Africa and the transatlantic slave trade

Arm ring trade token,
The Manchester Museum, The University of Manchester

Barbados penny,
Gallery Oldham

Blackamoor,
Bolton Museum and Archive Service

The Slave,
People's History Museum

Manilla, 1700s
© The Manchester Museum,
The University of Manchester

Manilla, 1700s

The Manchester Museum, The University of Manchester

Manillas were traditional African horseshoe shaped bracelets made of metals such as iron, bronze, copper and very rarely gold. Decorative manillas were worn to show wealth and status in Africa.

Europeans used them as a form of currency in west Africa to buy and enslave African people. They manufactured them in Britain, especially around Bristol and Birmingham, based on African designs. Different styles and metals had different values. One source stated that in 1505 one manilla was worth a big elephant tooth and eight to ten manillas would buy an African person to enslave.

The trade was described as triangular: ships sailed full of 'exchange' goods such as manillas, metals, clothing, guns and alcohol from Britain to Africa. Enslaved Africans were transported across the Atlantic to the Americas. The raw materials enslaved Africans grew on plantations such as sugar, tobacco and cotton were brought back to Britain where they were processed.

Historians estimate that at least 12 million Africans were removed by force during the transatlantic slave trade. Many millions died when they were captured and transported. Europeans dominated the trade in enslaved Africans using the power of guns. They justified enslaving Africans claiming that they were 'uncivilised'.

Slave Trade, 1791
© The Whitworth Art Gallery,
The University of Manchester

Slave Trade, 1791

The Whitworth Art Gallery, The University of Manchester

George Morland was an English artist who did two paintings known as 'Slave Trade' and 'African Hospitality'. He was inspired by a friend's poem to paint images of slavery. The movement to end slavery started in Britain in the 1790s.

This print was a reproduction of Morland's painting made to help raise awareness of slavery and the need for abolition. It was published in Paris in 1794, at the height of the French Revolution. The French abolished slavery in 1794 as part of the fight for equality, but Napoleon reintroduced slavery in 1802 and it was not abolished in French colonies until 1848.

This painting was made as a piece of propaganda. It is not based on actual events, but represents a dramatisation of selling enslaved Africans. European slave traders capture an African man, and a woman is led to a boat where there is a person weeping. The African trader under the tree, negotiating with the slave ship's captain, looks on.

The dog used to keep enslaved Africans under control is in contrast to the chained people. The animal has more freedom than the African men, women and children who were traded as goods.

West African drum, 1898
© The Manchester Museum,
The University of Manchester

West African drum, 1898

The Manchester Museum, The University of Manchester

This drum was collected in 1898 in Ilorin, Nigeria. It was given to Salford Museum and was described as 'both rare and special and very difficult to get hold of'.

Drums were a very important part of musical traditions in Africa and continued to be used by enslaved Africans on plantations in the Caribbean and the Americas. They were used in music, dance and religious ceremonies as well as to send messages.

Enslaved Africans used drum beats to signal the start of revolts, including the revolution in Haiti which led to its independence. For this reason drums were banned in some Caribbean islands.

The drum is made with a piece of manufactured cotton fabric, probably made in Britain, and possibly in Manchester.

The fact that British goods became integral parts of African objects shows how complex the transatlantic slave trade was between Britain and west Africa.

Cotton goods produced in Manchester were in demand in west Africa during the 1700s and 1800s where they were traded for people through African middlemen.

Questions

1 Why did Europeans enslave Africans to work on **plantations**?

2 How did they **justify** this?

3 What was life like in Africa?

4 What effect would losing so many people have on Africa?

5 Why was the transatlantic slave trade so profitable for Britain?

6 How did Africans help to enslave their own people?

Cotton and transatlantic slavery

Study for Slave Hold,
© The estate of Sir Jacob Epstein

Traite des Nègres,
The Whitworth Art Gallery,
The University of Manchester

Slave chain fabric,
Museum of Science & Industry

Mrs Rosa Samuel and
her three daughters,
The Whitworth Art Gallery,
The University of Manchester

Two cotton cops, 1735, 1885
© Gallery Oldham

Two cotton cops, 1735, 1885
Gallery Oldham

A cotton cop is a cone with cotton thread or yarn spun around it on a spindle. These two cotton cops were framed by William Mannock to celebrate the long history of cotton spinning in the north west of England.

Mannock was the owner of Marsland Mill in Oldham, which had over 40,000 spindles and employed 400 people. Mannock gave the cotton cops for the opening display of Oldham's Free Library, Museum and Art Gallery in 1885 to reflect the wealth the cotton trade brought to the town.

The two cops were made 150 years apart but both yarns are made to the same fineness and from the same raw material, American cotton. In 1735, before large-scale mechanisation, spinning was 'put out' and people did the work at home. By 1885, there were hundreds of mills across Lancashire.

