money and made it into the thing we all drink today. Names like **Lipton**, **Twinings** and **Brooke Bond** were born.



*More of that Rhyming slang, this time it rhymes with 'Thief'.



Tea leaves are picked from a plant, dried, sometimes rolled or crushed and then packed up so people can put them in hot water to make tea.



Does it look like leaves?

What does it smell like?

What does it feel like?

What's the bag made of?

Now look at the packaging your tea came in, whatever the brand is. Spend a bit more time than you would normally, look at the detail. What is telling you? Fill in the questions below.

Is the tea production eco-friendly?

Where was the tea grown?

Does it saying anything about the people who picked it?

Can it be recycled?





Back in the British Empire, 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.

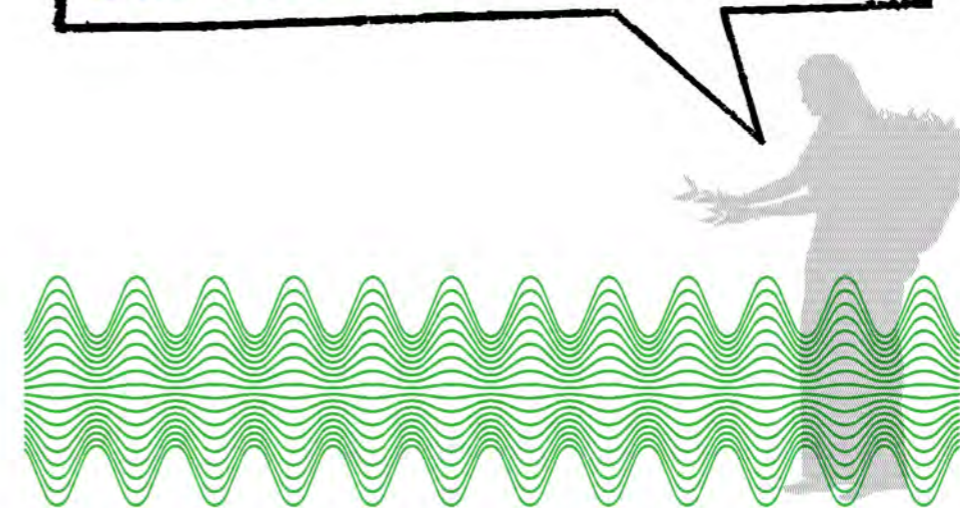
Local plantation workers, the people who picked the leaves, were often paid as little as 3p per day, worked 16-hour-straight and had few rights (that's the stuff that should automatically come with your job to protect you and your workmates). So the Brits were making their money by exploiting the workers.

What about today? Can you try and think of who picked the leaves you're holding now? How old are they? Where do they live? What was their day like?



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"The long horn from the tea factory calls us to work at 7am. I carry a special rucksack called a 'goniya' which carries the leaves after I pick them. I wear an extra layer made of sack to protect my legs, I carry a stick to check for holes and I don't wear shoes. We're told where to go by a 'Kangani' (they're in charge) and we pick leaves all day until 4.30pm with a break of 30 minutes. It doesn't matter if it's raining, hot or cold. We still go out. If we don't, we don't get paid. Mostly we work 6 days a week, except in the rainy season when we work every day. We have to collect about 20 kilos per day, which is about the same as 20 bags of sugar. We get paid about 1,750 Rupees a day, which is about £4."



In the UK, minimum wage is around £12, meaning for 8 hours work you'd be able to earn over £100 for 8 hours as an adult. Why is it so different?

It's because of global economic inequality (where some countries are richer than others). That has its roots in colonialism. When the British Empire controlled tea production, they got richer whilst the tea pickers got poorer. **So has anything really changed a century later?**

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You might think 'but I wasn't even born!'. That's right, but without knowing where we've come from and how it links to us, we can't make sure these things don't go on for another century.

So what can you do? Take a look at what you buy like tea and the other things you buy or use. Maybe ask some questions...

Today, names like PG Tips, who come from the British Empire, look to produce their tea sustainably and with people in mind. Use the QR codes to find out about things like Fairtrade and The Rainforest Alliance.

We have the power to buy things that are fair to the people that make them, not like the old colonisers who just took stuff.

So next time you're having a cuppa, have a think about how it got to you and how you're part of its journey.



WHAT'S NEXT?

2 sugars in your tea?

We'll be learning all about the sweet stuff next...

Grab an adult and go on a hunt
around your home for some tea.

Once you've found it, fill in the
questions and see how histories
inside these objects connect to
our lives today.



WHAT'S INSIDE?

