



Cunning Plan

...to use Black Tudors as a window into Tudor England

On 29 September 2018 I was fortunate enough to get involved with a collaborative project with Dr Miranda Kaufmann, the Historical Association, Schools History Project, and a brilliant group of people from different backgrounds all committed to teaching about black Tudors. In this short piece, I will share how I have introduced Year 8 pupils to black Tudors in my classroom. The accompanying 'Triumphs Show' in this edition of *Teaching History* explores the impact of these lessons in more detail.

In my school, the first term of Year 8 is spent exploring the Tudors. In her book *Black Tudors: the untold story*, Kaufmann tells the stories of ten Africans in Tudor England and concludes that 'the presence of Africans in Tudor England was common knowledge at the time, and it needs to become common knowledge again.'¹ In an attempt to make black Tudors common knowledge among my two Year 8 classes, I introduced them to the Tudors through an enquiry of four lessons based around individuals from Kaufmann's book.

Lesson 1:

Who were the Tudors?

This lesson started with a 'What do you know already?' discussion. I then gave the pupils four images: a monastery, the Tudor House from Southampton, Hampton Court, and a farmer's cottage. Pupils were given the task of labelling the key physical features of each and using these to make an inference about the sort of person who would have lived there. I then gave the pupils some information on six individuals who they had to place in each building and explain why

they were there. This lesson introduced pupils to the fact that 80% of the Tudor population were farmers and religion was central to the lives of the majority of the population.

Lesson 2:

Why are the Tudors significant?

This lesson used Counsell's 5Rs to ascribe significance. In particular pupils applied the criteria of 'remarkable', 'revealing', and 'resonant' to the four black Tudors from Kaufmann's book, working with the information in Figure 1. At no point in this lesson did pupils discover that these individuals were black. The lesson finished with a quiz on the key features of Tudor England which pupils had learnt from the individuals followed by a discussion about the significance of these people and how their experiences linked to the wider historical context.

Lesson 3:

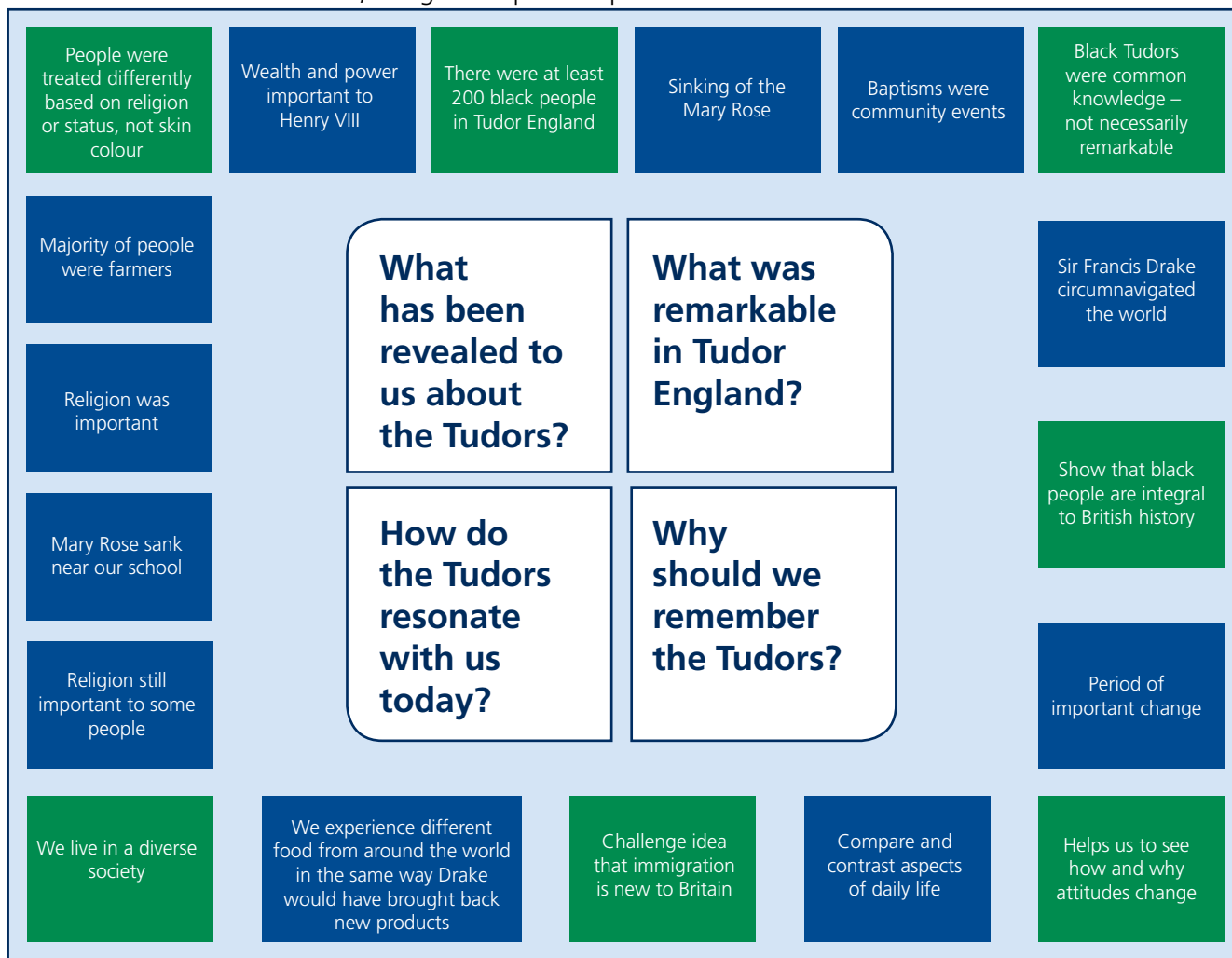
Why should we learn about black Tudors?

