



**TEACHING A  
DIVERSE PRIMARY  
CURRICULUM**

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# TEACHING A DIVERSE PRIMARY CURRICULUM

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Learning Matters  
A SAGE Publishing Company  
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55 City Road  
London EC1Y 1SP

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Thousand Oaks, California 91320

SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd  
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Editor: Amy Thornton  
Senior project editor: Chris Marke  
Project management: TNQ Technologies  
Marketing manager: Lorna Patkai  
Cover design: Wendy Scott  
Typeset by: TNQ Technologies  
Printed in the UK

© 2022 Editorial arrangement, Introduction and  
Chapter 6: Karin Doull

© 2022 Chapter 2: Helen Crawford © 2021 Chapter 3:  
Susie Townsend © 2021 Chapter 4: Damienne Clarke  
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First published in 2022

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**Library of Congress Control Number: 2022935444**

**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the  
British Library

ISBN 978-1-5297-8135-9  
ISBN 978-1-5297-8134-2 (pbk)

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# ABOUT THE EDITOR AND CONTRIBUTORS

## The Editor

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She has written articles on teaching design and technology in the Early years, and upcycling, recycling and sustainability, and combining control, programming, design and technology to further develop engineering skills. She is a Design and Technology consultant and has spoken about previous articles at two conferences in Birmingham on Computer Aided Design, and Computer Aided Manufacture (CAD CAM) and Design concepts/decisions. Her sessions are as inclusive as possible. Sue is above all a problem-solver and so enjoys new challenges.

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# 3

## THE TEACHING OF HISTORY AS A VEHICLE FOR CHANGE

SUSIE TOWNSEND

WE MAY HAVE DIFFERENT RELIGIONS, DIFFERENT LANGUAGES, DIFFERENT  
COLOURED SKIN, BUT WE ALL BELONG TO ONE HUMAN RACE.

KOFI ANNAN

**KEYWORDS:** CRITICAL RACE THEORY; DECOLONISATION; EMPIRE; IDENTITY; MULTICULTURALISM; UNCONSCIOUS BIAS; WORLD WAR

### CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

The aims of this chapter are:

- To review the present History curriculum in terms of racial diversity.
- To reflect on Black History Month and Black Lives Matter and their impact.
- To explore British history from differing racial perspectives; recognising hidden voices and achievements.
- To consider potential issues when developing a school history curriculum map and how they might be overcome.
- To provide examples of activities that can be used in the classroom which embrace and reflect our multicultural society.

## CCF ITE links

1.2	Teachers are key role models, who can influence the attitudes, values and behaviours of their pupils.
2.1	Learning involves a lasting change in pupils' capabilities or understanding.
3.1	A school's curriculum enables it to set out its vision for the knowledge, skills and values that its pupils will learn, encompassing the national curriculum within a coherent wider vision for successful learning.

## Introduction

*Identity is the history that has gone into bone and blood and reshaped the flesh. Identity is not what we were but what we have become what we are at this moment.*

(Nick Joaquin, 1988)

History shapes our own identity as an individual and helps us understand ourselves and our place within the 'long arc of development'. Britain is a multicultural society; In 2011, Leicester was the first city in the United Kingdom where the majority of the residents identified themselves as non-white British. But is this racial diversity reflected in the history that is taught in the classroom?

Politically, history also defines our national identity and there are tensions between the two. The constructed view of the past of our nation needs to be held to account and questioned and be challenged by individual histories. This national identity needs to be a collective one where every group in our society has a voice that can be heard. In the Census 2021, 8 million people (14% of the population) identified as form a Black, Asian or mixed multi-ethnic group, but are their histories reflected in our nation's narrative (DfE FE Commission, 2020)?

This chapter considers the ongoing debate surrounding diversity, the content of the History National Curriculum (NC) and what and how history is taught. The impact of the Black Lives Matter movement is discussed and initiatives such as Black History Month. The focus of the chapter is on the need for children to understand that there are different stories and perspectives and hidden voices that need to be heard while suggesting ways that this could be promoted in the classroom.