The cop on the right was made at Marsland Mill. The older cop on the left was only discovered when an old warehouse in Manchester was redeveloped in 1882.

The early cop is spun from cotton that was picked by enslaved African workers in America. The raw cotton came to England as part of the triangular trade associated with slavery. The 1885 cotton was probably picked by free African Americans who were the descendants of enslaved people. Slavery was abolished in America in 1865.

The Liverpool and Manchester Railway, 1830
© Museum of Science & Industry

The Liverpool and Manchester Railway, 1830
Museum of Science & Industry

The Liverpool and Manchester Railway opened on 15 September 1830, with stations at Liverpool Road, Manchester and Edge Hill. It was the world's first inter-city passenger railway. As well as carrying people, the railway was important for carrying goods.

In December 1830, American cotton grown by enslaved Africans was part of the first consignment of goods transported by the Liverpool and Manchester Railway. The need to move large amounts of cotton was a major factor in the development of transport in the north west of England. Canals were the main form of transport in the early 1800s until the expansion of the railway network.

New technology and machinery in the 1700s and 1800s helped revolutionise the British cotton industry. As more and more raw cotton was processed in the mills in and around Manchester, more Africans were enslaved to work on the plantations in the southern states of America.

By 1860 over 88% of the cotton imported into Britain came from the labour of enslaved Africans in America. Slavery was only abolished in America in 1865, although it had ended in the 1830s in the British colonies in the Caribbean.

You can see the original Liverpool and Manchester Railway train tracks and passenger station at the Museum of Science and Industry, MOSI, in Castlefield, Manchester.

Union patriotic envelope, 1861
© Museum of Science & Industry

Union patriotic envelope, 1861
Museum of Science & Industry

This envelope was published in New York in 1861, at the start of the American Civil War. Both the northern anti-slavery Union and southern pro-slavery Confederate states published illustrated envelopes from the 1850s as political propaganda to support their cause. Over 4,100 different envelope designs were produced, with versions published in most of the major cities, especially New York and Boston.

Slavery was a common theme as the northern Union states wanted to abolish it and the southern cotton growing Confederate states wanted it to continue.

The verse called 'Cotton is King!' mentions Manchester and says:

Old England is mighty;
Old England is free;

She boasts that she ruleth
the waves of the sea;

(But between you and I,
that's all fiddle-de-dee:)

She cannot, O Cotton!
she cannot rule thee.

Lo! Manchester's lordling
thy greatness shall own,

And yield more to thee than
he would to the Throne:

For before thee shall bend
his fat marrow-bone,

And deaf be his ear to the
live chattel's groan.

The words suggest that wealthy English traders valued American cotton extremely highly. The images reinforce the poem. John Bull, the stereotypical Briton, is showing respect to a cotton bale whilst kneeling on an enslaved African, showing what was more important to him.

Questions

1 How was cotton linked to the transatlantic slave trade?

2 How were raw and **manufactured** cotton products transported?

3 Why did so many people work in cotton factories around Greater Manchester?

4 How important was slave-grown cotton to the north west of England?

5 Where does cotton come from today?

Local cotton industries in Greater Manchester

Horizontal condensing engine,
Museum of Science & Industry

Manchester warehouses,
© Richard Weltman

Lancashire loom used
at Pennington Mill,
Museum of Science & Industry

Manchester Royal Exchange,
© Richard Weltman

Crompton's Mule, 1802
© Bolton Museum and Archive Service

Crompton's Mule, 1802

Bolton Museum and Archive Service

Samuel Crompton developed his first spinning mule in 1779. It was called a mule because it combined two previous cotton spinning machines, the water frame and the spinning jenny.

It produced large quantities of fine, strong cotton yarn. From 1781-1791, the first decade of the mule's use, the amount of raw cotton supplied to Britain more than tripled. The mule helped to revolutionise the British cotton industry. It massively increased the amount of cotton yarn manufacturers could produce, which meant more demand for raw cotton to supply the mills.

Despite the success of the mule, Samuel Crompton was unable to patent his design and made very little money from it. He eventually died in poverty in 1827. However, after his death he became a local hero in Bolton, and nationally known as the inventor of the mule.

Crompton's invention meant large scale employment, especially in Greater Manchester, and the cotton industry generated a huge amount of wealth for Britain.

The mule in the photograph ended up in the firm Dobson and Barlow of Bolton which manufactured cotton machinery. The mule was lent to Bolton museum to teach the history of the cotton industry. It became a permanent part of the museum collections when the last Dobson family member retired from the firm in the early 1900s.

The mule is probably one of the most important objects in any museum in the north west of England because of the impact the cotton spinning industry had in the region.

