



Historical Enquiries by **Justice to History**

Enquiry Four: Hostile Responses to Migrants

This Enquiry follows the development of hostility from elements of the British public towards immigrants from Early Modern times to the racist murder of a West Indian carpenter in London in the late 1950s. The earliest hostility can be considered 'xenophobic', and that ill-feeling and distrust towards foreigners can be traced far back in English history. While early expressions would not properly constitute 'racism', with ideas of 'race' developing most strongly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, concepts of fundamental genetic difference intensify simple fears of the unknown new arrival as we move further into and beyond the twentieth century.

Britain in the early twenty-first century has seen a rise in both xenophobic and racist hostility and abuse towards migrants. This Enquiry helps to examine the roots of such attitudes and to challenge pupils' views.

It must be noted that this can be seen as a difficult topic, both for young people and for their teachers. That said, it is an essential, albeit troubling part of Britain's history – one filled with surprising stories of solidarity. If taught sensitively, this can be one of the most enlightening and productive Enquiries. (See the [How to Talk about Migration](#) page for advice on how to cover difficult issues in the classroom).

If you are teaching migration as a GCSE topic, the OCR specification pays particular attention to the reception and acceptance of immigrants in England, and these case-studies and this Enquiry will be valuable resources for that course. The AQA programme touches on prejudices towards foreigners, especially in the second half of the twentieth century.

As with all Enquiries on this site, your pupils should be encouraged and guided to do independent research into the key concepts below, the historical cases focused upon, and the context of migration studied.

Enquiry question:

How far have racism and xenophobia influenced migrants' perceptions of themselves and their communities from 1500 to the present?

The key concepts involved: prejudice, racism, integration, xenophobia, class, ethnicity, race

The four sources from the collection to be investigated in this Enquiry:

- [Huguenot Silk Weavers in Spitalfields](#) (1500-1750)
- [Blood Libels, Castration and Christian Fears: Opposition to Jewish Citizenship](#) (1750-1900)
- [The First Indian MP: Dadabhai Naoroji](#) (1750-1900)
- [Murder in Notting Hill](#) (1900-2000s)



Sub-questions to be explored through the Enquiry:

- What arguments have people given to attack the idea of immigration into Britain?
- What are the differences between 'xenophobia' and 'racism'?
- What are the differences between 'race' and 'ethnicity'?
- What motives have influenced the people who have opposed immigration to Britain?
- What role have institutions like the government and the press played in accepting or resisting new migrant groups?





What are Historical Enquiries?

Historical Enquiries are sequences of lessons, usually amounting to five or six hours of learning, based on a core historical puzzle that requires time to be solved. There is a single enquiry question that both embodies the puzzle and sustains interest and engagement for the learning journey. Students study a range of primary sources and historical interpretations to build an answer to the question.

Each lesson will typically have its own key question to frame the learning. The best enquiry experiences will involve a good deal of classroom dialogue, both in small groups and as a whole class, with the teacher engaged in that dialogue principally through questioning.

Why work like this?

A joy of teaching through Historical Enquiries for teachers is that each group of students can construct a different valid resolution for the enquiry's puzzle. That is unlikely to happen in a single lesson. Over the course of the study, students' new perspectives on standard topics can inspire their teachers as well as their peers.

Trust and co-agency need time. We want to involve students in genuine independent learning, where they can develop the knowledge and understanding of substantive historical and conceptual thinking that will empower them to consider some of their own valid historical interpretations. Young people need to feel confident with a historical situation if they are to achieve this. A successful enquiry requires a good deal of mutual trust in the classroom. The teacher is attempting to develop co-agency with her students, which also takes time to develop. We think this is particularly important in studying migration histories, since many of our students will have so much of their own personal histories that they can bring to the issues being considered.

Building context for a particular puzzle needs time. Migration is being studied at GCSE level in English schools as part of the thematic history unit. This requires students to think about a very long stretch of British history, close to a thousand years in all the specifications. Comparisons need to be made across the centuries to consider how situations and peoples' experiences have changed or continued. This demands a good deal of contextual knowledge. We aim to develop that contextual knowledge whilst the students are examining a particular historical situation or person in an enquiry. This can develop what has been termed 'breadth within the depth'. The enquiry needs to take some time to build up that kind of knowledge.

How should you approach this enquiry?

Dialogue will be key as students explore ideas about sources and interpretations. Develop talk in your classroom so that students usually begin their thinking about a puzzle or source with discussion in a small group. The feedback from those groups can then be the springboard for a whole-class discussion about the subject. The classroom environment and its protocols need to be established clearly and carefully. Think carefully about the seating arrangement, and try to avoid seating in rows. Groups of four students on two tables are useful with an open shape that enables all students to see the teacher and the rest of the class without turning right around.

Questioning needs to encourage students to work out ideas for themselves, in a form of Socratic dialogue. Think about the questions you will ask in relation to the key sources chosen for the enquiry and those you will add to your plan. Each source will be the driving force for a



lesson, but you will also need to give students access to background contextual knowledge. This can often be done through a well-chosen video clip or a passage from a quality textbook

Planning will be specific for your own school context, but you will need to think creatively about the standard three-part lesson format. The 'starter' will probably be longer than often suggested, since it will involve introducing the key source and puzzle. The 'plenary' will not always be able to test the key learning that students have achieved, since they will usually be in the process of engaging with the enquiry. You will often want to end a lesson by considering what further questions the students can pose in order to build on the day's learning; anticipation is more important than performance. Nonetheless, the enquiry should end with a substantial summative activity that enables the students to present their own resolution to the puzzle.

Who are Justice to History?

We are the designers of these four tasks and two history educators, Abdul Mohamud and Dr Robin Whitburn, who are committed to developing historical approaches in secondary school classrooms as a contribution to the pursuit of social justice. We have specialised in unfamiliar hidden histories, which have included a number of enquiries in Black History, Muslim History, and English Medieval History. We have been closely involved in the development of the new AQA examination GCSE History unit on Migration, Empires and the People from c790 to the present day, wrote an accompanying scheme of work and a course textbook. We are both actively involved in the work of the Historical Association and work with them in the provision of CPD for secondary history teachers. We currently work with a number of London schools in developing their history curriculum and pedagogy through enquiries.

Visit our website at www.justice2history.org