## What is meant by critical race theory and decolonising the curriculum?

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is an understanding that society is 'shaped by racism which is endemic, systematic and often unrecognised' (Bradbury, 2020: 243). It considers that policies and curricula can be fundamentally prejudiced against minority groups. Often this is not the intention, and policies may seem to be 'colourblind' but in fact have racial consequences. Decolonising the curriculum has its basis in this theory:

*Decolonizing the curriculum means creating spaces and resources for a dialogue among all members of the university on how to imagine and envision all cultures and knowledge systems in the curriculum, and with respect to what is being taught and how it frames the world.*

(Keele University Manifesto, cited by Charles, 2019: 1)

This useful definition clarifies what is meant by decolonising the curriculum. Students have put pressure on universities to review the curriculum that is offered and to make sure that the views of all are represented, and there is equality in the system, the processes and the staffing of the university. Discussions about this began in 1990s but have gained real momentum following the creation of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2013 and its transformation into a worldwide phenomenon following the death of George Floyd in 2020. It is with this background of change that the History NC should be measured against to see if it promotes equality and diversity or militates against it.

## REFLECTION

What do you understand by the term 'decolonizing the curriculum'? How might this relate to across the curriculum?

## So how diverse is the History National Curriculum as a policy?

The various iterations of the History NC demonstrate a change in emphasis about diversity within the History Curriculum; in 2008 History Curriculum, diversity was defined as a statutory concept – cultural, ethnic and religious diversity (QCA, 2008). The attainments target all referred to the need to consider history within a local, national and international framework and, within that, to analyse the nature and extent of diversity. This would indicate that diversity was considered important by the policymakers of the time although there was also criticism that the multicultural perspective of the NC was tokenistic (Dennis, 2016; Bracey et al., 2011).

In contrast, the 2013 History NC only makes one specific reference in the purpose of study:

*History helps pupils to understand the complexity of people's lives, the process of change, the **diversity** of societies and relationships between different groups, as well as their own identity and the challenges of their time.*

(DfE 2014: 1)

The *History Review* (2021) also only mentions diversity once in a section related to the breadth of the curriculum offer, with an example from Wilkinson about the importance of Islamic boys knowing about Islamic civilisations and the following statement:

*Moreover, the national curriculum refers not only to diverse pasts but to the importance of history in developing pupils' identities. In modern multi-cultural Britain, pupils' community pasts are diverse and often blended and complex.*

(*History Review*, 2021)

Although there are ways in which the History Curriculum can represent diverse views, it is clear that the policy does not emphasise this and it is diversity by default rather than intent. The NC is strongly criticised in the Black Curriculum Report 2021 for presenting a White Anglocentric view of history which fails to represent or ignores other viewpoints.

## **So does the actual content in history at Key Stages 1 and 2 allow for an appreciation of racial diversity and identity?**

At Key Stage 1, the four units do not mention diversity, and there is no requirement to do so; it is left up to schools and teachers to implement if they wish. Rather than insisting on the incorporation of world and diverse histories at the core of the discipline, this means that schools can opt out of choices and present a broadly white male insular view of British history (Alexander et al., 2012). There are opportunities to build diversity into the curriculum (see the section on teaching ideas and strategies) but they rely on schools making the decision to do this and on teachers having the confidence and subject knowledge to carry this out effectively. The non-statutory guidance does not specifically promote this. For example, in suggested content for the unit on significant individuals, there are a list of thirteen possible suggestions; when viewing these in terms of diversity, five are from outside the United Kingdom and two are people of colour – Mary Seacole and Rosa Parks. There are no racially diverse examples from the United Kingdom itself.

At Key Stage 2, out of the nine units that are taught, three of them are based on wider world history; early civilisations, ancient Greece and a non-European society unit. A fourth is about the Roman Empire but the focus needs to be on its impact on Britain. The other units are British-centric although there is potential here for Black and Asian links. The theme beyond 1066 is open to choice. But what are schools choosing? The lack of the much loved Tudors and Victorians in the Key Stage 2 curriculum means that many schools use this unit as a way of delivering some history on one of those time periods.

This NC is for schools in England and so it is natural and right that children should learn history about the country that they live in and every country in the world will have their own focus. However, history is about analysing and debating, interpreting, questioning and above all challenging. There must be an awareness of the wider world and a recognition of different viewpoints about events and people. There must also be an understanding that British people can have different heritages, that we have a collective history, and everyone's story is a vital part of the history of our country – history is about people and the society in which they live and hidden voices need to be heard and their contributions celebrated (Osler, 2009).

Phillips (2002) asserted that a focus on diversity in history teaching can lead to children gaining a more inclusive view of society and a more informed outward view of the world. History teaching should reflect the cultures and backgrounds of all children and allow them to explore and understand their own identity and deepen their understanding of others; by engaging children in the global view teachers will begin to break down the barriers that can exist in the curriculum and teach children to recognise and tolerate different perspectives.