Souvenir cotton bale, 1884
© Gallery Oldham

Souvenir cotton bale, 1884

Gallery Oldham

Throughout the 1800s most of Oldham's cotton came from the southern states of America. Raw cotton was processed and packed in large bales for shipping. This cotton bale is from the World Exposition Trade Fair held in New Orleans in 1884-85. Cotton was one of America's most important and well recognised export products. The cotton bale is labelled 'A souvenir of the sunny south'.

Slavery was abolished in the USA at the end of the American Civil War in 1865 but cotton continued to be exported, grown by the descendants of enslaved Africans.

With the mechanisation of the cotton spinning industry in and around Manchester throughout the 1700s and 1800s, more raw cotton was needed from the plantations.

Slave-grown cotton from the southern states of America provided 70% of the raw material fuelling Britain's Industrial Revolution at its height.

Manchester's cotton mills produced 'coarse checks' (cloth or fabric with a pattern of crossed lines) and silk handkerchiefs. These were sent to Africa and traded for enslaved Africans, completing the triangle of trade between Britain, Africa and the Americas.

This cotton bale was donated to Gallery Oldham in 1942, by Councillor E Henthorn, whose grandfather Thomas Henthorn was a cotton dealer in the 1880s, and later the manager of a group of Oldham cotton mills.

Interior of the Royal Exchange, 1877

Manchester Royal Exchange, 1877
Manchester Art Gallery

Manchester was the world's first industrial city. It was an important centre for the spinning of cotton during the Industrial Revolution as well as the commercial centre of the industry. The Exchange was where the business took place. In 1874 it was called 'the largest trading room in the world'.

The painting by HL Saunders and Frederick Sargent is an important historical document as it names key individuals involved in Manchester's cotton trade at that time.

The Manchester Exchange had a membership of up to 11,000 cotton merchants who met every Tuesday and Friday to trade their goods. These merchants represented 280 cotton towns and villages in and around the north west of England.

The original Manchester Exchange was built in 1729. A new larger exchange was completed in 1809 at the corner of Market Street and Exchange Street. As the cotton industry continued to expand a much larger building again was needed. This was completed in 1849. When Queen Victoria visited Manchester in 1851 she was welcomed in the new exchange not the town hall. After her visit the building was called the Manchester Royal Exchange, and a large royal coat of arms was added to the exterior.

Since 1973 the building has been the Royal Exchange Theatre. This painting was given to Manchester Art Gallery in 1968 by the Royal Exchange committee but is currently in Manchester Town Hall.

Questions

1 How important were machines to the cotton industry?

2 How did Greater Manchester benefit from cotton?

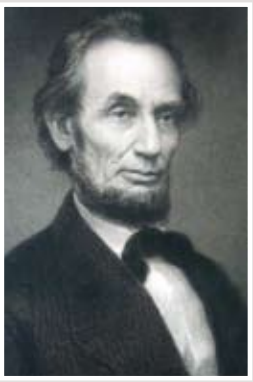
3 Why was there so much money to be made from the cotton trade?

4 Can you compare conditions for cotton workers in Greater Manchester and enslaved Africans on America's cotton **plantations**?

5 Was Manchester 'built' on slavery?

The American Civil War and Lancashire cotton workers

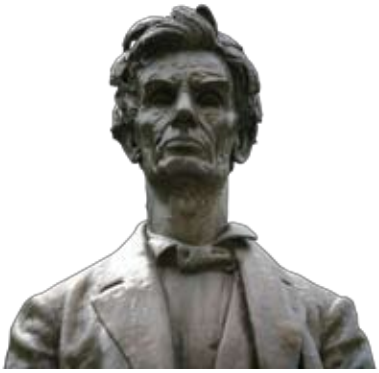
Figure of 'Blind Joe', *Gallery Oldham*



Abraham Lincoln by William E Marshall, *Touchstones Rochdale*

Bust of Richard Cobden, *Touchstones Rochdale*

A handkerchief in memory of John Bright, *Touchstones Rochdale*



Statue of Abraham Lincoln, 1917
by George Grey Barnard © Paul Cliff

Statue of Abraham Lincoln, 1917 by George Grey Barnard

This bronze statue of Abraham Lincoln was sent from the USA to Britain to mark 100 years of peace between the two countries. It was intended to stand outside the Houses of Parliament in London.

The statue shows Lincoln as an ordinary man of the people rather than as a statesman, which was controversial, so a different statue was sent to London. Manchester took this one because of its connections with Lincoln during the American Civil War.

Abraham Lincoln was elected president of the USA in 1860. One of his main policies was to stop the spread of slavery. The pro-slavery southern states which used enslaved labour to grow cotton feared his election would destroy their way of life. Seven southern states, then four more, split from the northern anti-slavery Union states.

The American Civil War, between the Union north and the Confederate 'rebel' south, began on 12 April 1861. It led to a cotton famine in Lancashire when the export of raw cotton from the USA dried up. Many cotton workers in the north west of England were unemployed and starving as a result, but they still showed widespread support for Abraham Lincoln and abolition.

