

BRISTOL OLD VIC

THE MEANING OF ZONG

KS3 & KS4 & KS5

EDUCATION PACK



BRISTOL
ARCHIVES



University of
BRISTOL
Theatre Collection



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



**HERITAGE
FUND**

Photography: Curtis Richard Charity No. 228235

CONTENTS

- 3** Introduction
- 4** National Curriculum Links
- 6** Cast and Creatives
- 8** Synopsis
- 9** A word from Tom Morris
- 10** Transatlantic slave trade
- 11** Bristol's role in slave trade and the Bristol Old Vic
- 12** BLM and Edward Colston 2020
- 13** Zong Massacre
- 14** Equiano/Vassa biography
- 16** Time Line
- 17** Granville biography
- 18** Abolition
- 20** An A-Z of Names in mentioned in the play
- 24** Suggested Themes
- 28** Music within the play
- 30** Cultures in the play
- 31** Workshop Activities
- 33** Further Reading
- 34** Sources

INTRODUCTION

Please note;

The content within this education pack may be upsetting to some.

‘The Meaning of Zong’ is set in 1783 and its language, while reflective of the period, would no longer be appropriate today. We can use instances of inappropriate language to consider how vocabularies evolve over time to better reflect the ways understanding and beliefs change.

“It’s a story which focuses on a very difficult part of our history, but actually, it’s about positive change- and how that positive change comes about”

– Giles Terera

The Meaning of Zong, Giles Terera’s debut play, elucidates the tale of the Zong Massacre of 1781 where 132 imprisoned African’s were thrown overboard into the Atlantic Ocean. The action cuts back and forth between this event and its subsequent 1783 insurance retrial.

Olaudah Equiano (Gustavus Vassa) and Granville Sharp, among others, by attending the retrial hearings use their passion, ingenuity, and strength to try and expose the brutality of the Zong to a wider public outside the courtroom; in which the knowledge has been contained. They hope to make the whole of Britain ‘shudder’ at the horrors of the transatlantic slave trade.

The play celebrates the strength of the human spirit against adversity and, through journeying to the past, helps us

to understand our place in the present. Themes include; the nature of humanity, memory, union and justice.

Bristol Old Vic is really excited to be able to premier the stage performance of *The Meaning of Zong* which was first performed in 2021 as a radio play aired on ‘Radio 3’ as part of the BBC’s ‘Light Up’ season.

We hope this resource pack is useful in aiding the exploration of both the play and the wider contexts on which it is based.



NATIONAL CURRICULUM LINKS

HISTORY KS3 & KS4 & KS5

- Ideas, political power, industry, and empire: Britain, 1745-1901
- Local history study
- Gain and deploy a historically grounded understanding of abstract terms such as 'empire', 'civilisation', 'parliament' and 'peasantry'
- Know and understand the history of these islands as a coherent, chronological narrative, from the earliest times to the present day: how people's lives have shaped this nation and how Britain has influenced and been influenced by the wider world
- Understand the methods of historical enquiry, including how evidence is used rigorously to make historical claims, and discern how and why contrasting arguments and interpretations of the past have been constructed
- Parliamentary reform and radical reformers
- Using historical interpretation to analyse the past

Further

- Develop and extend their knowledge and understanding of key events, periods and societies in local, British, and wider world history; and of the wide diversity of human experience
- Develop the ability to ask relevant questions about the past, to investigate issues critically and to make valid historical claims by using a range of sources in their historical context
- Develop an awareness of why people, events and developments have been accorded historical significance and how and why different interpretations have been constructed about them

ENGLISH KS3 & KS4 & KS5

- Understand and critically evaluate texts
- Identifying and interpreting themes, ideas and information
- Adapting their writing for a wide range of purposes and audiences: to describe, narrate, explain, instruct, give and respond to information, and argue
- Planning for different purposes and audiences, including selecting and organising information and ideas effectively and persuasively for formal spoken presentations and debates
- Improvising, rehearsing and performing play scripts and poetry in order to generate language and discuss language use and meaning, using role, intonation, tone, volume, mood, silence, stillness and action to add impact
- To use discussion in order to learn; to elaborate and explain clearly their understanding and ideas

CITIZENSHIP KS3 & KS4

- Understand the roles played by public institutions and voluntary groups in society, and the ways in which citizens work together to improve their communities, including opportunities to participate in school-based activities
- Understand the precious liberties enjoyed by the citizens of the United Kingdom
- Understand the nature of rules and laws and the justice system, including the role of the police and the operation of courts and tribunals

Further

- Develop an understanding of parliamentary democracy and the key elements of the constitution of the United Kingdom, including the

NATIONAL CURRICULUM LINKS

power of government, the role of citizens and Parliament in holding those in power to account, and the different roles of the executive, legislature and judiciary and a free press

- Human rights and international law
- The legal system in the UK, different sources of law and how the law helps society deal with complex problems
- Diverse national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom and the need for mutual respect and understanding

MUSIC KS3

- Perform, listen to, review and evaluate music across a range of historical periods, genres, styles and traditions, including the works of the great composers and musicians
- Learn to sing and to use their voices, to create and compose music on their own and with others
- Develop a deepening understanding of the music that they perform and to which they listen, and its history

CAST AND CREATIVES

Writer & Director

Giles Terera

Co-Director

Tom Morris

Set & Costume Designer

Jean Chan

Composer & Musical Director

Sidiki Dembele

Sound Designer & Co-Composer

Dave Price

Lighting Designer

Zeynep Kepekli

Video Designer

Tom Newell of Limbic Cinema with Will Duke

Movement Director

Ingrid Mackinnon

Assistant Director

Nadia Williams

Costume Supervisor

Rhianne Good

Dramatherapist

Samantha Adams

Beatbox & Loop coach

Conrad Murray

Fight Director

Kate Waters

Associate Directors

Julia Head & Claire O'Reilly

Production Manager

Ed Wilson

Company Stage Manager

Emily Walpole

Deputy Stage Manager

Fiona Bardsley

Assistant Stage Manager

Eve Richardson

Stage Management Placement

Grace Dobson

Production Photographer

Curtis Richard

CAST AND CREATIVES



Onstage Musical Director
Sidiki Dembele



Ottobah Cugoano
Michael Elcock



Grenville Sharp
Paul Higgins



**Sir John Lee/ Robert Stubbs/
William Woodfall**
Simom Holland Roberts



Arthur Pigot/Kelsall
Remi King



Ama/Gloria
Kiera Lester



Joyi/ Lord Mansfield
Bethan Mary - James



Annie Greenwood / Elijah Brown
Eliza Smith



Olaudah Equiano
Giles Terera



Riba
Alice Vilanculo

SYNOPSIS

*“1783... New empires, new power, new media, the modern world appears. And it is human slavery which greases the gears”
(Scene 2)*

Two hundred years ago, Olaudah Equiano read the harrowing reports of a massacre aboard the slave ship Zong, where 132 Africans were thrown overboard. Joining forces with anti-slavery campaigner Granville Sharp to publicly condemn these actions, he helped set in motion events which led to the abolition movement in the UK.

But Olaudah’s mission goes beyond the courtroom. Having bought his own freedom, he now faces a personal battle to rediscover his past and accept his true self.

Giles Terera’s boldly inventive debut play *The Meaning of Zong* is a story of our time, celebrating the power of the human spirit against adversity. Performed by an ensemble cast, it serves as an inspiration for how individual and collective action can drive unimaginable change.