## Is it time for Black History Month to evolve?

The idea of celebrating Black History was the brainchild of Carter G Woodson, a Black historian who began Black History week in 1926, but its conception, in the format that is current today, was devised at Kent University in 1970. The purpose of the event was to raise awareness of African/Caribbean Americans and their history during the month of February and has now spread to other countries. It was first celebrated in Britain in 1987 and takes place in October. It has been a vehicle for change in many schools in the United Kingdom as this explicit focus on Black History and its significance has led to the celebration of positive Black British role models rather than focusing on Black History as being just about one story – slavery.

There are issues with this approach, however, and debate about whether there should be change. There are many other ethnic groups that have played a vital part in the development of Britain as a nation, for example, the legacy of empire has meant that there may be a need for more explicit emphasis on Asian communities and their contributions. In a climate of political correctness, many teachers are unsure if they should include other racial groups under the banner of Black History. For example, it has been evident that people of Chinese descent have suffered from a huge rise in racial comments and abuse as a consequence of the COVID pandemic but their views and contributions to our community seem to be hidden from public view (<https://www.itv.com/news/2021-07-16/uk-chinese-people-may-be-scarred-for-more-than-a-generation-after-virus-abuse>). To consider their history under the umbrella of Black History would be a misnomer so perhaps it is time to expand the definition of Black History Month.

There can also be the view that a box has been ticked, and Black History has been ‘done’ in October and does not need to be revisited again; there is a need to integrate diversity into the whole history curriculum so that it is not an ‘add on’ but an essential. However, there is a danger that without Black History Month as a flagship the focus on diversity will be diluted and lose momentum.

The seminal Swann Report made such an observation when stating

*multicultural understanding has to permeate all aspects of a school's work. It is not a separate practice that can be welded onto existing practices.*

(Swann Report, 1985: 10)

Refocusing on the term ‘diversity’, rather than Black History, as a key aspect of the curriculum could help reinforce the view that everyone’s identity is unique and needs to be reflected in what is being taught and that it should be interwoven throughout the whole school curriculum. Other groups in society need to be acknowledged too, such as those of different class, gender, disability or sexuality as well as other races. Maybe this is the next stage of development in terms of appreciating different cultural heritage.

### REFLECTION

What evidence of Black History have you seen in school? Has this been embedded in the curriculum or some sort of ‘add on’?

## What are the issues in including diversity in a school curriculum map and how might they be resolved?

In the key findings of the *Curriculum Review: Diversity and Citizenship* (2007) Ajebo et al. identified a number of factors which were limiting the drive to a diverse curriculum. These included low prioritisation by school leaders, lack of training, lack of confidence by teachers and lack of resources and where to access them. These inhibiting factors continued to be highlighted specifically in the *History Curriculum* (Harris and Clarke, 2011).

The changes in teacher training have led to a government shift away from universities to more school-based routes. This does lead inevitably to less time for trainee teachers to build subject knowledge and pedagogy especially in primary schools where the emphasis on literacy and numeracy has led in many schools to a narrowed curriculum. The amount of time allocated for foundation subjects in primary teacher training is usually very limited and even more so where there is less history expertise available. There is also not the time to unpick the curriculum and consider how the units could be made more diverse.

This lack of training and potentially of subject knowledge leads to a lack of confidence in even experienced teachers. Many teachers recognise the importance of diversity but are worried about how they might do this and if they might use the wrong words or cause offence through a lack of their own understanding. As Alexander et al. (2012: 15) commented:

*Diversity is seen as controversial and 'personal', and freighted with emotional baggage which they [the teachers] feel they lack the subject expertise to deal with.*

There has been some progress, however. The focus of the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (EIF) 2021 has emphasised the need for an ambitious, inclusive curriculum and for the broad range of subjects to be taught. In primary schools, this has led to a refocusing on foundation subjects how they are taught. There is also reference to learners 'developing their understanding and appreciation of diversity' although this is linked specifically to British values and stresses commonality rather than difference. Nevertheless the EIF does encourage school leaders to justify and provide a rationale for their curriculum map.

In terms of training, this inspection framework has also focused Initial Teacher Training (ITT) providers on the need for an ambitious programme of study which should be continued into the first two years of teaching and beyond. Teachers need Continual Professional Development (CPD) so that they can gain confidence in how they can make the History Curriculum more diverse and resources that are available to support them. However, the Early Career Framework (ECF) 2019 has no specific references to the importance of diversity and no specific resources for history as a subject area. Neither is there a specific reference to diversity in the Core Content Framework (CCF) which is the curriculum that ITT providers are being assessed against. It would seem that although the importance of recognising and celebrating racial diversity has become much more evident in the media through movements such as Black Lives Matter, this does not seem to have been reflected in all recent government legislation.



