



Key Stage 3 - Plantation Life

Plantation owners purchased slaves at auction from British seafarers, who acted on behalf of themselves and their investors back home. English colonial law defined slaves as the property of their owners and they were deprived any human rights. Their owners separated Africans from their families, gave them new European names and punished them if they spoke their own language. The physical and psychological distress of enslavement meant many Africans died within the first months of arrival.

Learning Objectives:

- To examine the importance of the Caribbean as a source of profit for the European trading market
- To make students aware of the harsh treatments that enslaved Africans endured on the plantations.
- To create awareness that the slave trade was an economic, profit intensive process in which exploitation and commercial gain went hand in hand.

Task 1:

- The images used in this task, are dated in the early 1920's/1930's. However the conditions that labourers toiled during the 17th C and that of the 20th C are not that different. Draw attention to the size and amount of sugar cane to be cultivated, weather conditions and tools used to cut the cane.

Extension activity:

Look at the other goods such as tobacco, tea, coffee, cotton, which were cultivated.

Task 2:

This task illustrates how images can convey different layers of meaning and to realise that interpretation can differ from person to person. You can add or choose your own images from the archive folder from this theme.

Task 3:

Music was important to enslaved people. It enabled them to express their African heritage, their spirituality and communal strength. Work songs and spirituals were a fusion of African and European influences. To keep rhythm as the field workers cut the sugar cane or performed other repetitive tasks they would sing songs. Musical transcriptions of early slave songs are very rare. This work song illustrates the widespread African musical feature of call-and-response.

William Dickson, who lived in Barbados from 1772, had been secretary to the island's governor. He was well acquainted with slavery and slave life in Barbados. He later joined the British abolitionist movement. The 'G.S.' referred to in the manuscript is Granville Sharp, a prominent member of the movement. This one-page manuscript has been published in Jerome S. Handler and Charlotte J. Frisbie, "Aspects of Slave Life in Barbados: Music and its Cultural Context" *Caribbean Studies* (Vol. 11, 1972), pp. 5-46.

Viewing the learning activity file

If the document doesn't initially open in presentation mode, press 'F5' in Powerpoint to view the activity full screen as a slideshow. This should also enable links to website content to be accessed by clicking on them. Alternatively, links can be viewed by copying and pasting the url into your web browser.