A WORD FROM TOM MORRIS

Co-Director and the Artistic Director of the Bristol Old Vic

“Liberal-minded Bristolian folk like me are often reluctant to talk about the slave trade. When drawn into conversation we tend to bemoan its atrocity and condemn it as an outright wrong, but we moderate our moral judgment by saying that people thought differently in the eighteenth century, that the transatlantic slave trade was a fact of life at that time, that we should be careful not to judge the past by today’s standards, because our eighteenth-century forbears simply didn’t see it as wrong.

In the research for Giles Terera’s play The Meaning of Zong, I have discovered that this opinion is startlingly false. A close reading of the primary sources shows that many of those directly involved in the trade knew very well that it was wrong, but found it too difficult politically, economically, and socially to stop.

If we are brave enough to judge the people who were involved in the transatlantic slave trade in this city by our own standards, then it becomes possible to judge ourselves by their standards too. It allows us to look at ourselves and our role in the world and ask: what are the things we are doing which we know to be wrong, but which we keep doing, because it is socially, politically, and economically difficult to stop doing them? Then we can work out together how we can generate and share the courage and the vision, to make those the things which we start to change”



THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

The transatlantic slave trade was the largest forced migration in history, it was a trade that helped shape modern Britain and we all still live with its legacies.

The transatlantic slave trade is often conceptualised as a triangle. British enslavers travelled from ports in Britain and travelled to West Africa trading goods such as guns and iron for enslaved people. These enslaved people were kidnapped from countries such as Ghana, Sierra Leone and modern-day Nigeria. At the time, merchants would let other African's do the actual slave-raiding, transporting those who were captured in chains to the coast in order for sale to European traders.

They were marched in shackles “like cattle to the slave-market, examined like cattle, bought like cattle and, like cattle, branded with a hot iron” (Robinson 1973, p.60).

These enslaved people were then taken across the Atlantic to the West Indies in a journey referred to as the ‘Middle Passage’. Enslaved people were packed together below deck in cramped conditions still chained and shackled together; women and children were kept separately from the men and were subject to regular abuse. Conditions aboard the ship were so poor it's estimated that over 2 million enslaved people died on this 4-to-12-week journey.

Once docked the enslaved were then sold to people in the West Indies and North America in exchange for goods such as sugar and tobacco which would return to Britain (thus completing the ‘triangle’). The buyer would own these

individuals for life (Chattel Slavery) and any children born to the enslaved people were automatically enslaved too.

Between 1500 and 1870 over 12-15 million people were enslaved and transported from Africa to European colonies and plantations. Their labour was used to produce and harvest tobacco and sugar among many other products deemed valuable in western societies.

Britain played a huge part in the slave trade with around 10,000 voyages across the Atlantic taking place from docks/ports in cities such as Bristol, Liverpool, and Southampton.

While the slave trade was abolished in 1807 it would take over 25 more years for slavery itself to be abolished in 1833.

Bristol made a fortune out of every aspect of slavery, including its abolition. Merchants received compensation for their ‘loss’ in 1833, “one Bristol firm-Messrs Thomas & John Daniel-collected nearly a quarter of a million pounds” (Robinson 1973, p.72), via abolition. Adjusted for inflation this would be worth nearly £32,000,000 today.

“The abolition act contained provisions for the financial compensation of former British slave owning families by the British taxpayer to the tune of £16 Billion pounds... the largest bailout in British history until the 2008 banking crisis” (Scene 21).

BRISTOL'S ROLE

Miles Chambers (Bristol's first city poet laureate)

"Some people don't get that black people still feel the full impact of slavery today" ... "We are still seeing the effects of slavery in this city, there is still money from slavery in this city and so we can't ignore it."

Bristol's fame and wealth were built on the slave trade.

It was a trade "which the Corporation of Bristol and the Society of Merchant Venturers warmly endorsed as 'the great support of our people at home, and the foundation of our trade abroad'" (Robinson 1973, p.57)

Bristol's official involvement in the transatlantic slave trade started in 1698 when the London-based Royal African Company's monopoly of the trade was ended. A few Bristol ships had been licensed to engage in slave trading as early as 1690 and there is little doubt that Bristol ships traded illegally in slaves well before then.

By 1709, fifty-seven slave ships were sailing from Bristol. Twenty years later the number was up to eighty or ninety and, by 1755, no fewer than 155 Bristol merchants were trading in slaves. These traders reaped the profits from the sale in Britain of molasses, tobacco and ivory which had, in the Americas and West Indies, been exchanged and bartered for using Slaves (refer to the Slave Trade Triangle from the last section).

By the late 1730s Bristol had become Britain's premier slaving port. In 1750 alone, Bristol ships transported some 8,000 of the 20,000 enslaved Africans sent that year to the British Caribbean and North America. By the latter half of

the century, Bristol's position as premier slaving port had been overtaken by Liverpool yet, even as late as 1789, the trade to Africa and the West Indies was estimated to have comprised over 80 per cent of the total value of Bristol's trade abroad.

Famous Bristol names such as Colston, Tyndall and Farr were directly involved in the trade whilst the Brights, Smyths and Pinneys owned West Indian plantations. Street names such as Guinea Street, Jamaica Street, Codrington Place, Tyndall's Park, Worral and Stapleton Roads recall the city's involvement with Africa and the West Indies.

While the Slave Trade officially ended in 1833, when slavery itself was formally outlawed in British territories, the legacy of the trade can still be felt in Bristol. For example, as late as the 1960s the Bristol Omnibus Company openly employed only white drivers and conductors; this was until the black-led Bristol Bus Boycott challenged this discrimination. In May 1963 a group of young West Indians, Roy Hackett, Guy Bailey, Prince Brown and Owen Henry, led by British born Paul Stephenson organised a boycott against the Bristol Omnibus Company which aided the passing of the race relations act of 1968 which made discrimination on grounds of race illegal in jobs and housing.

The Bristol Old Vic as a theatre isn't innocent.

The Bristol Old Vic/Theatre Royal was opened in 1766. Its construction was funded by 50 merchants of whom at least 12 were slave ship owners, and another six were suppliers to the slave ships, plantation owners or sugar traders.

BLM AND EDWARD COLSTON

“Neutral is white. The default is white. Because we are born into an already written script that tells us what to expect from strangers due to their skin colour, accents and social status, the whole of humanity is coded as white. Blackness, however, is considered the ‘other’ and therefore to be suspected”

(Reni, Eddo-Lodge, Why I’m No Longer Talking to White People about Race)

The Black Lives Matter movement was founded in America in 2013 in response to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin’s murderer; a grave injustice that occurred as a result of the kind of societal inequality touched upon in the above quote from Eddo-Lodge.

Black Lives Matter are a collective of liberators with the aim of eradicating white supremacy and an aim to build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes.

The movements visibility was greatly increased after the murder of George Floyd on May 25th 2020 after a Minneapolis police officer knelt on his neck for more than eight minutes.