The statue of Abraham Lincoln can be seen in Lincoln Square on Brazennose Street in Manchester. It says: 'This statue commemorates the support that the working people of Manchester gave in the fight for the abolition of slavery during the American Civil War'.

Cotton famine flour barrel, 1862,
© Touchstones Rochdale

Cotton famine flour barrel, 1862

Touchstones Rochdale

The north west of England was directly affected by the American Civil War. The region needed raw slave-grown cotton from the southern states of the USA to supply its cotton mills. Abraham Lincoln blockaded southern ports in the USA to prevent the export of cotton and to protest against slavery.

This meant that no raw cotton came into Britain and led to the Lancashire cotton famine of 1862-63. It cost Lancashire mill owners about £30m. It was a time of great hardship and many cotton workers were unemployed and starving. Despite this, many people in the north west of England still supported the abolition of slavery.

On 9 February 1863, the relief ship George Griswold, docked at Liverpool, carrying food sent by Abraham Lincoln and the people of New York and Philadelphia to thank the starving people of Lancashire for their support of the northern anti-slavery states in the USA. The ship was greeted on the dockside by a crowd of nearly 4,000 people. The cargo included boxes of bacon and bread, bags of rice and corn, and 15,000 barrels of flour.

The barrel shown in the picture is the only one remaining from that cargo and is on display at Touchstones Rochdale.

Captain's sword, CSS Alabama, 1864
© Touchstones Rochdale

Captain's sword, CSS Alabama, 1864

Touchstones Rochdale

One side of this sword says 'Captn Raphael Semmes' and the other 'Steamer Alabama CSN, 1864'.

The southern Confederate states in the USA needed ships to attack northern Union merchant ships but they had no ship building industry. There was a secret mission to Liverpool to buy arms and build ships. It was illegal for the British to provide weapons and support foreign wars. The steamer ship the Alabama was built disguised as a merchant ship and left Birkenhead with a British captain and crew. She was then fitted out as a warship away from the eyes of the British government and North American spies.

Captain Raphael Semmes took command of the Alabama. She sailed all over the world, putting out of action a total of 69 anti-slavery Union ships, at a cost to the northern states of $6m. A young man named Bell from Rochdale was on board the Alabama, when she sank some northern Union ships. He wrote in a letter to his cousin:

'We have taken about 35 vessels. We fired a shot from the gun that I was at and it nearly knocked her foremast down... A man of war steamer which we had to take by force we sunk in 17 minutes... we escaped with one man wounded in the mouth. He is now alright. I must conclude as there is a full rigged brig in sight... we can't say exactly what she is but if she be a Yankee she will be on fire directly.'

The CSS Alabama was finally sunk in June 1864, outside the French port of Cherbourg. The sword may have been presented to Captain Semmes during his stay in Europe following the loss of the Alabama.

Questions

1 Who was Abraham Lincoln and why was he important?

2 What caused the American Civil War?

3 Who in the USA wanted slavery to continue and who wanted it to end?

4 What linked the American Civil War to the north west of England?

5 What was the Lancashire cotton famine and how did it affect cotton industries in Britain?

6 Were people in the north west of England pro or anti-slavery?

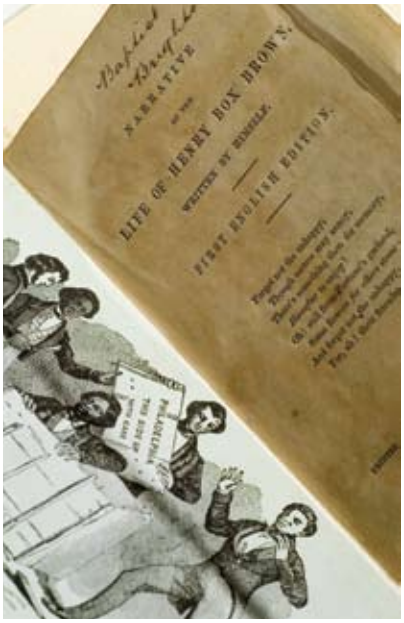
Freedom and human rights

Model of a freed slave,
The Whitworth Art Gallery, The University of Manchester

James Watkins,
Bolton Museum and Archive Service

Uncle Tom and Little Eva,
Bolton Museum and Archive Service

Slave whip,
People's History Museum



Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown, 1851, in the collection of the John Rylands Library, The University of Manchester

Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown, 1851

In the collection of the John Rylands Library, The University of Manchester

Henry Brown was born enslaved in Virginia USA in 1815. In 1849 Brown's master refused to buy Brown's wife when she and their children were put up for sale. Henry Brown decided to escape to freedom by being posted in a box.