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6-7 - Connect

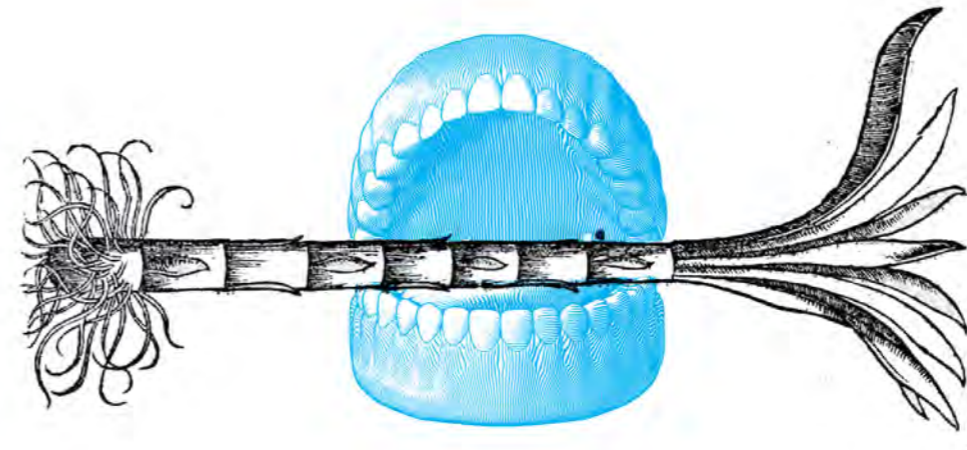
8 - Change

Sugar



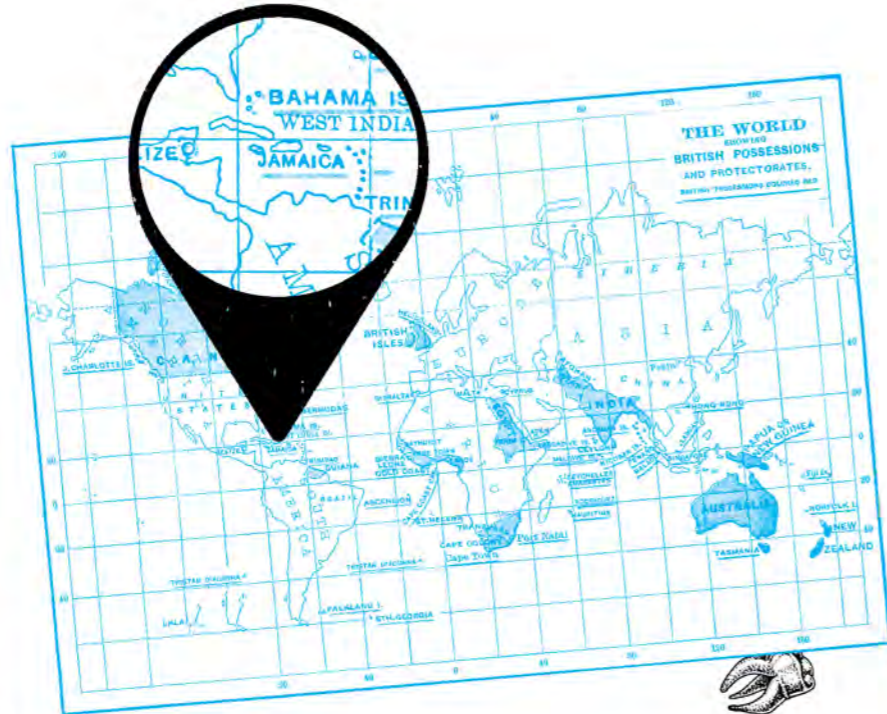
A giant wild grass from the south pacific. Sugar cane was first cultivated around 800 BC. It was known as "honey without bees" and used as medicine in India and Rome. Travellers helped it spread across East Asia, where traders discovered it and carried it to Europe.

Used to make a sweet white power that was 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!



HISTORY

The sweet stuff has played a major role in the growth of the British Empire since the 1600s. Originally from Asia, sugar cane was introduced to the Caribbean by European colonisers. It was farmed on large plantations (like the ones used for tea, remember?) on islands such as Barbados and **Jamaica**. The British took that idea from the Portuguese who'd been doing it in Brazil, so they weren't the only ones, and transformed these islands.