In their impact report 2020, Black Lives Matter wrote:

“In the first eight months of 2020, police killed 164 Black people [in America alone]. Prior to May 25th, we had already seen far too many. So, when George Floyd was murdered, in a way far too similar to what we had seen six years prior in the case of Eric Garner- it was breaking point for people everywhere. Suddenly we had thousands- millions- of people across the country and globe calling for

change... across the country and the globe... in times of stress and hardship, we turned to each other. Because we know that we keep us safe”

In June 2020, Black Lives Matter and associated groups protested in Bristol leading to the toppling of the statue of Edward Colston that stood on Colston Avenue. Colston was a 17th century merchant and slave trader whose ships sent about 80,000 men, women, and children from Africa to the Americas between 1672 and 1689 alone, and who’s name looms large over Bristol. The statue was dumped in the harbour.

Bristol was divided over the toppling; many arguing that history can’t be changed. What those people ignore is that for years people had peacefully campaigned for the statue’s removal or, at the very least, a plaque explaining the atrocities he committed but to no avail. This inaction echoes the sentiment of Olaudah’s words in scene one to Gloria, “wait for white people to put it there you’ll be waiting a long time”.

The inability for those in power to affect positive change led to protestors taking concrete, positive action.

THE ZONG MASSACRE

“Zong. The ship was built by the Dutch, won by us and sold to a Glasgow trader in Africa before Gregson bought her. Originally called the Zorgue, which in the Dutch vernacular translates- Care”
(Equiano/Vassa in Scene Ten:)

The Slave Ship Zong departed the coast of Africa in September 1781 with 470 slaves.

Despite being a small boat the ship’s Captain, Luke Collingwood, deliberately overloaded the ship with slaves with twice the number of people the ship had been designed to carry (this was not uncommon practice during the transatlantic slave trade).

By the 29th November disease had run rife of the ship and many of the slaves were malnourished. Deeming many of the slaves unsellable and to avoid further disease the ship’s crew decided that some of the slaves should be thrown overboard; their lives being claimed for on insurance. It was common practice for ship owners to take out insurance for their ‘cargo’ of enslaved people.

Over the course of 3 days 132 enslaved people were thrown overboard.

In filling to claim insurance for their losses it was argued that the massacre occurred out of necessity as the Zong did not have enough water to sustain both crew and human ‘commodities’. At the time this was a perfectly legal claim as John Lee states in Scene Nine:

“British Law is clear: Blacks are property. This property was thrown overboard of necessity to save vessels”.

In the initial insurance trial, the court found in favour of the ship’s owners granting £30 compensation for each

enslaved person thrown overboard (the equivalent to approximately £5300 today).

However, this decision was appealed in a second trial in 1783. It is this appeal that *The Meaning of Zong* focuses on.

(Note; this retrial was still an insurance dispute rather than a murder trial as Ottobah Coguano calls for it to be in scene nine).

Although those who were responsible for the Zong massacre were never brought to justice, the event itself increased the profile of abolitionists such as Granville Sharp and Olaudah Equiano and brought new converts including Thomas Clarkson and Reverend John Ramsay. They, in turn, inspired the actions of William Wilberforce who led the successful campaign to have Parliament abolish slavery throughout the British Empire in 1833.

In 2007, a memorial stone was erected at Black River, Jamaica, and in London a ship was sailed to Tower Bridge to commemorate the bicentenary of the Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade.

A BIOGRAPHY

A Biography of Gustavus Vassa Olaudah Equiano

Scene Two:

"My name is Gustavus Vassa. Named for a Swedish King. I bought my freedom from a British Captain. Baptised. Studied my scripture. Educated. I am a barber. I cut gentlemen's hair. Which I learned fighting this country's war"

Scene Fourteen:

"I am Olaudah Equiano. Olaudah meaning: one who speaks well or one with a loud voice"

Born: c.1745, Essaka (now Nigeria)

Died: 31 March 1797, London, England

Spouse: Susannah Cullen (m.1792)

Children: Anna Marie Vassa (1793-1797), Joanna Vassa (1795-1857)

According to his account, Equiano was kidnapped at age 11 and taken to the West Indies. He describes this kidnapping in scene 11 explaining to Ottobah that his father ("he was an Embrenche, which in Africa is a kind of... Judge" - Scene 20) had left the village and asked Equiano to look after the house and his sister, Rayowa, when two men and a woman stole both of them.

From there he went to Virginia, where he was purchased by the Royal Navy officer, Lieutenant Michael Henry Pascal, with whom he travelled widely. It was Pascal who renamed Equiano, 'Gustavus Vassa' after the 16th-century Swedish King. It was whilst travelling with Pascal

for eight years that he was baptised and learned to read and write.

Equiano changed hands twice more, to a ship captain in London and then again to the prominent merchant Robert King before buying his own freedom in 1766 after which he settled in England and became an active abolitionist. It was whilst working as a deckhand, valet and barber for Robert King that Equiano was able to save to buy his freedom, earning money by trading on the side of his services to King. It took him three years to save up the £40 asked of him (equivalent to roughly £7,500 today).

He was a prominent member of the 'Sons of Africa', a group of 12 black men who campaigned for abolition; Britain's first black political organisation. His autobiography, 'The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano; or, Gustavus Vassa, the African', published in 1789, with its strong abolitionist stance and detailed description of life in Nigeria, was so popular that in his lifetime it ran through nine English editions and one U.S. printing and was translated into Dutch, German, and Russian. The Interesting Narrative remains an essential work both for its picture of 18th-century Africa as a model of social harmony defiled by Western greed and for its eloquent argument against the barbarous slave trade. While he died before he was able to see Britain's positive action toward abolition; his contribution to this happening was enormous.

A BIOGRAPHY

Equiano had many supporters in Bristol, including over 60 subscribers to his book. But he had enemies too, with commercial interests in the transatlantic slave trade, several of whom invested in the building of this theatre, and some of whom campaigned against him, making him fear for his safety on his planned visit to Bristol in 1793. In light of this we have invited his memory to Bristol permanently... In 2018, Bristol's Year of Change, our rehearsal space 'Cooper's Loft' was renamed the 'Equiano Studio' in memory of the pioneering abolitionist... in order that his courage, vision and creativity might inspire all future Bristolians of every background to challenge and reform the injustices we see in our world, just as he did in his.

TIMELINE OF EQUIANO

- 1745** Olaudah Equiano born in Essaka, in what is now southeastern Nigeria
- 1756** Kidnapped and is sold to various masters within Africa. Then endures the Middle Passage to Barbados and to Virginia.
- 1756** Bought by British Naval Officer Michael Henry Pascal and is renamed Gustavus Vassa. Taken to England.
- 1756-62** The foundation stone of the Theatre was laid.
- 1763-66** He is resold to Robert King in Montserrat and works on trading ships in the West Indies
- 1766** The Theatre opened with a capacity of more than 1,000. To gain admission, people had to enter through houses on King Street. They would go into through passageways built underneath the houses that led into a courtyard where the theatre building stood.
- 1766** Equiano saves enough money to buy his own freedom.
- 1772** Granville Sharp gets the Somerset decision, declaring that slavery cannot exist in England and slaves setting foot there are free.
- 1775** Travels to the Mosquito Coast, Central America, with Dr. Irving to establish a plantation and to Christianize the Indian population.
- 1776** Returns to London. American Declaration of Independence signed.
- 1783** Equiano informs abolitionist Granville Sharp of Zong massacre (1781), which adds further emotional reactions to the anti-slave trade movement.
- 1784** Equiano sails for New York.
- 1786** Equiano appointed commissary to Sierra Leone recolonization expedition
- 1787** Helps organize Sons of Africa in London. Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade formed in England.
- 1788** Equiano presents anti slave trade petition to England's Queen Charlotte, wife of King George III. Abolitionists petition British Parliament to end the slave trade.
- 1789** Equiano sails for New York.
- 1790** The Narrative is printed in Dutch.
- 1791** Narrative printed in New York. Slave revolt in St. Dominique (Haiti).
- 1792** Marries Englishwoman Susan Cullen.
- 1797** Equiano dies in London.

