

What can we learn from the stories of two statues in Bristol? Colston & Wesley

Anti-racist religious education

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RE TODAY AND NATRE WORKING WITH THE FREE CHURCHES GROUP AND METHODIST SCHOOLS



RE Today
Services



John Wesley and Edward Colston:

An RE lesson about slavery and statues

In RE pupils learn about diversity all the time.

In anti-racist RE, negative or racist attitudes or behaviour are confronted and challenged so that prejudice can be reduced and equality and justice issues can be highlighted.

In this lesson your 7-11s will have a chance to explore some ideas about racism and prejudice.

See the notes to this slide for further details.

Start your pupils work on the next slide.



A story of two statues.

RE for 7-11s

In this lesson you will have a chance to explore some ideas about racism and prejudice.

You will be examining questions such as:

- What can we learn from the stories of two statues in Bristol?
- A question of justice: What can be done to reduce prejudice against minority ethnic groups in our society?
- Does religion contribute to racism, or does it contribute to justice and fairness? Or both?
- What are your thoughts on making our community more just for all its people?



Statues: remembering and celebrating great lives?

- First of all, talk to a partner about statues: why do people put them up? Who gets to have a statue? Have you seen any near your school, and in your town?
- One way of thinking about statues is that they are memorials. They remind us of something or someone important from the past. **Who in your school do you think might get a statue made of themselves one day? Why?**
- Another thing about a statue is that it is usually local: the place where you find it is important in the life story of the person in the statue. **If you made a statue of a person you admire, who would you choose and why? Where would you put it up?**
- On the next slide, you will find out about the great life of a person whose statue is in Bristol.



Who was John Wesley and why is there a statue of him in Bristol?

- John Wesley was born over 300 years ago in 1703 in Lincolnshire.
- He was only five when he nearly died! His house caught fire one night, and he was trapped in an upstairs room. Two men from his church – one standing on the other's shoulders – rescued him just before he burned to death. Afterwards John's mum Susanna thought that he had been saved for a purpose.
- When he grew up, he became the leader of a new Christian community, called the Methodist Church. He preached that God loves every person more than anyone can imagine. Anyone can be friends with God, who forgives us. Anyone can talk to God through prayer.
- Guess what he looked like – and guess the answers to 6 quiz questions on the next slide.





Quiz: Six guesses

- 1. Guess how John Wesley travelled around Britain
- 2. Guess how many sermons he preached (mostly to crowds in the open air)
- 3. Guess how many miles he travelled to preach about Jesus Christ
- 4. His books were very popular: guess how much money they made him
- 5. He tried to follow Jesus' teaching. Guess what he did with the money he made.
- 6. Guess how many people are Methodist Christians in the world today





Quiz: answers

- 1. John Wesley travelled around Britain on horseback
- 2. John preached about 40 000 sermons over about sixty years. That's over 600 per year. Often, thousands gathered to listen to him. He was some speaker!
- 3. John travelled about 250 000 miles to preach about Jesus Christ. That's as far as it is to the moon.
- 4. John Wesley made over £30 000 from his writing. That might be about £7million in today's money
- 5. In 1744 Wesley wrote, "When I die if I leave behind me ten pounds...you and all mankind can bear witness against me, that I have lived and died a thief and a robber." The only money he had when he died was the loose coins in his pocket. He gave all the rest away.
- 6. There are about 80 million Methodists in the world today.



Who was Edward Colston? Why was there a statue of him in Bristol?

- Edward Colston was born in Bristol to a rich and important family in 1636, over 380 years ago.
- When he grew up, he became a sea merchant, running many ships that traded from Spain and Portugal and also to Africa and the Caribbean
- He traded in sherry, vegetable oil, silk, wine, fruits, gold, silver – and enslaved people. He became very rich from his trading. He owned two big houses, one in Bristol.
- The enslaved people were men, women and children captured in West Africa and taken like cargo on ships to work for no money on sugar and tobacco farms 3500 miles away. Many enslaved people died on Colston's ships. Their bodies were thrown into the sea.
- Edward gave money to his favourite charities in Bristol. When he died in 1721, he was very rich. Guess what he looked like – and guess the answers to 6 quiz questions on the next slide.