Brown was sent from Richmond, Virginia, to Philadelphia. The 350 mile journey took 27 hours. In Philadelphia the box was opened and Brown jumped out and declared 'Good morning, gentlemen!' as if he had arrived on a train.

The engraving of his rising from the box became an important image used to support the case for abolition. Brown became an overnight sensation changing his name to Henry 'Box' Brown.

As an escaped enslaved African, Brown could have been caught and returned to his owner.

He left the USA and arrived in Liverpool in 1850. He toured the north of England to tell his story and to help raise awareness for the abolition of slavery. He spent the next 14 years lecturing and re-enacting his escape. Brown spoke at venues in Manchester, where he made the contacts to enable him to publish his book 'Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown'.

His popularity and the publication of his book show the support for the abolition of slavery in Manchester and the surrounding cotton towns.

Brown married an English wife and had two children. The 1871 census lists the Browns in Cheetham, Manchester where they were doing well enough to employ a servant. In 1875, however, Brown decided to return to America, and the last record of him is in 1878 outside Boston.

Slave shackle, 1807 © People's History Museum

Slave shackle, 1807

People's History Museum

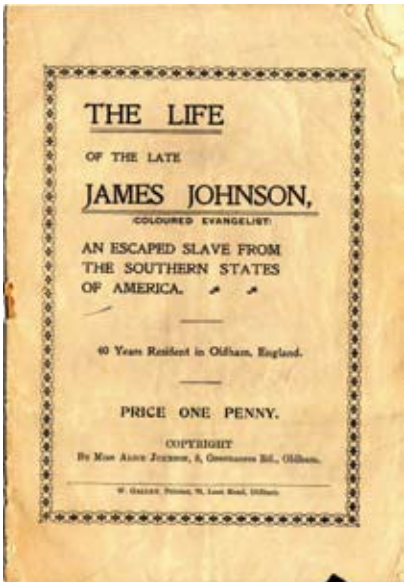
Shackles were used to control enslaved Africans when they were captured, marched to the coast and loaded in ships like cargo. Men remained chained in the holds of ships for journeys across the Atlantic of about six weeks.

Shackles were also used as a form of restraint and punishment on plantations in the Caribbean and America. Enslaved Africans often tried to escape and shackles, whips, guns and dogs were used to stop them.

This shackle was used in the French Caribbean colony of Saint-Domingue where there were many sugar, tobacco and indigo plantations, and Africans were treated very badly. The western part of the island was originally called Haiti.

Haiti is unique as the only nation which gained independence as the result of a rebellion by enslaved Africans. The rebellion was led by Toussaint L'Ouverture and Jean Jacques Dessalines. These two former enslaved Africans used their brilliant military and political leadership to defeat both the French and British armies. Independence was declared in 1804 and Saint-Domingue was once again called Haiti as the name for the new African-led nation.

The use of shackles and the brutal punishments for enslaved Africans were some of the most shocking aspects of slavery for abolitionist Europeans and Americans.



The Life of the Late James Johnson, 1914
© Gallery Oldham

The Life of the Late James Johnson, 1914

Gallery Oldham

James Johnson was born into slavery on 20 March 1847, at Smithfield, North Carolina in the USA. He escaped during the American Civil War by swimming out to a northern warship, the Stars and Stripes, anchored off the coast. Johnson made his way to New York, and worked his passage to Liverpool, arriving in December 1862. Over the next four years he travelled across England and settled in Oldham in 1866.

Johnson initially worked for Platt Brothers of Oldham, one of the largest companies making machines for the cotton industry. He then drew on his experiences of slavery to become a religious preacher. During his sermons Johnson talked about the evils of slavery which helped to establish a strong anti-slavery movement in Oldham. Abolitionists formed a strong mass political movement and used petitions and sugar boycotts to try and bring an end to slavery.

The Slavery Abolition Act that finally ended slavery in British colonies was passed on 23 August 1833. On 1 August 1834, all those enslaved in the British Empire were set free. However, a period of apprenticeship kept many working in the same conditions as slavery until 1838.

Owners received massive amounts of compensation after abolition, whilst those who had been enslaved received nothing. Slavery did not end in the USA until after the American Civil War in 1865.

Questions

1 What is it to be free?

2 How and why were enslaved Africans treated so brutally?

3 What rights did enslaved Africans have?

4 Why did they try to escape slavery?

5 Who resisted slavery and campaigned for **abolition**?

6 Does slavery still exist today?

Campaigning for the abolition of slavery

Tobacco box lid,
Manchester Art Gallery

Cup and saucer with sugar cane and cotton flowers,
Gallery Oldham

Sugar castor,
Manchester Art Gallery

Anti-slavery pincushion,
Manchester Art Gallery

Token, 'Am I Not a Man and a Brother', 1787

Token, 'Am I Not a Man and a Brother', 1787

People's History Museum

This token was made in 1787 for the first anti-slavery organisation set up by Granville Sharp and Thomas Clarkson. It shows a chained African man, naked and kneeling, surrounded by the words 'Am I Not a Man and a Brother'. The reverse has two hands joined in friendship.