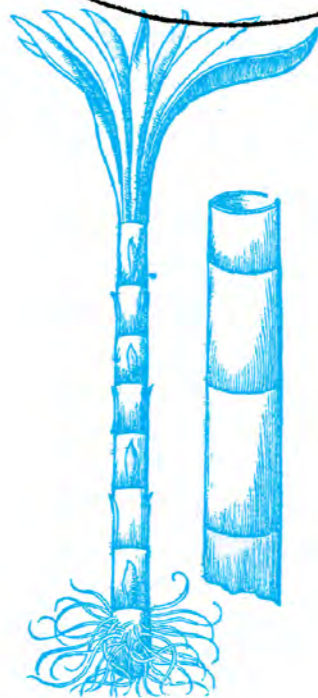
Jamaica was producing around 77,000 tons of sugar each year! A lot of it was sent to Britain which imported about 80% from these Caribbean colonies. Sugar made plantation owners very rich. By the late 1700s, the British sugar trade was worth millions of pounds each year, equal to billions of pounds today. Over time, sugar became less of a luxury item for the rich and more of a common ingredient in British food and drink (especially tea!). Back then, 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!



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



INVESTIGATE



It comes from sugar cane, a tall plant that looks like bamboo. It's cut, crushed and squeeze to get sweet juice which is cleaned and boiled until sugar crystals form.



OPEN UP THE BAG

What does it feel like?

What does it taste like?

What does it smell like?

What's the bag made of?

Now look at the packaging your sugar came in, whatever the brand is. Spend a bit more time than you would normally, look at the detail. **What is is telling you?** Fill in the questions below.

Is there any information about sustainability?

Where is the sugar cane grown?



How is the sugar cane produced?



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

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

First came the "Manufactured Run," when British-made goods were taken to Africa and exchanged for captured African people.

Next was the "Middle Passage". Those people were shipped to the Americas on vessels like The Brookes, which left Liverpool in 1781 and could carry up to 609 enslaved people in horrific conditions.

Finally, the "Home Run" brought goods produced by enslaved labour, sugar, rum and cotton, back to British ports.

Around 12.5 million people were forced onto ships; millions died because the journeys were so brutal.

The plantation bell rings at about 4 a.m. before sunrise. Breakfast is cornmeal porridge before walking to the cane fields. It's cooler to work in the morning before the sun gets hot at midday. We use special tools called 'billhooks' to cut cane, always watched by 'Overseers' who sit on horses. 12 hours of cutting leaves and carrying bundles of cane to the carts for crushing. Even though the plantation makes rich sugar for somewhere called Britain, we are not paid for our work. In the evening, after dark, we return to the huts to eat something like salted fish and yams with family who have all been working, even the youngest kids, before resting for a few short hours.



You might think that slavery is a thing of the past. But right now, almost 50 million people are trapped in slavery worldwide and roughly a quarter of all victims are children.



You might think 'This is just a bit of homework' or 'those were the olden days'. Yes, it happened a while ago, but slavery still happens and its hiding.

So what can you do? Take a look at what you buy that has sugar in it and the other things in the kitchen. Maybe ask some questions...



Today, many businesses like Tate & Lyle are examining their past and improving conditions in their supply chains (the journey products take to reach you). They work with organisations like Fairtrade and their own commitments such as Sustainably Refined 2040, which includes decarbonisation and ethical sourcing of their sugar.

As shoppers, we can help by choosing fair-trade products that aim to pay and treat workers properly.

So when you're munching a choccy biccyy LOADED with sugar, remember to ask who made your biccyy, and are they a nice bunch?

