



## Historical Enquiries by **Justice to History**

### Enquiry One: Women from the British Empire

Women have traditionally been obscured from the main narratives of history and this has, too often, been reflected in the teaching of history in schools. Drawing specific attention to important migrant women across time, this Enquiry works to counter this practice and engage pupils with unique historical stories. The systemic sexism that has challenged women in Britain over the centuries has been compounded with racial prejudices for women of colour who have migrated to Britain. This Enquiry focuses on the interaction of these powerful negative forces.

The Enquiry should not seek to dwell on or even present the idea of the women of Empire as victims; instead it should shed light on the social and political structures that they had to overcome allow time to consider the gains made in the face of significant obstacles. In each of these cases, the main figure worked hard to rise above things that would impede her acceptance and progress in British society. The question focuses on the impact of the challenges faced, and how the women fought back.

If you are studying migration with GCSE students, it's worth noting that case-studies are an important way of working with the themes in both the AQA and OCR thematic studies. You will find some of the women in these four sources in the textbooks that cover the three exam courses. You can use these examples in preparation for the GCSE examinations to illustrate factors that have influenced migration and the way in which migrants have been received in Britain, which is an important part of the OCR courses. The AQA course links migration and empire, which is relevant, and present, in all four cases.

Regardless of the level where you are using this Enquiry, 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 were women from the Empire able to overcome the prejudices that faced them as female migrants in British society?

The key concepts involved: colonialism, feminism, identity, legislation, prejudice, racism

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

- [Migrating Home: 'Mixed' Children and the Return of the Nabobs of India](#) (focusing on the story of Mary Wilson) (1750-1900)
- [Student Migrants: Cornelia Sorabji at Oxford](#) (1750-1900)
- [Families Divided: The Campaign for Anwar Ditta and Her Children](#) (1900-2000s)

Sub-questions to be explored through the Enquiry:

- How far did prejudice impact the lives of the women when they migrated to Britain?
- How did the effects of British Empire influence these women's lives in England?
- How did these women interact with the English authorities?
- Was life easier for male migrants?



- What were these women's greatest successes?





## 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.

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