The kneeling image and the motto 'Am I Not a Man and a Brother' became the symbols of the anti-slavery movement. The image was created by Josiah Wedgwood who was an abolitionist and also ran a pottery company. It showed enslaved Africans as passive as if they accepted slavery. Many enslaved Africans resisted slavery and escaped. They showed courage, ingenuity and determination to end slavery.

The symbol was copied on anti-slavery leaflets, and used to decorate medallions, men's snuff and tobacco boxes, ladies' bracelets and hair pins, as well as other everyday household ceramics including milk jugs, tea sets and sugar bowls, many of which were produced by Josiah Wedgwood's pottery company. This spread the anti-slavery message widely.

In Britain opinion was divided over the issue of slavery. The British state (including the royal family and the church) and many rich landowners and businessmen initially supported slavery. Their wealth depended on it. Many ordinary people, especially women, saw that it was against basic human rights and campaigned to bring it to an end. There was a lot of anti-slavery support in and around Greater Manchester. The British slave trade was made illegal in 1807.

Breakfast service made by Wedgwood, 1785

Breakfast service made by Wedgwood, 1785

Gallery Oldham

This breakfast service shows many connections to slavery. It was made by Josiah Wedgwood. Wedgwood was an abolitionist and produced the design 'Am I not a Man and a Brother?' showing a kneeling enslaved African begging for freedom.

The set includes a sugar bowl. There was a huge growth in consumption of sugar in Britain during the 1700s. Sugar was grown on plantations in the Caribbean by millions of enslaved Africans working in appalling conditions. They often worked from early morning to late in the night and cutting and boiling sugar cane was extremely hard and dangerous work.

Sugar started off as a luxury but soon became a basic part of the British diet. It was used to sweeten puddings as well as drinks such as tea, coffee and chocolate.

Rum was also produced from slave-grown sugar and became a very popular drink. Rum was given to sailors as well as to enslaved Africans on ships crossing the Atlantic.

This breakfast service was owned by British prime minister, William Gladstone. His father, John Gladstone, had large sugar plantations in Jamaica and British Guiana (now Guyana) and received nearly £100,000 in compensation when slavery was finally abolished. The enslaved people who had worked on his plantations received nothing.

This breakfast service came from the Lees family who founded Oldham's art gallery. They made their fortune in the cotton industry, which depended on raw slave-grown cotton from plantations in the USA, until the abolition of slavery in 1865.

Bust of John Bright, 1867
© Touchstones Rochdale

Bust of John Bright, 1867

Touchstones Rochdale

John Bright was born in Rochdale in 1811. He and his brothers took over the family cotton spinning mill at Cronkeyshaw in 1839. It became one of the biggest mills in Rochdale.

The Bright family were Quakers, a religious movement that believed in pacifism and equality for all. Bright was active in politics all his life, becoming an MP for Durham, Manchester and Birmingham.

Although Bright made his money from cotton, he was, like most Quakers, strongly anti-slavery. He supported Abraham Lincoln in the American Civil War and the fight against slavery. Bright and Rochdale MP Richard Cobden regularly wrote letters of support to President Abraham Lincoln. They became known among politicians in parliament as 'the two members for the United States'.

Bright had enormous influence in the north west of England and found strong support among the working people of Rochdale against slavery. Frederick Douglass, an African American who escaped slavery, described John Bright and Richard Cobden in his 1883 autobiography, as 'friendly to the loyal and progressive spirit which abolished slavery'.

Although Bright strongly opposed slavery he didn't support the end of child labour in Lancashire mills. He argued that many families relied on child labour for their survival. He also refused to contribute to the poor relief fund for Rochdale during the cotton famine. Instead he offered his workers loans which they could barely afford to repay.

Questions

1 Who was involved in the **abolition** movement in the north west of England and why?

2 Why was John Bright anti-slavery when he owned a cotton spinning mill?

3 What methods did **abolitionists** use to get support?

4 When were enslaved people finally free in British **colonies**?

5 What types of campaigns are successful today?

After abolition

Golden Jubilee commemorative plate, *Gallery Oldham*

Beyer-Garratt locomotive, *Museum of Science & Industry*

The Cotton Industry: A Romance of Modern Work, *Bolton Museum and Archive Service*

Henry Mayers Hyndman, *People's History Museum*

Tewkesbury medal, 1834

Tewkesbury medal, 1834

Bolton Museum and Archive Service

This medal was given to school children in Tewkesbury in 1834 to celebrate the abolition of slavery. One side shows a freed enslaved African standing beneath radiant beams of light with his arms raised to heaven. He is standing on a broken whip with broken chains around him.