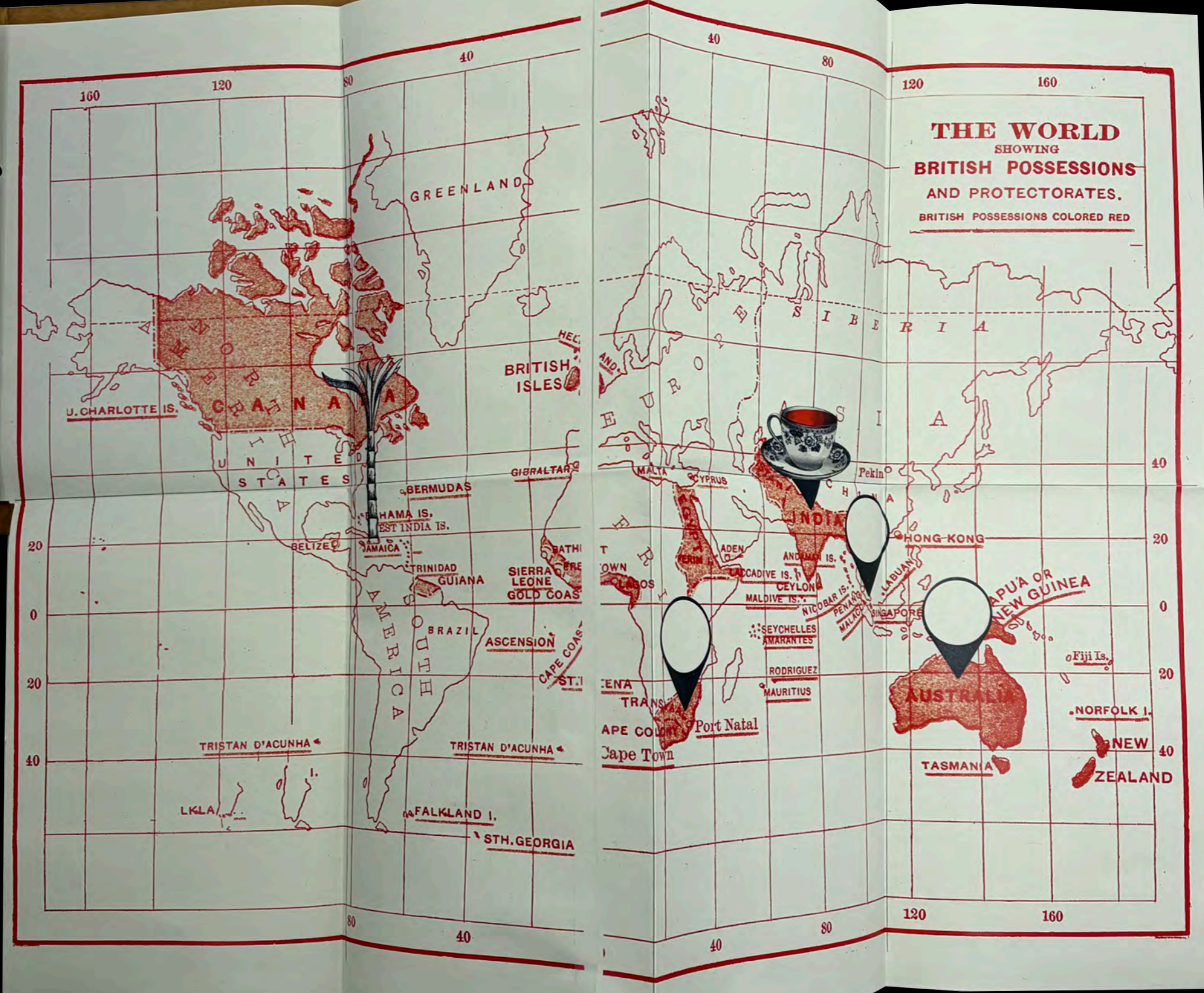


WHAT'S NEXT?

That was bittersweet.
Now, let's look at something cleaner... soap.

Grab an adult and go on a hunt
around your home for some sugar.

Once you've found it, fill in the
questions and see how histories
inside these objects connect to
our lives today.



Looking ahead:

- Riso booked for 29th May
- (• Zerox booked for 29th May)
- (• Bath-based Riso printer approached as backup)
- ~~Professional photography booking 28th May~~
- 21st May – all 5 booklets drafted, ring binder hand stamped with copy and front cover, map?
- w/c 28th May – finessing, prep Riso files for 29th
- 29th – printing and binding
- 30th-1st – Photography at home, prep Summative pdf, revise/typeset Research Summary
- 2nd June – PCSA submission

**'Where are the
missing bits of
the Parthenon,
Dad?'**

..asked Ella.

Dad: 'Well, they're in London'.
Ella: 'Why?'.
Dad: 'Because a British guy kind of stole them about a hundred years ago and never gave them back'.
Ella: 'Why?'.
Dad: 'For money, I think. It was during the British Empire'.
Ella: 'The what?'.
Dad: 'Empire, like the Roman Empire. It was when Britain ruled over a lot of the world'.
Ella: 'Oh. Ok. Can we get an ice cream?'.
Dad: 'Sure'.

I was a grown man and a parent before I noticed the shadow in my Britishness.

I moved to a place where years ago, a Brit drew a line in green pencil that divided land and families. It turns out that "we" had drawn other lines in other places too.

Whilst we were traveling around, my kids started asking questions like: 'Why do the Egyptians have pounds?' But it was really me, asking questions of myself.

So I told them that our country invaded places, taking other peoples stuff, and actual people too.

When I was their age I never questioned why every map had the UK at the centre, or why lots of it was in reddy pink, or why there was something called the Third World, or the Middle East or the Far East.