Timeline reproduced with kind permission of The Equiano Society, www.equiano.uk

The Equiano Society was founded by Arthur Torrington and Samuel B. King in London in November 1996. Its main objective is to publicise and celebrate the life and work of Olaudah Equiano. The society also celebrates and publicises the achievements of Equiano's contemporaries: Ignatius Sancho, Phillis Wheatley, Ottobah Cugoana, and others who made outstanding contributions to African literary and cultural heritage.

A BIOGRAPHY

A Biography of Granville Sharp

Scene Two:

"Vassa: "Granville Sharp is the only one in Britain who gives a damn about Black people"

Born: 10 November 1735

Died: 6 July 1813

Sharp was a leading British abolitionist, scholar and philanthropist. The ninth and youngest son of Thomas Sharp and Judith Wheler, he had a variety of interests, including theology, for which he taught himself Greek and Latin, and music.

His interest in slavery began in 1765 after he befriended Jonathan Strong, a slave who had been badly beaten by his master, David Lisle. Sharp's brother William was a doctor who gave free treatment to the poor of the City of London, it was while visiting his brother that Sharp noticed Strong and they became friends.

After Jonathan Strong had regained his health, David Lisle paid two men to recapture him. In the late 1760s, it was not at all unusual for slaves and former slaves to be kidnapped and forcibly put aboard ships bound for the colonies in the New World. We witness a particularly tense moment in scene three when Vassa is at the docks trying to gather information about The Zong, and arouses the suspicion of an officer who assaults Vassa, (Vassa: "Get off me. You're going to take me. Get off me!"). The interaction speaks to the suspicion and mistrust black people were greeted with in Britain at the time.

When Sharp heard the news, he took Lisle to court claiming that as Strong was in England he was no longer a slave. However, it was not until 1768 that the courts ruled in Strong's favour. The case received national publicity and Sharp was able to use this in his campaign against slavery.

Sharp devoted his time to forcing a definitive legal ruling on the question of whether a slave could be compelled to leave Britain; which was enshrined in law in 1772 with the Somerset ruling in which Lord Chief Justice Mansfield (who also presided over the Zong insurance retrial in 1783) ruling that slave owners could not legally force slaves to return to the colonies once they were in Britain.

In 1787, Sharp and his friend Thomas Clarkson were instrumental in forming the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade. Although Sharp and Clarkson were Anglican, most of the other founding members were Quakers. They later persuaded the MP, William Wilberforce, to become their spokesman in parliament.

The London committee adopted as its seal Josiah Wedgwood's celebrated cameo, with the image of the supplicating slave in chains and the slogan of emotive pathos 'Am I not a Man and a Brother?' It became one of the best-known and enduring of the artistic representations of the abolitionist movement.

ABOLITION

The struggle to end the transatlantic slave trade and slavery was achieved by African resistance and economic factors as well as through humanitarian campaigns. Campaigners set out to inform the British public about the barbarity of the trade in human cargo and its connection with sugar production.

The vigorous campaign to achieve abolition ramped up in Britain in 1770s with high profile court rulings such as The Somerset Case in 1772, in which it was decided no enslaved person in England could be forcibly moved and resold, and The Zong trials of 1783.

Early activists included Granville Sharp and Thomas Clarkson, who argued that the only way to end the suffering of enslaved people was to make the slave trade illegal by banning British ships from taking part.

In 1787 many abolitionists came together to form the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade (their seal is above). The group gained the support of the MP William Wilberforce who from 1789 represented the group in parliament and began to introduce anti-slavery motions in proceeding. Wilberforce was instrumental in the passing of the 1807 Abolition of the Slave Trade Act.

9 of the 12 members of the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade were Quakers; formerly known as the Society of Friends. The Quaker church was strongly opposed to the slave trade.

In 1787 Ottobah Cugoano shared his experiences of enslavement entitled 'Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evils of Slavery'; the first published critique of the slave trade by an African person. It was swiftly followed by the publication of Olaudah Equiano's autobiography. These publications served as powerful testaments to the horrors of enslavement. Both men were prominent members of the 'Sons of Africa', a group of 12 black men who campaigned for abolition; Britain's first black political organisation.

Abolition wasn't easy, counter campaigns were mounted by those who profited from slavery. The West India lobby of plantation owners and their supporters in the British Parliament fought abolition; and while ultimately unsuccessful they were still able to profit from the ending of the slave trade. Despite the abolition of slave trading by Britain in 1807 illegal trading continued for a further 60 years. While, as we're told in scene 21, the abolition act of 1833, which ended slavery itself in British colonies, contained "provisions for the financial compensation of former British slave owning families by the British taxpayer to the tune of £16 Billion".

Abolition of the Slave Trade Act, 1807.

Despite opposition from a variety of people with a vested interest in slavery, the abolitionists and their supporters persisted. In 1806, Lord Grenville made a passionate speech arguing that the trade was 'contrary to the principles of

ABOLITION

justice, humanity and sound policy'. When the bill to abolish the slave trade was finally voted upon, there was a majority of 41 votes to 20 in the Lords and a majority of 114 to 15 in the Commons.

On 25 March 1807, the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act entered the statute books. This ended the buying and selling of enslaved people within the British Empire, but it did not protect those already enslaved and many enslavers continued to trade illegally.

It took a further 30 years of campaigning before slavery was abolished in most British colonies.

AN A – Z OF NAMES

There are so many people mentioned within this play here's an A-Z list of them and why they're significant in the context of the play.

“Note: Sir Thomas Hart, Elijah Brown, Annie Greenwood and the Crew members mentioned in scene 14: Michael Sullivan, John Barnes, George Aston, Michael Haman, aren't featured here as they're fictional creations. This is not to diminish characters such as Elijah Brown (a dock worker) and Annie Greenwood (a female secretary) who, while fictional, reflect real lives.

Arthur Leary Pigot

(First mentioned in Scene 9)

Within the judicial proceedings for The Zong massacre Pigot represented the insurers. As we are told in scene 9, his father was one of the biggest slave owners in the Caribbean.

Bishop of Chester – Beilby Porteus

(First mentioned in Scene 3)

Beilby Porteus was born in 1731 and died in 1809. He is considered to be the first Anglican in a position of authority to seriously challenge the Church's position on Slavery. Indeed, in Scene 3 he is the only bishop who agrees to meet with Granville Sharpe though his thoughts on the topic don't appear as advanced as Granville's.

Brother Mandeville

(First mentioned in Scene 5)

Refers to George Robert Mandeville, a member of the Sons of Africa. In 1787 Olaudah Equiano presented an antislavery petition to England's Queen Charlotte, wife of King George III, Mandeville was one of the signatories.

George III, King

(First mentioned in Scene 1)

George III was the King of Great Britain and of Ireland from October 1760 until the union of the two kingdoms on January 1801. After this point he was King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland until his death in 1820. In regard to slavery, it was George III who signed into law 'An Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade' on 25th March 1807.