## REFLECTION

How well prepared do you feel to plan and teach across a diverse curriculum? What additional support might you need?

## Case study

### How to make Key Stage 1 more diverse?

Here are two of the units that are taught and some suggestions about how integration of racial diversity could be achieved.

**Who are you?** Draw around each child so that there is an outline and then draw a timeline within the outline showing each year of the child's life. Get them to think of key events in their own life, such as the birth of a sibling or a new pet for the family. It could be when they got a special present or went on holiday. Speak to parent and ask for photos which would be stuck within the outline at the correct point on the timeline. They could then have a circle around their outline with things that have happened locally/nationally and then another circle for events that are international. In this way, they can see how their identity is part of a collective identity.

**A theme within living memory** – you could look at a decade such as the 1950s or 1960s when their grandparents might have been born. You could look at the Windrush generation and the influx of Indian migration. Children could consider push and pull factors and then look at sources to gain an idea about what it was like to arrive in a new country and what they brought with them. A theme like this could also provide the focus for a significant event – The birth of the Notting Hill Carnival, for example, in 1966 or the landing on the moon in 1969. A topic such as this has many cross curricular links. Fashion, music, technology, architecture, art are just a few of the areas to be explored. Who were the famous artists at the time, what style of art was popular and why? Who were famous poets and writers of children books? A typical 1960s meal could be created or a cut-out paper doll with clothes that you could attach using tabs. Children could create a dance to show the arrival of the Windrush or a fashion show catwalk. Linking history and geography they could put pins in 10 random places around the world. Where have they landed? What is that place like? What was happening there in the 1960s?

In terms of historical events, the space race would provide links to scientific developments, and an understanding of the work of hidden figures such as Mary Jackson, Katherine Johnson and Dorothy Vaughan would demonstrate the significance of a team of individuals in making journeys to the moon a reality. The 1960s is a period of protest and fights for equality so the Civil Rights Movement, the Bristol Bus Boycott, LGBT and discrimination against Native American and Aboriginal people are all ideas that could be explored although these may be more appropriate if looking at the 1960s at Key Stage 2. The Vietnam War would also be better studied at Key Stage 2. There is so much that you could explore with this decade. Most importantly, however, the children could ask their families about their own stories from the time.

**Significant individuals** – The NC states that you must study at least two individuals and compare them so that their achievements are in the context of the period. A class can study as many individuals as they would like and again there are opportunities to really expand children's knowledge and look

outward to the wider world. Considering a theme such as explorers or scientists or famous artists could allow children to place the individuals chronologically and consider continuity and change but will also link to other areas of the curriculum. They can come from different parts of the world, different time periods and from different racial backgrounds. Children could be asked to find out about someone who they wanted to find out about from their own cultural background. It could be part of a show-and-tell session or it could be linked to anniversaries of individuals or an investigation about the Google Doodle for the day. They could indeed produce their own Google Doodle but again outcomes can be cross curricular – they could create a 3D object for the museum shop to sell which tell people about the person and what they did and includes an image of some sort and at least two quotes about or by the person.

## Case study

### Teaching sensitive issues – slavery and Britain’s role

Although it is essential that the contributions that all people make are celebrated, the darker side of history should never be ignored – prejudice, racism, inequality and for some enslavement. It is essential to know what happened in the past even if it sits uncomfortably with our national identity. The wealth of cities such as London, Liverpool and Bristol was as a result of human trafficking and the industries that profited by the slave trade helped raise the status of Britain as a trading nation and became part of the infrastructure that the Industrial Revolution was to be built upon. The slave trade stopped in 1807 but the ownership of slaves was to continue until 1833. The government gave £20 million to owners in recompense for their loss of workers, and this money was used to build or renovate some of the great houses in England. This debt was only finally paid off in 2015.

However, although children need to know the truth about the past, the way in which this is done must be age appropriate. Discussions about the conditions of the Middle Passage and the punishments inflicted are not suitable for Key Stage 2. Events could either be so sanitised that the children would not be able to engage with them at an emotional level or in an effort to make them understand, the sources used could be far too explicit. However despite these caveats it is a hugely important topic that should be discussed with upper Key Stage 2 children. In units such as the Roman Empire, early civilisations and ancient Greece, they will have discovered the use of slaves within society, and they need to recognise that this was practised in turn by Britain and other European countries in much more recent times and that slavery still exists today. This is a subject that links to human rights, citizenship and moral issues and needs to be addressed (Townsend, 2019).