Quiz: Six guesses

- 1. Guess where Colston's other house was
- 2. Guess how many enslaved people Colston's sea merchants took from West Africa
- 3. Guess how long the journey from West Africa to the Caribbean took
- 4. Guess how many of the enslaved people died on board ship while they were being transported to the Caribbean
- 5. Guess what kind of buildings were made in Bristol with the money Colston gave to charity
- 6. Guess what was put up in Bristol to remember Colston in 1895





Quiz: answers

- 1. Colston's two big houses were in Bristol and London
- 2. Colston's merchants took more than 84 000 enslaved people from West Africa
- 3. The ships' journeys from West Africa to the Caribbean took at least ten weeks
- 4. Over 19 000 of the enslaved people on Colston's merchant ships died on board ship
- 5. The money Colston gave to charity was used to build hospitals, schools and churches
- 6. A statue of Edward Colston was put up in Bristol in 1895.



Why do we put statues up?

Choose your top three reasons, 1-2-3, from these 5

Look at the two statues on the next slide.



We make statues of people we think are heroes



We use statues to remind us of our history



Statues are for the future: they tell the people in the future what mattered to the people who put them up



Statues express our values. Statues of soldiers value winning wars. Statues of philanthropists (who give money away) value charity



A statue is like a prize. We give a statue to the family of a person who we think is a winner.



Two statues in Bristol



John Wesley



Edward Colston



John Wesley, founder of Methodism, hated slavery

- John Wesley believed that every human was precious to God. He was in favour of freedom for all enslaved people.
- In Bristol in 1788 (over 230 years ago) he preached against slavery from the pulpit in the New Room (the oldest Methodist building in the world today).
- Local slave-traders and merchants paid a bunch of bullies to disrupt what was happening at the New Room, making a mob, shouting at Wesley, throwing benches and seats over. They started fighting. Wesley would not shut up: he bravely denounced the slave-traders in the name of God.
- John Wesley worked with many black people and continued to support the abolition movement. His last letter before his death was sent to the MP William Wilberforce, supporting his anti-slavery campaign.





June 2020: Edward Colston's statue...

- The slave trade was not banned until 1807
- In June 2020 there were protests against racism in the USA, in Britain and around the world. Thousands of protestors marched in the streets of Bristol.
- Over recent years, many people wanted the statue of Colston taken down. They sent letters and signed petitions. There was a lot of discussion about what to do. And no action was taken. We don't think anymore that slave-traders should be remembered with statues.
- Guess what happened when the protestors marched past the statue... Watch the clip on the next slide to show what happened.



itv NEWS



HOW DO WE RIGHT HISTORICAL WRONGS?

This is quite a grown up clip.
Watch and listen carefully, then
ask some questions and discuss
answers with your teacher. It's a
news clip from summer 2020.

An extra clip:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bgMVI8GDp2k>



Was it a good thing to throw Edward Colston's statue in the docks?

Here are some arguments on both sides. Can you add any more?

Select what you think are the two best arguments on each side from the boxes below

Yes because...

- Colston was a racist and believed white people mattered but black people did not
- Colston was a slave trader and many enslaved people died on his boats
- We don't admire people for just being rich. They have to be good too!
- Black people living in Bristol find the statue very offensive and emotionally upsetting.
- ...

No because...

- The statue might remind people he was a slave-trader, which we shouldn't forget
- It should have been taken down by the Mayor or the Council, not by a crowd on a protest
- He did some good with his money
- Throwing it in the dock was very wasteful – melt it down and sell it for scrap metal instead
- ...



John Wesley: was he a great Christian leader? Why should he be remembered with a statue?

- Wesley often quoted the Christian Bible: 'There is neither Jewish nor Gentile, slaves nor free, male nor female, but all are one in Jesus Christ.'
- He believed that every human was made to be like God, 'in the image of God.'
- He put his beliefs into action by being friends with people whatever their race or skin colour.
- The impact of his life was huge – in his own time, he preached to many thousands, but since then Methodist Christianity has grown all over the world to be about 80 million strong
- Famous Methodist Christians include Presidents of the USA, Nelson Mandela – and Beyonce.
- Find out more about John Wesley at the New Room website:
www.newroombristol.org.uk



John Wesley was only 18 when Edward Colston died, and they never met. But what would they have said to each other?