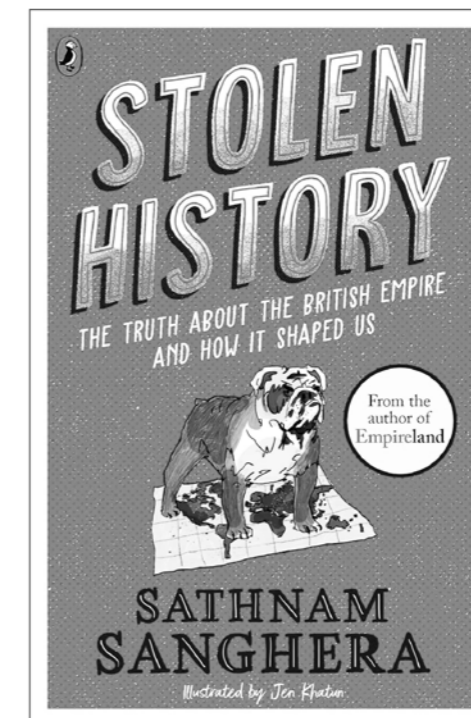
I do now.

My Britishness is complicated. I'm trying to be a good human despite the colonial history of the place I was born in. It's still there, under the surface.

Maybe I can help change it. I guess that starts with me and my kids.



'Colonialism: if one country take control of another, it colonizes it. If one nation of people takes over another nation of people, the people who are conquering are the colonizers and the people who are conquered are the colonized. The taken-over place is now a colony, and the people who came in to do the taking over are colonists or colonialists.'



Introduction

History bored me to tears at school. I couldn't see how spending a whole term learning about the Stone Age was going to help me live my life. It must have been grim to be those strange hairy people in those strange and hairy times, but I didn't understand why we needed to know about them. I mean, we had chainsaws instead of stone tools, we lived in houses rather than caves, and we had fantastically cheap razors available in most supermarkets. Nor did I see how the Hundred Years War had any relevance to us. Beyond the fact that every single lesson on it felt like it was 116 years long which was, in fact, how long the Hundred Years War actually lasted. How did the war-naming person get that so wrong?!

It wasn't just history I struggled with. I never got the hang of art; everything I ever drew ended up looking like a donkey. And I dreaded cross-country running. Not only were we told to run for six kilometres without stopping or drinking water, but the teachers also threatened that we'd have to run in our underpants if we "forgot" our running kits (the 1980s were weird!). But history was dreadful. It comes as a massive surprise therefore that, at the age of forty-six, I am the author of a bestselling history book for adults, *Empireland*. It's even more of a shock that here I am now, beginning a children's version of that book.

Until recently I had read very few history books – finding them, in general, too long and boring. I'm not a historian; I'm a journalist and author. And I didn't even study history beyond the age of sixteen. What changed? Well, it turns out there's an incredibly

interesting slice of history which I wasn't taught about at school or university – the British Empire. It's a part of history that is still important to life as we know it today. It explains so much about Britain as a nation, including where some of our money comes from, the stuff we find in our museums, the reason the country is home to citizens of all different races and backgrounds, the food we eat, the words we use and so much more. It's this history that explains lots about my life too, such as the reasons why my Indian parents emigrated to Britain in the 1960s ('emigrate' means moving from one country to another). It also explains the racism that surrounded me as I grew up in Wolverhampton in the 1980s and 1990s. For example, at the time certain jobs seemed closed off to people of colour – not just the fancy jobs running companies, but some non-white people even found themselves unable to get jobs as teachers or drivers. Some pubs and clubs didn't allow entry to those who had a different skin colour to white British citizens. And there was horrible abuse and violence directed at those who weren't white.

I bet the history of the British Empire explains something about your life too.

The British Empire (and don't worry, I'll be explaining exactly what this is very soon!) was the biggest empire in human history, covering a quarter of the planet at its height, and is the biggest thing Britain ever did as a nation. It's as important as the

leading role we played in the Second World War, when we beat the evil German Nazis, and cemented the idea that we were as plucky and determined as the British bulldog that is sometimes used to symbolize us (and which graces the cover of this book). Frankly, it's one of the biggest things that ever happened in the history of the world.

It's astonishing that I was taught almost nothing about it at school. And it's astounding that it's still not a priority to teach this in history classes today. So do not fear if you've not come across it yet either. It turns out we're not alone. In my research and conversations, I've come across adults who studied history at some of the most famous universities in Britain who learned almost nothing about the British Empire. A survey conducted around twenty-five years ago found that huge numbers of adults had very little knowledge about it. For example, more than half the people taking part didn't know that the USA began as a British project. We can't be blamed for Hershey's chocolate, or take credit for Disneyland – it was long before all those things – but, yes, America was once a British enterprise.

