**Huguenot immigration to Britain**

The rise of Protestantism in the sixteenth century led to religious wars across Europe. Following King Henry VIII’s break with Rome and especially under the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, England became a major Protestant nation with Catholic Spain and, later, France as its chief rivals. Protestant refugees from these wars fled to England seeking safety and were largely welcomed. They included Walloons from Belgium and northern France, followed by French Huguenots after an event known as the St Bartholomew’s Day Massacre in 1572, when Huguenots were targeted for assassination and violence by Catholics.

Towards the end of the seventeenth century there was further extreme repression of Huguenots by the regime of French King Louis XIV. The sources studied in this lesson relate to the arrival, and the later experiences, in Britain of French Huguenots during the 1680s and 1690s, on either side of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in October 1685 by Louis. The Edict had given protection to French Protestants within France for over a century. Its revocation ended that protection and compelled a massive forced movement of French Protestants around Europe in diaspora.

In all, about 200,000 Huguenot refugees left France during the reign of Louis XIV and about a fifth of those came to England. The rest went to the Netherlands, Germany, Scandinavia, and the Americas (where, in most cases, they were warmly received). Across the parts of Europe where they settled, the Huguenots received an especially warm welcome where they brought new skills – in silk production and metalworking. But where they proposed to integrate with the existing labour forces of well-established industries like paper and glass manufacturing, they sometimes experienced intolerance. Large communities of Huguenots settled in London – especially in Spitalfields – and in Canterbury, Exeter, Plymouth, Norwich, Rochester, and Southampton, as well as in many other towns around the country.

Across England, the Huguenot immigrants distinguished themselves as artists, engravers, print-sellers, paper-makers, booksellers, bookbinders, furniture-makers, wood carvers, sculptors, gun-makers, gold- and silversmiths, jewellers, clock- and watchmakers, painters, glassmakers, ceramicists, ivory turners, silk and textile workers, doctors, scientists, writers, merchants and bankers. The variety of their impacts underscores the extent to which their migration was both a gain to England and a loss to France. Arguably, no other refugee group of this period made a broader impact than they did: they revolutionised the textiles industries, the arts and journalism, and provided much of the hard cash for the financial revolution that took place in London in the 1690s.

Adapted from <http://www.ourmigrationstory.org.uk/oms/by-era/1500%E2%80%931750> and <http://www.ourmigrationstory.org.uk/oms/thomas-papillons-advertisement>