

## Windrush | Across the Seas



*Marian, the 'Laundry Queen', Jamaica Planter (1959), at Kingston National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London, Bird Collection*

### **A note on historical and contemporary relevance**

Black History in Britain and globally cannot be fully understood without deep contemplation of the Transatlantic Slave Trade and its continued role in shaping modern society. We strongly recommend readers visit the [Understanding Slavery website](#) to better understand the Black experience before 1948 and how this impacted the experience of the Windrush generation and their descendants in Britain.

We also encourage readers to compare and contrast the historical Black experience to contemporary issues such as those raised by Black Lives Matter campaigns and the experience of communities of identity during the Covid-19 pandemic. We hope through continued research and education about diverse communities, readers draw their own conclusions and formulate their own representative narratives on historical events.

We invite you to use the activities in this resource to learn about the arrival of HMT *Empire Windrush* and reflect on the experiences and contributions of people who migrated from the Caribbean to Britain.

### **What was HMT Empire Windrush?**

- HMT *Empire Windrush* was a ship, best remembered today for bringing West Indian people responding to an invitation from Britain, to come and work in the country. Some of those on board the ship had been to Britain before and some hadn't, but many were excited for a fresh start and new future.
- Watch a [short film from the BBC](#) on the history of the Windrush Generation

### **Watch News footage from 1948**

- This [video](#) documents passengers aboard HMT *Empire Windrush* arriving in London in 1948.
- **Reflect:** Look at the passengers clothes and listen to what they are saying, what kind of lives do you think they have left in the Caribbean? Think about what brought them to London? What did they hope for from their time in Britain? Choose five key words to describe the sensations of climbing aboard the ship and five for their feelings as they eventually disembark.
- **Respond:** Use your answers to the activity above and [this template](#) to write as one of the passengers on board *Empire Windrush*. Think about who you would write home to, what your first impressions are and how you feel about your future in London.

### **The Scandal**

- In 2012 the British Government and Home Office created new legislation which increased the rules about who could come to Britain to live, receive medical care, an education and work. These new laws meant anyone living in Britain needed to have official documents to continue living in Britain.

*"Because many of the Windrush Generation arrived as children on their parents' passports and the Home Office destroyed thousands of landing cards and other records many lacked the documentation to remain in the UK."*

*The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants*

Despite condemnations from the public and recognition of their failings, the British Government has still not resolved the situation for many of the Windrush generation who have had their lives turned upside down.

- Visit [The Joint for Welfare of immigrants website](#) to find out more about this legislation and the impact this had on Caribbean communities in Britain
- **Reflect:** Watch this [video](#) showing the impact British legislation has had on people who have been born or spent most of their lives living, contributing and working in Britain
- **Respond:** Do you think the treatment of the Windrush generation has been fair? How should the Government support people impacted? Write a blog or create a persuasive poster to argue your point of view. Find out who your local MP is and send them your views.

### See modern street art dedicated to the Windrush Generation



Work by Deanio X with occasional collaborators including: Nathan Bowen, Sondos Mahdy, Tasnim Mahdy, and

- Visit street artist Deanio X's website and look at his work [Fresh off the Boats](#), a mixed media gallery. The work honors the sacrifices of migrants including the Windrush generation and their descendants, to Britain today and throughout time.
- **Reflect:** Are Deanio X's artworks making a statement, sending a message, or asking a question?
- **Respond:** What are your views about the experiences of the Windrush generation and their descendants? Can you show this through your own art? Share it on social media and add the hashtag #WindrushDay so we can share it at our Windrush online event.

### Hear Migration Stories

- Listen to [Andrea Levy talk about her novel \*Small Island\*](#)
- Listen to a [BBC intergenerational story](#) from Ghana and Jamaica to London.
- **Reflect:** Do you have your own migration story? Have your friends or family changed where they live, work or go to school? Our journeys in life can be global or local.
- **Respond:** Make a film about a journey. This could be about your own experiences or the experiences of your friends or family. As an example, watch the film '[London](#)' created by one of our Young Volunteers.

### The power of Spoken Word

- Watch '[Checking Out Me History](#)' by John Agard.
- Listen to [Have you heard George's Podcast?](#) From George the Poet. In episode 4 he confronts colonial legacies and the experiences of displaced communities. Visit the [BBC website](#) to read why he turned down an MBE
- **Reflect:** How do John Agard and George the Poet express their views on colonial legacies through the use of poetry? Why might it be difficult for migrant communities to carve their identity and sense of belonging in Britain? What are the problems in the way history has been told in the past? How should we tell history today? Whose experiences should we share?
- **Respond:** Watch [Tatiana Ellis short tutorial](#) to learn what spoken word is and 3 simple steps you can take to create your own. Share your own spoken word piece on social media and add the hashtag #WindrushDay so we can share it at our Windrush online event.

### Useful Links/Further reading

<https://windrushfoundation.com/>

<https://www.runnymedetrust.org/blog/by-tag/windrush>

<http://www.blackhistory4schools.com/20century/>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/z6gnrd>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/43793770>