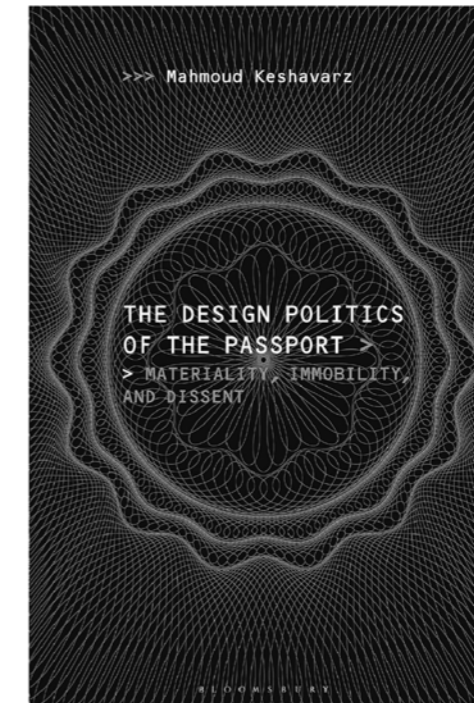
If you didn't know these things either, there's no shame in it at all; you're still at school and learning. Also, I hope you'll feel a lot more knowledgeable by the time you get to the end of this book. The plan is to tell you some of the things I wish I had known at your age (beyond a shortcut to that dreaded cross-country route!). I'll explain what the British Empire was exactly and why lots of us don't know more about it. We'll talk about

museums, which are home to many priceless artefacts belonging to countries that used to be part of the British Empire. I'll give you examples of things in our modern world that have roots in the empire – things we see, do, say and experience, from Britain's towns and cities to our food and drink, sports, books, plants and more. And we'll also discuss what you can do to expand and spread your knowledge and understanding about it.

Most importantly, I'll tell you how the British Empire explains why modern Britain is such a multicultural place, filled with lots of people of different colours and cultures and walks of life, living alongside each other. It's a lot to aim for, but I hope that by the end of this book you'll understand what has taken me forty-six years to discover: that if we learn the truth about our past, we can make better sense of the present and future. And also fight for a kinder and fairer world.

If we learn the truth about our past, we can make better sense of the present and future. And also fight for a kinder world.

'If design politics is about the articulation of materials on various levels and in certain directions, intervention in design politics is about disarticulating practices, performances, and interactions produced by the design politics, while rearticulating them in directions other than those taken so far or those toward which we are heading. **But it is also important to remember that there is no formula for understanding design politics, nor are there specific criteria for making it. There are only moments, situations, devices, and things that can lead us to disarticulate and rearticulate possible ways of moving through, engaging with, and inhabiting in the world. Passports are one of them. There are many more to engage with.'**



Ethics of Design

In this book I have problematized the perspective that sees designing as a task of problem-solving or service-delivering and proposed earlier to see designing as an articulatory practice that helps us to be sensitive to its history, politics, and limits; to its orientations. By articulations, I refer to the acts of negotiation in forging certain relations that may or may not follow the tendential historical and material connections determined by strong forces of the mobility regime such as colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism. Once we begin to understand design and the position of the designer through articulatory practice, designers encounter choices to be made on the basis of the positions they occupy or have taken, rather than problems to be solved, services to be delivered, or improvements to be facilitated. This consequently locates designers' bodies and subjectivities in relation to the other bodies and subjectivities involved in any act of articulation.

This introduces another way of discussing ethics in and of design. The ethics of design can no longer be reduced to a set of moral and judgmental concerns as some sort of external feature to be implemented and achieved. By thinking of designed things as material articulations and designing as an articulatory practice, ethics become about recognizing the politics of the locations and conditions within which one works, and the politics that is generated from working within those conditions. Consequently, the relation of ethics to design / is not a matter of "adding" ethics to design or making design ethical; it is about recognizing how design already contains ethical implications and being able to act on that recognition.

As it was shown, passports for many inhabitants of the world are part of devising their lived experiences and of how they experience the world. For many, however, this artifact still is an instrument that at best would satisfy their needs and speed up their pace of mobility when borders, border guards, and bodies are all connected to each other, as in the case of recent experiments

with new smart border crossing initiatives in major airports of the Global North, for instance, in the Netherlands and Australia. Yet designers who are busy with connecting devices, networks, people, and environments in more and more user-friendly ways so rarely recognize the disconnections they design as a consequence of their promotion of interactivity and digitalization.