Around the edge of the medal words taken from the Bible say: 'This is the Lord's doing; It is marvellous in our eyes'. The reverse says: 'In commemoration of the extinction of colonial slavery throughout the British Dominions in the reign of William the IV Augt 1 1834'.

In 1807 the British parliament ended the transatlantic slave trade, but it was still legal to own enslaved workers. The abolition campaign continued in Britain and there were many rebellions by enslaved people in Caribbean colonies.

The Act that ended slavery in British colonies was finally passed on 23 August 1833. On 1 August 1834, all those enslaved in the British Empire were finally set free, but an 'apprenticeship' system kept many working in the same conditions until 1838.

Different countries abolished slavery at different times. Denmark abolished the trade in 1803, France in 1848 and Portugal in 1869. Slavery only ended in America in 1865.

The British celebrated the abolition of slavery. They justified their actions on moral and religious grounds, and suggested they were superior to other countries that still had slavery. In fact, there were economic reasons why slavery was becoming less profitable and the British seemed to forget they were once the most active slave traders in the world.

Cotton is King stereoscope card, 1895

Cotton is King stereoscope card, 1895

Bolton Museum and Archive Service

This stereoscope card shows cotton pickers descended from enslaved Africans. The card is titled: Cotton is King, Plantation Scene, Georgia, U.S.A.

The American Civil War of 1861-1865 led to the end of slavery in the USA. However, this picture was published in 1895, well after the Civil War had ended, and shows that many people were still working in conditions that were little different to slavery. African Americans still had the lowest paid and hardest jobs.

After the American Civil War there were a number of laws known as 'black codes' or the 'Jim Crow Laws' that discriminated against former enslaved African Americans and still limited their freedom.

The laws were slightly different from state to state, but they all restricted the ability of African Americans to own property. They also included vagrancy laws under which black people could be forced to work for white people if they were considered unemployed.

This inequality led to the American civil rights movement and the fight for equal legal rights took more than another 100 years. There were a number of very influential people associated with the American civil rights movement including Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, Malcolm X and Paul Robeson.

Barack Obama, an African American, became the 44th president of the USA in 2009. For many Americans this was a sign that the civil rights movement had finally succeeded and racial equality had been achieved even if racism still continues.

Token, We Are All Brethren, 1814

Token, We Are All Brethren, 1814
People's History Museum

Although dated 1807, when the British transatlantic slave trade was abolished, these tokens were made in about 1814 and again in about 1830-50 to be used as coins in the colony of Sierra Leone in Africa.

Sierra Leone was an important centre of the transatlantic slave trade supplying enslaved Africans. In 1792, Freetown was founded by the Sierra Leone Company as a home for freed enslaved Africans. These men had fought for Britain in the American War of Independence and were offered their freedom. They were repatriated to Sierra Leone, even though they may have come from different parts of Africa.

The coins were commissioned by Zachary Macaulay, a former Governor of Freetown, Sierra Leone, and a member of the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade.

The reverse is in Arabic, and translates as 'Sale of slaves prohibited in 1807, Christian era, in the reign of George III: verily, we are all brothers'. The Arabic text was possibly included as the Arab slave trade continued long after British abolition. This token may have been seen as a way of spreading the abolitionist message.

Even though the British slave trade ended in 1807, many millions of Africans continued to be enslaved and exported. British traders carried on transporting Africans illegally and some European countries did not abolish their trade until much later.

After slavery ended, Britain imported Asian indentured labourers to its Caribbean colonies to keep up the supply of cheap workers. These indentured labourers were paid very low wages but their conditions were not much better than those of slavery.

Questions

1 Did slavery end with the 1807 and the 1833 laws to abolish slavery?

2 Did Britain abolish slavery for **moral** or religious reasons?

3 Where were other cheap labourers found to send to Caribbean **colonies**?

4 What was the American civil rights movement?

5 Did the end of slavery lead to equal human rights?

Legacies of transatlantic slavery: racism in Manchester

Money box,
Gallery Oldham

Punch and Judy puppet,
Gallery Oldham

Zulu with a Black Eye,
Gallery Oldham

Simply Read,
Manchester Art Gallery

Robertson's golliwogs, 1960s
© Gallery Oldham

Robertson's golliwogs, 1960s
Gallery Oldham

The golliwog was a popular childhood toy across Europe and the USA. It originated in a children's story book, The Adventures of Two Dutch Dolls, written by American author Florence Kate Upton in 1895.

In the story, two dolls are let loose in a toy shop where they meet Golliwog, 'the blackest gnome', dressed in red trousers, red bow tie and blue coat. He looked crude, with a black face, unruly hair, thick lips and wide eyes. Golliwog was, in fact, a caricature of the American minstrels – white men who blacked up to perform songs in a manner that mimicked enslaved Africans.