George Floyd

(First mentioned in Scene 1)

George Floyd was an African American man who was murdered by the police officer Derek Chauvin in Minneapolis on 25th May 2020; he was 46. George Floyd said more than 20 times that he could not breathe as he was restrained by Chauvin and his officers. Footage captured of the event was shared on social media and sparked mass protests under the banner 'Black Lives Matter'.

Granville Sharp

Granville Sharp

(First mentioned in Scene 2.1)

See the larger biography on page 17

Gustav I of Sweden

(First mentioned in Scene 2)

While not mentioned directly, Gustav I, of the Vasa noble family, was the King of Sweden from 1523-1560, and inspired the name 'Gustavas Vasa' which Lieutenant Michal Pascal gave to Olaudah Equiano.

Guy Fawkes

(First mentioned in Scene 9)

Is one example given of other significant trial hearings that have taken place in

Westminster Hall. A member of a group of provincial English Catholics who was involved in the failed Gunpowder Plot of 1605.

Harriet Tubman

(First mentioned in Scene 1)

Harriet Tubman was born into slavery in 1820. Having escaped slavery in the South of America in 1849 she went on to become a leading abolitionist and the most famous ‘conductor’ on the Underground Railroad. She risked her life to lead hundreds of family members and other slaves from the plantation system to freedom on this elaborate secret network of safe houses.

Ignatius Sancho

(First mentioned in Scene 4)

Charles Ignatius Sancho was a British abolitionist, writer and composer. Born on a slave ship in the Atlantic, Sancho was sold into slavery in the Spanish colony of New Granada.

Ottobah: “I know one thing, people will be talking about Ignatious Sancho looooong after slavery is done. I don’t ask you to be defined by slavery, I dare you to out live it!” (Scene Five)

James Kelsall

(First mentioned in Scene 2.1)

Kelsall was the first mate upon The Zong. He provided a testimony for judicial proceedings surrounding the massacre.

James Kelsall

(First mentioned in Scene 2.3)

Sharp speaking to Vassa- “I helped him gain freedom from his master”

Jonathan Strong was a slave brought to London from Barbados by David Lisle. David Lisle, a London lawyer, has severely beaten Jonathan and left him unconscious in the gutter, Doctor Sharpe and his brother

Granville Sharp (also included in this A-Z) did all they could to help Strong. After recovering strength, Strong was spotted by David Lisle, his former owner, who had him arrested and thrown in gaol, awaiting transport back to the Caribbean to be sold as a slave. Fortunately, Granville Sharp heard of this and hurried to the Lord Mayor’s office to demand Jonathan’s release; this was eventually granted.

Lord Chief Justice Mansfield

(First mentioned in Scene 2.1)

William Murray, 1st Earl of Mansfield was chief justice of the King’s Bench of Great Britain from 1756 to 1788. He oversaw the Somerset case brought forward in 1772 which concerned a slave’s liberty and status as property in which he ruled that no slave could be forcibly removed from Britain and sold into slavery.

Luke Collingwood, Captain

(First mentioned in Scene 2.1)

William Murray, 1st Earl of Mansfield was chief justice of the King’s Bench of Great Britain from 1756 to 1788. He oversaw the Somerset case brought forward in 1772 which concerned a slave’s liberty and status as property in which he ruled that no slave could be forcibly removed from Britain and sold into slavery.

Olaudah Equiano

First mentioned in Scene 1)

See the larger biography on page XXX

Ottobah Cugoano

(First mentioned in Scene 4)

Also known as John Stuart, Cugoano was born in 1757. Captured and sold into slavery at the age of 13 in present-day

Ghana, he was shipped to Grenada. In 1772 he was purchased by an English merchant who took him to England, where he was freed. He was an abolitionist, political activist and one of the leaders of London's black community who helped form the Sons of Africa. In 1787, with the help of his friend, Olaudah Equiano, he published an account of his experiences, *Narrative of the Enslavement of a Native of Africa*.

Queen Victoria

(First mentioned in Scene 1)

Victoria was Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland from 20 June 1837 until her death in 1901. Known as the Victorian era, her reign of 63 years and seven months was longer than any previous British monarch. Upon her succession to the throne the Slavery Abolition Act had already been signed (in 1833), though this shouldn't be seen as the end of the struggle for equality.

Robert Stubbs

(First mentioned in Scene 2.1)

Robert Stubbs was a passenger on board *The Zong* and was a former captain of slave ships. In 1780 he was appointed governor of Anomabu, a British Slave Fort, but was deemed an incapable and irresponsible leader and was quickly removed from his position. He provided testimony during judicial proceedings surrounding the massacre.

Susannah Cullen

(First mentioned in Scene 5)

Susannah Cullen was Olaudah Equiano's wife, they married on April 7, 1792. She was an English Woman of Scottish descent whom he apparently met on his book tour in Cambridgeshire in 1789. Susannah gave

birth to their first child Ann Mary on October 16, 1793.

Thomas Clarkson

(First mentioned in Scene 21)

Clarkson was a leading campaigner against the slave trade and slavery in Britain and the British empire. In 1779, Clarkson went to Cambridge University where he won a Latin essay competition on the subject of whether it was lawful to make slaves of others against their will; feeling that someone should do something about this evil; dedicating the rest of his life to ending slavery. Along with Granville Sharp, he helped form the Committee for the Abolition of the African Slave Trade. He devoted his time and energy to travelling around Britain, particularly to the ports of Liverpool and Bristol, gathering evidence about the slave trade from eyewitnesses, especially from sailors who had worked on slave trading ships.

Thomas More

(First mentioned in Scene 9)

Is one example given of other significant trial hearings that have taken place in Westminster Hall. He served as Henry VIII's Lord High Chancellor from 1529-1532. However, in 1535 he was tried for treason having opposed protestant reformation and opposing Henry VIII's separation from the Catholic Church.

William Wallace

(First mentioned in Scene 9)

Is one example given of other significant trial hearings that have taken place in Westminster Hall. Wallace, born 1270, was a Scottish knight who became one of the main leaders during the First War of Scottish Independence. In 1305 he was tried for treason against King

AN A – Z OF NAMES

Edward I and was hung, drawn and quartered after being found guilty.

William Wilberforce

(First mentioned in Scene 21)

Wilberforce was an English member of parliament and a social reformer who was very influential in the abolition of the slave trade and eventually slavery itself in the British empire. Thomas Clarkson (also part of this A-Z), a member of the Committee for the Abolition of the African Slave Trade, had a tremendous influence on Wilberforce persuading him to lobby for the abolition of the slave trade. Wilberforce regularly introduced anti-slavery motions in parliament. He died in 1833 shortly after the act to free slaves in the British empire passed through the House of Commons.

William Woodfall

(First mentioned in Scene 4)

Born in 1746 Woodfall was an English printer, publisher, and Parliamentary reporter. He was the Journalist and editor of the Morning Chronicle, the paper in which Vassa finds printed the letter in Scene Two.

SUGGESTED THEMES

Don't limit yourself to just this list; there are so many themes and topics that can be explored in *The Meaning of Zong*.

The Operation of History

The manager of the bookstore mentions George Floyd to which Gloria responds: "I'm talking about the British Slave trade". Gloria doesn't diminish the importance/impact Floyd had on advancing the 'Black Lives Matter' movement globally but demands we recognise the areas of difference as well as overlap in how racism within different societies, in this case America and the UK, operate. The historian David Olusoga writes:

"Britain is not America. But we too are disfigured by deep and pervasive racism... it would be foolish to see only parallels in the US and UK experience. But to downplay our own problems would be shameful... excusing or downplaying British racism with comparisons to the US is a bad habit with a long history".