One way of doing this is to show that slavery in the 18th and early 19th centuries was not something that happened somewhere else but was visible in Britain itself. Plantation owners returned to England at intervals and brought with them slaves to act as domestic servants. Slavery was not supposed to exist in England but the laws were vague and contradictory, and plantation slaves were seen legally as property and commodities that could be moved as the owner wished. There is evidence to show that many slaves fought against the system and risked severe punishment/transportation back to the colonies to escape and start a new life in Britain. Children would need some background to the transatlantic slavery, but it is important that the history is ‘peopled’ so that pupils can find out about individuals who had been brought to England against their will in this way. This will help them realise that this history is not

abstract but is here around us. Children can also look at the physical evidence left behind which shows the wealth that was created on the back of this human suffering.

## Possible activities and resources

Children need to understand what slavery is, so group work and mind maps could be a starting point for discussion. This understanding of key term is fundamental, and it is important to check for misconceptions. They also need to understand the principle of the trade triangle. This can be done using different parts of the classroom to build the triangle so that children physically walk it but without labels saying what is being traded. You could then get them to ask questions to try and understand the system and how goods and people were traded. Listening to extracts from Olaudah Equiano's autobiography should help them begin to understand the reality of this and they could link to the Human Rights Act today.

Moving the focus to Britain will help them to see the individual stories. There are some websites which show maps where graves of slaves have been recorded, for example: <http://remikapo.org/slave-graves-and-other-memorials/>. Children could use these to get information about different people and to see if they can see any patterns in distribution of the graves geographically. For more examples on how this resource could be used, refer to Townsend (2019).

There are fantastic role models against this background of human misery, such as Mary Prince, Olaudah Equiano, Ignatius Sancho and Ottobah Cugoana who were Black abolitionists. One activity could for each group to be given one name and date. They would need to find one quote, two pictures, three key facts and four reasons why they were significant. They could then write a speech which one of the group could deliver and the class could vote on the best speech.

A final activity could be for the group to make an anti-slavery memorial in whatever medium they chose – dance, mural, clay model, computer graphics or piece of music. This could encourage children to think about symbolism and the messages that they want to convey.

## Case study

### WW1: telling the story from different perspectives – the hidden voices

This topic could be considered as a significant event – Remembrance Day and who we remember – at Key Stage 1 or as a theme beyond 1066 at Key Stage 2. The Great War of 1914–1918 was a World War as the colonies of empires were brought into the conflict. These voices are often not heard and their sacrifices not always recognised.

Take, for example, the Indian army. When the war began in 1914, volunteers from Britain had to be recruited and trained. There was a desperate need for soldiers from the Empire, and by the end of 1914 the Indian army made up almost a third of the British Expeditionary force. By 1915, four out of the six had been moved to the Middle East where they fought against the Ottoman army in Mesopotamia. In the heat of the desert they endured a five-month siege at Kut al Amara. The city was taken and 10,000 Indian Prisoners of War were forced to march over 500 miles to Syria or even further to Anatolia. Many

died and their bodies are buried in a small cemetery in Istanbul previously designated for casualties of the Crimean War. In all over 1 million Indian troops served overseas, of whom 62,000 died and another 67,000 were wounded. But there was little recognition of their feats and loyalty. Back in India where the cry for independence was growing ever louder these soldiers were seen as supporting the British oppressor, and their fight in the Middle East was forgotten by the British press who focused predominantly on the Western front.

Or you could explore the contribution of the Chinese in World War One. China sent voluntary non-combatants to provide support labour, digging trenches, making munition and tank supplies. There were so many deaths and injuries that the British government reluctantly had to offer some compensation, and by the end of the war the Chinese workers were the largest and longest serving non-European contingent in World War One. Britain alone recruited 94,500. But where are their voices in the history of the war?

These are just two examples but children could find out about these events. They could research individuals whose names are on war graves and find out as much as they can about them. They can use a map of the world to find where these soldiers came from and where they were fighting. For all children it is important to ask them if they know of any of their family who was in World War One and find out about their own family history.

## CHAPTER SUMMARY

History should be diverse by its very nature but the stories that are told are often from one racial perspective. The discussions around race, diversity and decolonising the curriculum are wide-ranging, and this chapter can only touch upon some of the key elements of these issues. One message should be very clear, however. In schools we need to celebrate our shared history and recognise the contributions of all across the boundaries of race, religion and geographical location. As teachers we should ensure that what we are teaching is relevant to our children and creates, rather than divides, our communities.

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