This book brought about stories of how movement across territories has been and still is regulated through the specific material and technical practice of designing, expanding, and sustaining passports. At the same time, it has been more of a project on immobilities as a particular design paradigm and practice. While there is much scholarship on how design facilitates, helps, and supports mobilities, this book looked at the other side of the spectrum and highlighted how bodies, subjectivities, and their possibilities to act in the world have been, are, and will continue to be immobilized by designed things and design activities.

When a new e-passport acts as the border and border guard simultaneously to reduce the time spent in passport check queues, for many this design is a way of smoothing their experience and interactions at the given checkpoints; therefore, they do not "feel" the border. But what these designs do is reducing our engagement with the world into limited and receptive measures that hide the politics of mobility regime exposed in this book. In this sense the seemingly most ethical designer, best attuned to the needs of users through human-centered approaches, "will generate the least ethical outcome, the one that most fully services others' needs, thereby disabling them" (Tonkinwise 2004) in understanding the design politics that is at work in any situation and context around materialities. In this regard, perhaps the unfinished, not completely user-friendly, and half-functional design is more ethical than its more effective counterparts. And this is why travelers without the right papers, those whose passports function partially and only after modification provided by forgery, can enact the ethics embedded in passports, the

essential force of its materiality, better than the authentic owners, the citizens who carry one or more functional passports. A traveler without the right paper learns to engage with the materiality of the border politics precisely because she or he comes up against the materiality of its institutions and practices through their lack of a functioning and user-friendly passport; a device that paradoxically has hidden the materiality of the border politics behind a seemingly immaterial and seamless space of travel and mobility. As Ahmed (2017: 138) puts it: "If we are hit by something, we become conscious of something." Those who do not come up against the materiality of the mobility regime, against passporting, would not recognize the materiality of the right to move, and thus would not be able to enact the ethics embedded in the materiality of the world and its possibilities of access, movement, and residence. The first step in recognizing the ethics of design thus lies in recognizing the materiality of design, in recognizing its limits and its partiality in use for certain bodies.

The second step is to move from reflection, the prevailing paradigm in defining design activity, to recognition. This entails the recognition of the positions of designer(s) beyond institutional or professional ones.

Those who are fascinated by the actual design of passports and may participate in a new brief for a passport design that may represent their country or "nation" better, or make it more user-friendly for "everyone, are not necessarily crude nationalists. What they are unable to recognize is that the design of passports unites citizens in an unexpected way, despite the political disagreement among them. It is not that states consciously shape our perception of being, for instance, European, and then use different measures to legitimize this, rather that the European passport design shapes us as specific subjects of a particular imagined whole and gradually over time, through back-and-forth presence, gains significance. It is through "granting significance" (Bottici and Challand 2013) to a common narrative by a designed artifact

like a passport that imagined communities such as Europe are produced and sustain themselves persuasively? There is a smooth nationalism and racism embedded in processes of materializing citizenship via passports through modernism and its sense of technologically produced aesthetics.

To recognize the orientations-history and politics-that identify the relations between objects and bodies as given and natural is to trace how certain historical forces have shaped the context of that specific design in order for it to exist and operate. In this book, the mobility regime as the context in which passports operate and become legible was identified. Consequently, it is impossible to ignore the fact that the current passport in our hands is a specific product of national, colonial, and late imperial ideas around mobility. Furthermore, like other specific material practices that have shaped colonial relationships, these designs are not bound to their specific moment and site of invention and use and move to other spaces once proven to be functional and profitable for the privileged. Thus, to recognize the paths designed things and design activities have taken to arrive to the present moment in which we rework, reshape, or rearticulate them is another aspect of recognizing why design demands an ethical engagement.

If design politics is about the articulation of materials on various levels and in certain directions, intervention in design politics is about disarticulating practices, performances, and interactions produced by the design politics, while rearticulating them in directions other than those taken so far or those toward which we are heading. But it is also important to remember that there is no formula for understanding design politics, nor are there specific criteria for making it. There are only moments, situations, devices, and things that can lead us to disarticulate and rearticulate possible ways of moving through, engaging with, and inhabiting in the world. Passports are one of them. There are many more to engage with.

**Do you receive
training to be able
to teach students
about colonialism
and The British
Empire?**

No.

**Adam Reynolds,
KS3 Tutor/
Head of Humanities**

**Sydney Morris,
KS3 Tutor/
History**

Do you receive training to be able to teach students about colonialism and The British Empire?

No – also lacking on PGCE from 2022-23 based on discussion with Sydney Morris (History Teacher). Following our discussions I think this might also be worth raising as a potential route forward – Teacher CPD opportunities/ events. There is professional development on offer already re: PSHE about staff delivering sensitive topics etc. Could this be tweaked to accommodate History and the themes of colonialism and the British Empire?