Memory

In her book *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* "Our struggle is also a struggle of memory against forgetting". Here they speak towards both the memory of personal societal trauma but also that of traumatic memories that precede one's own life narrative, but nevertheless define it. Legacies of the transatlantic slave trade still haunt the present; and it is through the appraisal of memory that we can recognise these legacies.

"They are not satisfied with colonising our land. They seek to colonise our bodied, our minds, our thoughts, colonise our feelings, our talent, our culture. Our sense of self" (Ottobah to Vassa, Scene 5)

Exposing truth

Sharp feels like he's in a losing battle in exposing the brutality of the slave trade.

For reasons of corruption and white washing the truth is being hidden from the public, take Annie for example who is shocked to hear of the realities of the slave trade having believed "Africans are better off in America. My brother David was lost there in the battle of Yorktown. He wrote of paradise" (Scene 10). "They want this kept from the public" (Granville to Vassa, Scene four). Granville, with the help of Vassa, intends to make anyone who lifts a spoon of sugar to sweeten their tea SHUDDER at the exposed horror and truth of the trade. Throughout the play the hope of exposing truth comes under threat such as in scene 10 when Annie, having promised to transcribe the court hearing, questions her decision to do so. Having been unaware of the truth she states, "I cannot write down such acts for two shillings, two hundred pounds, nor all the gold in Africa". Equally in scene 20 after the trial has been found in favour of the insurers and the lies of the Zong voyage exposed a Clerk attempts to confiscate the transcript written by Annie in the hopes of preventing the exposure of truth. Attempts to expose the truth in the period carried risk; take for example William Woodfall, owner of the *Morning Chronicle*, who we meet in scene 6, and who was imprisoned for publishing anti-slavery sentiment. Of great importance here, once truth is exposed, is responsibility. As Olaudah states in scene 17 it's not the reason but the response.

Complicity

Throughout the play we meet a range of characters who are complicit within the trade, within this scene key examples are the Bishop of Chester and Elijah Brown. The difference between the two characters is their level of power. Brown recognises the brutality of the trade and sees it first-hand every working day but

SUGGESTED THEMES

admits he has to work out of financial necessity (being financially indebted to the trading company). Brown speaks about his brother in law: “My brother in law works down the iron works, making the chains for them slavers... he don’t know nothing about what goes on out on them ships”. Contrary Chester is aware of the brutality yet seems unwilling to take or commit himself to affirmative or concrete action in scene three beyond meeting with Granville.

Union

Gathered in Grays inn are a large crowd of Black Londoners and Quakers, they have formed a united community. Adversity is easier to overcome when there’s strength in numbers as Granville realises in scene 20 “change is different people leaning to a common cause... I’ve spent my life marching alone. Change is begun by individuals, but it is always realised by groups”. We may see the Black Londoners as united together by identity politics which can emerge as a response to social injustice and widespread prejudice, acting as a necessary counter to oppression.

Corruption

Throughout the play we become aware of the level of corruption with many influential and high-powered people holding a stake in the trade itself and thus having a vested interest in its continuation, thus acting as a barrier for its abolition. For example, In Scene 9, at the first day of the Zong retrial, Ottobah, speaking to the audience, informs us “plaintiffs- slave owners, insurers- slave traders, lawyers- slave owners... judge- slave owner. It was a convention”, indicating a completely rigged system in judicial proceedings. While we may have a tendency to wish to see justice as being blind (consistent with the image painted in scene 12), in the case of the Zong trial it certainly wasn’t, bias existing at all levels of the court. Themes of corruption

are also picked up in scene three when Granville appeals to the Bishop of Chester arguing that “the church may pick and choose its moral position dependent on its own interests?... there is a plantation in Barbados, Codrington- I assisted a runaway- the church of England has a stake in that very plantation does it not?”. During the abolitionist campaigns certain wealthy MPs bribed other MPs to get their support in blocking abolitionist bills through parliament. It should be noted: “prime ministers whose families profited from slavery included Sir Robert Peel, the founder of the modern police force, and William Gladstone... his father, John Gladstone, was one of the largest slave owners in the British West Indies”

Key theme: Dehumanisation

(Include an illustration of stowage plans for the 18th-century British slave ship)

The comparing of black people to animals occurs in Scene Nine of The Meaning of Zong when Judge Mansfield claims the massacre of 132 was “just as if horses had been thrown overboard”; zoomorphising those who had been enslaved. Statements such as these see hierarchies of race set up along human and non-human terms; we may call this inhumanisation, the belief that one group of people are more human than another.

Further acts of dehumanisation are alluded to in this scene when Pigot states: “This Zong was a four-mast ship at two hundred tons. Carrying 442 chattels... it is calculated a ship of this size would house no more than 300. The Zong was a recklessly overcrowded ship before she had even left Africa”, a statement made worse when Vassa insists: “the ship was smaller than that... he doesn’t know what he’s talking about.

SUGGESTED THEMES

It was three masts, not four". The illustration above shows an illustration of the stowage plans for the 18th century British slave ship 'Brookes' and was commissioned in the period by abolitionists. Slave ships were dangerously overcrowded in the name of greed, to increase the profits of each voyage. Slaves were tightly packed; "A ship's hold was cramped - only five feet high, with a shelf running round the edge to carry yet more enslaved people. People were loaded in so close together that one captain described them as being 'like books on a shelf'" 27. Throughout the play black people are dehumanised and made inferior. For example, in scene 3 the Bishop of Chester refers to them as 'heathens' a derogatory word to mean a person regarded as lacking culture or moral principle; particularly a person who does not belong to a widely held religion. Slaves were also physically abused while onboard as evidenced in scene two, when Stubbs says to Ama; "Pretty thing. Don't you die. I'll need you during this voyage. Only unspoilt one left". While in scene 16 we hear testimony from Joyi who discusses her rape by members of the crew; "They hurt us. One of the murder men... he comes to me, smiles- says words to me in his language that I do not understand, but I know he means me to be still and make no noise. I feel as if I'm tearing inside and I hope that no one will see. I pretend that I am home with my mother up in the ground, but I feel sick because I know that her heart would break if she could see what this white man is doing to her child".

Key theme: Justice

As the previous scene concluded "none shall know peace until there is justice".

Lady justice is a personification of the moral force within judicial systems. She is depicted different in various contexts though commonly, as the poem picks up on, is depicted as holding a sword (representing authority), being blind folded

(representing impartiality) and holding a pair of scales (representative of support and opposition).

Key theme: sexism

Despite Granville's want of a shorthand transcript writer for the retrial, he is trepidatious to give the job to Annie who states "you presume my being a female renders this statement untrue"; this is an allusion to other social inequality in the period; that of sexism. In the eighteenth century, enlightened ideas about the organisation of society, including the position of women were beginning to sprout... such as moving away from the belief in witches held in previous centuries (see the witchcraft act of 1735).

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) in 1792 she published 'A Vindication of the Rights of Woman' and she is commonly marked out as the 'Mother of Feminism'.