The golliwog quickly became a common character in children's books, but changed from the original ugly but lovable creature of Upton's stories into a stereotyped villain, mean-spirited and devious.

The golliwog went on to appear on pencils, knitting patterns, playing cards, toys and ornaments.

The golliwog is probably best remembered in Britain as the brand logo for Robertson's jams. It first appeared on product labels and advertising material in 1910 and was immediately hugely popular. After much criticism and campaigns to expose the racist history of the image, Robertson's finally dropped the golliwog from its packaging in 2001.

'Pass It On' by Lemn Sissay

How is it that we still smile when the pressure comes?
How is it we stand firm when they think we should run?
How is it that we retain our integrity?
How is it through this maze that we keep the clarity?
How is it that through pain we retain compassion?
How is it that we spread but stay one nation?
How is it that we work in the face of abuse?
How is it that the pressure's on yet we seem loose?
This is the story about the rising truth, when you feel closed in simply raise the roof,
the Africans were the first civilisation born by the Nile was the first generation.
Malcolm X had a dream we have a dream too,
and the only way to get it is to pass it on through,
from the day we leave to the day we arrived, we were born to survive born to stay alive,
by all means necessary I'm an accessory, to provide the positive vibe is a necessity,
to clasp our past to go to war with our fears, to claim and attain in our future years.

Sometimes life can be cold and complicated more time the problem is overrated.
Nina Simone called it the Blacklash Blues,
even though they say it's history we all know that it's news.
The oppressor hopes and prays for you to cry,
to close your hearts and your minds to lay down and die,
to be another numb number to treat and delete,
to fall into the spiral rhythm of defeat.

Malcolm X had a dream we have a dream too
and the only way to get it is to pass it on through,
no message has been stronger, no sea carried more weight,
no army marched for longer, no wind swept at this rate.
So pride is in my skin is in the vision I have seen.
The pain I withstand for I have a dream.
Know who you are, know the ground on which you stand.
Never build your house on a bed of sand.

Lemn Sissay, 'Pass it on' Rebel without Applause, Bloodaxe Books Ltd 1992

'Pass it on' by Lemn Sissay

Lemn's family comes from Ethiopia but Lemn was put up for adoption when his mother moved to England. He was brought up by a white family living in a Lancashire cotton town. When he was 18 years old, Lemn moved to the city of Manchester.

In 2006, Sissay wrote an article, 'Growing up in an alien environment' about his life in Britain:

'My mother came to England in 1967... Ethiopia was a prosperous place... a comfortable time for Ethiopians. But as she found out, it was not a comfortable time for race relations in the UK. My mother, finding herself in difficulties, sought to have me fostered for a short time. However, my care worker told my foster family that it was a proper adoption. I was with them for 11 years. Although my adopted father and mother were white I believed they were my father and mother. I had seen black people in the street or maybe even said hello but until I was 17 years old I never actually knew another black person. Throughout my life I have been very lost, I've been very confused – but I've always searched for answers and the ultimate answer is that the buck stops with yourself.'

By the age of 19, Lemn was one of only two black literature development workers in Britain at Commonword, a community publishing cooperative in Manchester. Today, a number of his poems can be found on buildings throughout the Manchester area and have become local landmarks, making Lemn a local literary hero. He has performed his plays and poems throughout the world, on TV and on radio programmes.

Paul Robeson by Jacob Epstein, 1928

Paul Robeson by Jacob Epstein 1928

Touchstones Rochdale

Paul Robeson was one of the most famous, and controversial African Americans of his time. He was an actor, film star, singer and civil rights activist.

Robeson was born in Princeton, New Jersey, in 1898. His father had escaped from slavery as a teenager. He told Paul stories of slavery and encouraged him to achieve his potential in spite of racial prejudice.

Paul Robeson was an outstanding scholar and paid his way through Law School by working as a professional footballer and as an actor. He experienced racism in the law profession and left to become an actor. Robeson played the part of Shakespeare's Othello (in London in 1930, on Broadway 1943, in Stratford in 1959). These performances were of artistic and political importance for an African American at that time.

Robeson was also a singer and sang spirituals that stemmed from the time of slavery. He said: 'If I can teach my audiences who know almost nothing about the Negro, to know him through my songs… then I will feel that I am an artist, and that I am using my art for myself, for my race and for the world'.

He lived and worked in Britain between 1927 and 1939. In 1949 he returned to sing at the Free Trade Hall in Manchester and at the New International Club in Moss Side. The club was too small for the thousands who came to hear him sing so Robeson sang in the street for them.

Robeson's politics and his support for civil rights made life difficult for him in America. At one point he had his passport withdrawn. He died in 1976.

Questions

1 How were black people generally portrayed throughout history?

2 What is racism?

3 Does racism still exist and can it be linked to the transatlantic slave trade?

4 What do you think it is like to be black growing up and living in Manchester?

5 Does slavery continue today?