- **Imagine, plan and script a conversation between the two of them. Maybe it would start like this:**
- *JW: “Hello Edward. I’m John Wesley. I think we both love the city of Bristol?”*
- *EC: “John, good to meet you. I do love Bristol. It is here that I have made my fortune. What brings you the city?”*
- *JW: “I’ve come to preach the good news of Jesus: this is about liberation for everyone.”*
- *EC: “Ah. I’m a Christian too. I’ve given money to build a church. I’m a very successful sea merchant...”*
- **The next three slides show work from 9 year olds writing their own versions of this conversation**



EC: I am a sed merchant and enslave people from west africa. Do you like my new carriage?

TW: You shouldn't be enslaving innocent people. Are you christian?

EC: Yes I'm an anglican christian and why not they're black.

TW: God made equally and even though we have different opinions you shouldn't judge them.

EC: But...give

TW: Take your slaves back home, give all money to charity and the lord will forgive you.



Imagine that Colston and Wesley have just met for the first time, what would they have said to each other? Write the script below:

Jw "How are you feeling today?"
Ec "OK, my name is Edward and I have a great fortune in trading."
Jw "My name is John Wesley. I'm a christian and also what trading do you?"
Ec "Fruits, silver, gold and slaves."
Jw "Pardon?"
Ec "Slaves."
Jw "Are you a christian?"
Ec "Yes."
Jw "Well obviously not."
Ec "Yes I am thank you."
Jw "In the bible it says treat everyone as the same."
Ec "Doesn't mean im not a christian."
Jw "But you don't follow the rules."
Ec "But I still am a christian."
Jw "To be a christian you follow the bible and slave trading is against it."



Imagine that Colston and Wesley have just met for the first time, what would they have said to each other? Write the script below:

JW: Hello Edward, I'm John Wesley.

EC: Hello John, nice to meet you, I really love the city here.

JW: I really love Bristol too and how everyone believes in God.

EC: I'm a Christian so I always give money and giving money to people to build churches.

JW: Really! I love hearing this kind of news.

EC: Well, it was nice meeting you.

JW: It was nice meeting you too.

EC: Bye!

JW: Bye!



Further work: the human bar chart of opinions

- Read the quotations on the next 6 slides, and make a human bar chart with your class, explaining how much you agree with them.
- The human bar chart uses your own body to show your point of view – stand by the number that represents your opinion.
- 1 = strongly disagree. 6 = strongly agree.
- An alternative to a human chart is to make one out of coloured A4 pieces of paper, which children lay on the floor in turn, or to hold up a whiteboard with the number of your opinion on it.
- Discuss as you go!



**1 = agree
strongly**

**6= disagree
strongly**

**“I think it was a bad idea
to tear down the statue
of Colston and throw it in
the docks”**



**1 = agree
strongly**

**6= disagree
strongly**

**“John Wesley’s bravery,
anti-slavery and
generosity mean that
he’s a good person to
have a statue.”**



**1 = agree
strongly**

**6= disagree
strongly**

“Pulling down statues is not as important as changing our hearts and minds and being less racist. Real change is inside, not just about what’s on a podium”



**1 = agree
strongly**

**6= disagree
strongly**

**“Racism today is the ugly
result of slavery in the past.
We will have to work harder
to drown racism in the
docks.”**



**1 = agree
strongly**

**6= disagree
strongly**

**“John Wesley’s life is
evidence that Christianity
can free people from mental
slavery.”**



**1 = agree
strongly**

**6= disagree
strongly**

“Black people and white people must work together if we are going to reduce racism.”



What did you learn?

Can you say 'yes' to some of these? Well done!

- I found out more about racism and prejudice
- I can tell the stories of John Wesley and Edward Colston
- I can explain the big differences between the two of them.
- I can explain what I think about this idea: "It was the right thing to tear down the statue of Colston and throw it in Bristol Docks."
- I can give my own ideas about how we can we reduce prejudice against minority ethnic groups in our society
- I can share my thoughts about the fact that both Colston and Wesley were Christians
- I can share my thoughts about making our community more just and fair – less racist and unfair - for all its people.



What did you learn?

Good if you can:

- Explain why there was a statue of Edward Colston in Bristol
- Explain why there is a statue of John Wesley in Bristol
- Give three simple reasons why the Wesley statue is still there, but the Colston statue is not

Even better if you can:

- Explain three things that are wrong about slavery
- Explain why slave-merchants started a riot in Bristol in 1788
- Write a thoughtful dialogue of your own between Edward Colston and John Wesley



Partners

This project is a partnership between the Free Churches Group, the Methodist Schools, RE Today, NATRE and many teachers of RE and educators from Black, Asian and other minority ethnic communities who have become voluntarily involved.

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