However, this said, even today, much as racism still perpetuates within social structures, there exist major inequalities for women who struggle against the patriarchy, among many problems, one major issue facing women today is economic inequality. We may want to consider the term intersectionality theorised by Kimberlé Crenshaw which considers the crossovers between race and gender (as well as other marginalised groups in society) operates throughout the play. See scene 18 "We must be subject not to the chains which we see but the ones we do not. For the ties which bind us one to the other have been in place since before the oceans rolled and make steel seem as straw".

SUGGESTED THEMES

Key theme: Home

Rebelling against the white man's ritual of going around the tree of forgetting (as in Scene 2.2) Riba, Ama and Joyi take comfort in remembering home (see notes on scene 2.2 key **theme:** memory). They discuss food playfully arguing over how their families would prepare Jollof Rice. Memories of a home where the mountains are Great, the animals strong and the people ancient

MUSIC WITHIN THE PLAY

‘Tommy’s Gone to Hilo’

In scene 2.2 Elijah Brown sings ‘Tommy’s Gone to Hilo’

‘Rule, Britannia’

In scene 10 Elijah Brown sings ‘Rule, Britannia’.

Traditionally this song is performed at the ‘Last Night of the Proms’ which takes place each year at the Royal Albert Hall. Originally, Great Britain was called ‘Albion’ by the Romans, who invaded Britain in 55BC, but this later become ‘Britannia’. The song that we recognise today is estimated to have been written in 1740 was originally composed for the masque ‘Alfred’, about Alfred the Great. Masques were a popular form of entertainment in the 16th and 17th century. The refrain of the song is “Rule, Britannia! rule the waves:

“Britons never will be slaves.” And is often confused for “Britannia rule[s] the waves”.

‘Tue tue, barima’

In scene 17 as Ama sinks in the water she sings ‘Tue tue, barima’

Tue Tue is a traditional Ghanaian folk song and there are widely conflicting translations of its lyrics.

The lyrics for the song are written below:

Tue tue, barima tue tue
Tue tue, barima tue tue
Abofra ba ama dawa dawa
Tue tue
Abofra ba ama dawa dawa
Tue tue
Barima tue tue
Barima tue tue
Barima tue tue
Barima tue tue
Barima tue tue

Barima tue tue

One interpretation of these lyrics from the Hal Leonard Corporation is:

“We are thankful for our harvest,
Do you want to go down to Ghana?
Do you want to come?
We will sing this happy song as we travel”

CULTURES IN THE PLAY

Rhythms

The rain in scene 18 is described as follows in the stage directions

“A million tiny taps. Faster and Faster. Louder. A driving rhythm... The entire ship, wooden and hollow becomes one vast drum as the heavens open, the deluge comes on and the vessel vibrates under the din. In the sound are Fante rhythms, Yoruba rhythms, Ashanti Rhythms. Islam and Anyi rhythms... the whole theatre is ringing”.

- Fante: (also spelled Fanti) are a people of the southern coast of Ghana. They speak a dialect of Akan.
- Yoruba: One of the three largest ethnic groups of Nigeria, concentrated in the southwestern part of that country. The Yoruba language has an extensive literature of poetry, short stories, myths, and proverbs.
- Ashanti: (also spelled Asante) are a people of south central Ghana and are a subgroup of the Akan peoples.
- Islam: According to Arab oral tradition, Islam first came to Africa with Muslim refugees fleeing persecution in the Arab peninsula and came to root along the East African coast some time in the 8th century.
- Anyi: (also spelled Agni) are a people who inhabit the tropical forest of eastern Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana.

Anansi

“All the wisdom spilled. A storm blew up and the sweet rains washed the wisdom into the river, all out into the sea, to every corner of the world, so that now everybody has a piece of wisdom”

In scene 18 Riba tells Joyi the story of spider Anansi. In her telling spider Anansi hoarded all the wisdom in the world and tried to hide it in a tree but clumsily spilt it all. Originating from the Asante people of Ghana, there is not a single story that

features Anansi; rather he appears in a range of folklore; traditionally told orally (accounting for the great many variations). His tales are collectively known as ‘Anansese’ (spider stories). The art of storytelling and mythology are prominent features in African cultures as they are the means in which universal wisdom, social norms and behaviours for social cohesion are explained and passed down to future generations.

Religious imagery:

Asase Yaa

“My mother would call on Asase Yaa” (Riba, Scene 16)

Asase Yaa, also called Aberewa (Akan: “Old Woman”), in the indigenous religion of the Akan people of the Guinea Coast, refers to the great female spirit of the earth, second only to Nyame (the Creator) in power and reverence. The Akan regard the earth as a female spirit because of its fertility and its power to bring forth life, and they further personalize it as a mother because human beings depend on it for their continued nurturance and sustenance.

Abosom

“There are Abosom in the waters are there not?” (Joyi, Scene 15)

The Akan supreme being/god is Onyame; often thought to be female and associated with the Moon. However, Like other traditional west African religions, the Akan religion is polytheistic, meaning they believe in, or worship, more than one god. While Onyame is considered supreme, there are many minor deities. The abosom refers to the many minor deities who exercise powers over believers but are in turn subordinate to Onyame. The

CULTURES IN THE PLAY

abosom exercise their hold on the mind of the believer through asuman, charms, amulets, and other fetish objects associated with their powers.

Okomfo

“Okomfo? Please, we are in great danger” (Joyi, Scene 16)

Okomfo Anokye, a traditional spiritual leader and cofounder of the Asante empire who was considered to be the greatest law giver and wisest sage of the Asante// Ashanti people in western Africa. Okomfo Anokye had a profound impact on the Asante nation in its origin. He is the principal architect of Asante laws, customs, and beliefs about religion and supernatural powers.

WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES

Activity One

“What’s in a name?”

Sit students in a circle. Go around the circle one by one, introducing themselves by whichever name they wish to go by. Ask students to talk about the significance of their name to them. This could be anything the wish to volunteer; the origin story of their name, thoughts and feelings about their name, anecdotes relating to their name, what it means to them etc.

Activity Two:

“Name Game”

Have students walk around the room. When they make eye contact with another student, ask them to shake hands and introduce themselves by name. Once two people have shaken hands and exchanged names, they take on the name of the person they met. The next time they make eye contact and shake hands with someone in the room, they introduce themselves as the person they previously shook hands with. Students continue moving around the room, exchanging names and becoming the person they just met. Whenever a student receives their own name back to them, they are allowed to sit out and watch everyone else moving around the room.

When the majority of the group have found their own name again – pause the game and reflect on the students who are left still walking around the room.

Reflection:

- Why have some people not managed to get their name back?
- What does it feel like to have found your name, and sat down outside of the game?
- What does it feel like to have lost your name, to still be walking around the space?
- How could you have tried to get your

name back?

- How could you have helped other students to get their names back?

Activity Three:

“Timeline of change”

Part one:

Ask students to think about important events they have lived through, or know about. These could be big changes, or small things relevant to them. Students write down their important moments on a sticky note and stick them on the floor in a roughly chronological order – creating a timeline of change. Students can contribute as many moments of change as they like.

Reflection:

Students step back and look at the timeline of change they have created together

- Do any themes crop up?
- Have their peers remembered events they had forgotten about?
- Is there a particular year when more change happened. If so, why?
- Do they remember where they were when any of these changes happened?
- Have they contributed to any of these changes?
- Do some students remember events differently?

WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES

Activity four:

Telling your story

Students divide into pairs. They sit back to back on chairs. One of the pairs has a paper and pen. Inspired by the timeline, the other has 2 minutes to talk about a change they have witnessed, lived through or that has happened to them. As they are speaking, their partner notes down sentences, words or phrases that stick out. Partners swap and repeat the process with the different roles.

Once they have both had a chance to tell their story, the pairs choose one of the stories to make a short performance out of together. They are only allowed to use the words or phrases that were written down whilst they were speaking the story, and their own name. They can use their name and the words as many times as they like. They don't have to use any words at all.

After ten minutes, the class re-groups and takes it in turns to perform their pieces.

Reflection:

- What was it like to sit and tell your story without interruption?
- How did it feel to only be able to use the words written down by your partner?
- Did you feel like you could make your story understood? Did it become a different story?
- What were the qualities of the performances? How did the audience feel? What themes stuck out to them? How did it make them feel about change, and telling your story?
- If it wasn't your story that you used, how did it feel to perform your partners story?

FURTHER READING

In 2020 the Bristol Old Vic opened the Young SixSix library, an initiative thought up by our ensemble of young theatre makers the Young SixSix who felt that we're still not seeing enough Black stories in our theatres, our schools, or in our media. The library aims to celebrate books, plays, monologue and poems by black writers.

To get a book just browse the shelves in the foyer, find a member of staff and let them know you'd like to take it out!

The two books listed below are fantastic supplements to 'The Meaning of Zong' and all are available from the Young SixSix library now!

Superior: The Return of Race Science

Book by Angela Saini

Olaudah: "European scientists might try and find some equation for my presence, but you and I call it life"

(Scene One)

In Scene one, Olaudah speaks towards European white superiority; and how often in the period race was assigned in scientific terms. The emergence and continuation of race sciences is covered remarkably well in Angela Saini's book "Superior: The Return of Race Science" pointing towards figures such as the Swedish Carl Linnaeus who in 1758 created taxonomies of race based on phenotypes (appearance) but also based on character traits. Even Charles Darwin, one of Britain's most famous biologists, used and believed in these unscientific categorisations, claiming to observe; "gradations between the 'highest men of the highest races and the lowest savages'... Men were above women and white races above others."

Desdemona

Toni Morrison

"One time in Soho he and I passed one of these young fashionables, who laughed to his mate- "Smoke Othello!" Sancho drew up and exclaimed- "Aye sir, such Othello's you meet with but once a

century. Such Iagos as you, we meet with in every dirty passage. Proceed!" (Ottobah, Scene 5).

The Meaning of Zong contains references to Othello such as Coguanu recounting an anecdote about Sancho in scene five, or scene ten in which, after Vassa sticks up for Annie, Sharp cries; "One Desdemona insufficient?" referring to Vassa's love interest Susannah Cullen who, like Desdemona in Othello, was a white woman in love with a black man. Peter Sellars states that Othello "has stood for 400 years... in a fairly racist context to reinforce the idea that... the presence of a black man in the west is a permanent tragedy involving violence" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G73AhP7Sfpg>). To combat this, in 2011 Toni Morrison, Rokia Traoré and Peter Sellars collaborated to produce 'Desdemona' as writer, lyricist, and director respectively. The work adapted Shakespeare's original, working to recover the absent voices of black women from Shakespeare's original and exploring discrimination across lines of race and gender, revising black subjectivities from a feminist point of view. The play is set "between life on earth and life beyond it" where oppressive boundaries of sex, race, and class are removed and where Morrison imagines a space in which people can come to voice, a timeless point from which the plays characters can rethink life and are revealed in a way they're not in Shakespeare's original.

SOURCES

FOR MORE INFORMATION

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-0ds8WxxK0&t=147s>
2. <https://bristololdvic.org.uk/whats-on/the-meaning-of-zong#overview>
3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/z2qj6sg/articles/zfkfn9q>
4. A Shocking History of Bristol, Book by Derek Robinson
5. <https://www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/stories/bristol-transatlantic-slave-trade/>
6. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-bristol-42404825>
7. <https://www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/stories/bristol-transatlantic-slave-trade-myths-truths/>
8. <https://www.blackpast.org/global-african-history/zong-massacre-1781/>
9. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zqv7hyc/revision/9>
10. <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2021/jan/19/the-story-of-the-zong-slave-ship-a-mass-masquerading-as-an-insurance-claim>
11. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Olaudah-Equiano>
12. https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/equiano_olaudah.shtml
13. <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/the-life-of-olaudah-equiano>
14. <https://slaveryandremembrance.org/people/person/?id=PP003>
15. https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/sharp_granville.shtml
16. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Granville-Sharp>
17. <https://brycchancarey.com/abolition/sharp.htm>
18. <https://spartacus-educational.com/REsharp.htm>
19. <https://bristololdvic.org.uk/press/bristol-old-vic-announce-2018-year-of-change>
20. <https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/history-of-slavery/abolition>
21. <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/blackhistory/rights/abolition.htm>
22. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/z2qj6sg/articles/zn7rbqt>
23. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jun/07/britain-is-not-america-but-we-too-are-disfigured-by-deep-and-pervasive-racism>
24. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/17/african-artists-benin-museum-thrives>
25. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/sep/30/westminsters-links-to-britains-slave-trade-revealed-in-art-survey>
26. <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/inclusive-heritage/womens-history/visible-in-stone/womens-rights/>
27. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z6bm39/revision/8>
28. <http://pancocojams.blogspot.com/2013/06/what-does-ghanaian-song-tue-tue-really.html>
29. <https://www.bethsnotesplus.com/2015/11/tue-tue.html>
30. <https://www.halleonard.com/product/viewproduct.action?itemid=9971491&subsiteid=1>
31. <https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofBritain/Rule-Britannia/>
32. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Fante>
33. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Yoruba>
34. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Asante>
35. https://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/africa/features/storyofafrica/index_section7.shtml
36. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Anyi>
37. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Asase-Yaa>
38. <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/news-wires-white-papers-and-books/deities-akan-religion>

SOURCES

39. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Okomfo-Anokye>
40. <https://folklorethursday.com/regional-folklore/anansi-the-spider-trickster-or-teacher/>
41. <https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofBritain/Sons-Of-Africa/>
42. <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-92867>
43. <https://blacklivesmatter.com/2020-impact-report/>
44. <https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/>
45. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-bristol-52955868>
46. <https://brycchancarey.com/abolition/porteus.htm>
47. <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Mandeville-136>
48. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/George-III>
49. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/george-floyd>
50. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Gustav-I-Vasa>
51. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Guy-Fawkes>
52. <https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/harriet-tubman>
53. <https://www.bl.uk/people/ignatius-sancho>
54. https://urc.org.uk/images/LOS/200419_Who_was_Jonathan_Strong.pdf
55. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-Murray-1st-Earl-of-Mansfield>
56. <https://www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk/article/section/bhm-firsts/ottobah-cugoano/>
57. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Victoria-queen-of-United-Kingdom>
58. <http://equianosworld.org/associates-family.php?id=2>
59. https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/clarkson_thomas.shtml
60. https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/more_sir_thomas.shtml
61. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-Wallace>
62. https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/wilberforce_william.shtml
63. <https://spartacus-educational.com/Jwoodfall.htm>
64. <https://memaps.club/bbb/story-of-the-bbb/>

Education Pack compiled by William Campbell and Aniqah Rawat