Does this subject area crossover into English and PSHE? Are there broader themes of citizenship at play?

Morality is a big part of the context of the learning specifically in relation to the Colston statue in Bristol. Was it right to pull it down? Is it right to display it in a museum?

How important is a universal approach to approaching a subject like this? Does our language have to be carefully chosen?

Definitely needing to be aware of words but also being honest about the context of language to explain is crucial in developing the pupils' understanding. Also making parents aware of the sensitive language in the right context might further help to develop the impact of teaching.

Do you think existing learning materials such as those from Twinkl or Oak Academy work well, is there any room for improvement?

We don't tend to use those resources for our schemes of learning; they are bespoke resources tailored over years but are

always being changed and adapted to suit learners and current contexts. More general resources such as Twinkl do offer a starting point and some resources are presented well but as a Humanities department I would always encourage staff to tweak and amend to their own teaching style and pedagogy to allow greater depth of teaching and therefore learning.

To what extent does learning material account for SEND students and those with dyslexia?

Continued focus and drive on inclusive approaches to teaching and learning have shifted approaches more recently. Trying to accommodate all learners' individual needs is a challenge – personally I do not see it as being a job that is ever complete but just one that is in need of constant response and reflection.

Most of my research has shown a content-delivery task-completion pedagogy, but I have found some innovative alternatives. Do you think that an object based learning approach can help students learn about colonialism?

Always possible as long as it is structured around context and practicalities will always be an issue. Engagement of learners is critical so it does offer a broader range of interests, however education in general does put up some barriers in relation to this. Perhaps I would suggest looking at other educational models outside of the UK that offer alternatives. (Finland being a highly regarded model – inter disciplinary approaches and more project-based learning on offer)



The facts in this book really help the kids understand the extremes of these subjects but in a gentle way.

Polly, mum of Betty, aged 12.

References

Sanghera, S. (2023) *Stolen History: The Truth About The British Empire and How It Shaped Us*. 1st edition. Penguin Random House UK.

Keshavarz, M. (2019) *The Design Politics of the Passport: Materiality, Immobility and Dissent*. London: Bloomsbury.

Reynolds, A. and Morris, S. (2026) *Where's That eally From?* Interview with Adam Reynolds and Sydney Morris of Oakfield Academy, Frome. Interviewed by Mark Ecob for MAGCD Mini Reader, 12th May 2026. Available in text form above.

PROJECTED CONTRIBUTION

This body of work investigates the role graphic communication design can play in shaping critical historical awareness and socially engaged learning. It came from my research into the passport as a colonial object that produces and reinforces its own politics. Those insights led me to reflect on my own education within the UK school system between and how little emphasis was placed on the realities and continuing effects of colonialism and Empire. As both a designer and a parent, I became increasingly aware of how these omissions shape cultural understanding, national identity and attitudes of my children in turn in the current UK education system. I do not want them to inherit an understanding of history that lacks critical engagement with Britain's colonial past.

The project challenges my previous assumption of the neutrality of graphic communication design, positioning it instead as an active political and pedagogical tool rather than simply visual. Testing the publications with families revealed that concerns around the teaching of colonial history are shared by many parents and that an object based approach was a gateway to deeper engagement.

'The uniform section was very eye-opening for Betty as she loves shopping! So having these facts to back up our parenting on trying to encourage second-hand clothing when we can, was very helpful!'
Polly, Betty's mum.

A teacher described the curriculum as "a political football", highlights how educational priorities are often shaped by the ideological position of the government in power. In a contemporary political climate increasingly defined by polarisation, nationalism and the rise of what is commonly termed the far right in the UK and internationally, I believe there is an urgency to create opportunities for critical historical engagement wherever possible. Even small interventions that encourage young people and families to question inherited and accepted narratives, systems of consumption and ideas of national and global identities can have value.

Professionally, the work represents a significant shift in my professional practice as a book cover designer. It prompts me to think more critically about the cultural and political implications of the briefs I am part of and the responsibility I hold as a designer in shaping public understanding. Outwith professional or academic practices, I have noticed shifts in my vocabulary and thinking as a parent and individual, I am more aware of and can translate colonial legacies into positive discussion and behaviours in myself and my children.

I intend to continue developing and to publish this work through my book publishing and educational contacts, in order to contribute to wider conversations around colonial acknowledgement, curriculum development and the social responsibility of visual communicators. Maybe I can effect the same change in other parents and their kids by publishing *Where's That Really From?*