Pupils started with a mind-map where each branch represented a criterion of significance for the pupils to recall what they had learnt from the previous lesson. I also added: 'Why should we remember them?' to link to the final discussion we had had in Lesson 2. Following this, I asked pupils what the connection was between the individuals we had been studying. Some of the suggestions included: they were all religious, all lived under the same Tudor monarch, and they were all just ordinary people. When I revealed the additional connection that they were all black there was a

Figure 1: Information taken from *Black Tudors*. Pupils used this as the basis of their significance enquiry.

Jacques Francis	Jacques Francis was a deep-sea diver and was part of the team employed by Henry VIII to save as much as possible from the Mary Rose when it sank in 1545. It was estimated that there was £2 million worth of weapons on board. Jacques had to bring up as much as he could.
Diego	Diego was the personal manservant to Francis Drake. Drake was the first man to circumnavigate (sail all around) the globe and also stole gold, silver, and other treasures from the Spanish. Diego played an important role by acting as a spy, translator, and negotiator for Drake.
Mary Fillis	Mary was a servant for a merchant and later a seamstress. She was baptised (formally welcomed into the Church) when she was 20. Everyone from the local area came to church to witness the baptism and pray with Mary.
Cattelena of Almondsbury	Cattelena was an unmarried woman living near Bristol. She owned a cow and relied on this to make butter and milk which she sold to non-farming neighbours. Cattelena probably lived in a shared house.

Figure 2: Significance mind-map. Blue squares represent pupils' assessments of significance before the revelation that the individuals were black; the green squares represent assessments made after this fact was made known.



moment of stunned silence before I was bombarded with questions: Where did they come from? How many? How did they get to England? Were they slaves? After answering the pupils' questions, I shared Kaufmann's book with them and they added to their mind-map what they had learnt in a new colour (see Figure 2 for an example). This activity was accompanied by a lively discussion on why it is important that we learn about black Tudors. I stressed the point that 'in many ways their lives were no worse than those of the vast majority of Tudors...but this was the result of having no social standing, not of having dark skin.'² The pupils then used their mind-maps and ideas from the discussion to write letters addressed to the BBC explaining why Dr Kaufmann should be allowed to make a documentary on black Tudors.

Lesson 4: Which source is the most useful for learning about life in Tudor England?

In this final lesson we returned to the enquiry question: 'What was life like in Tudor England?'. I gave the pupils two pictures: Source A was an extract from the 1511 Westminster Tournament Roll showing John Blanke, a black trumpeter; Source B was a painting called 'The Months' showing people farming in a field. I gave the pupils time to analyse each image to determine what it showed about life in Tudor England using their

knowledge from the first three lessons. They then made a judgement about which was most useful for learning about life in Tudor England. There was an approximately even split in both classes with some arguing that Source A made people aware of black Tudors whereas those who chose Source B argued that the majority were farmers and therefore this would show people what everyday life was like in Tudor England.

This was a really enjoyable sequence of lessons to research, plan, and teach. As I explain in the accompanying 'Triumphs Show', the pupils were engaged in the lessons and came away with a knowledge of Tudor England and an understanding that black Tudors were not extraordinary at the time. Through continued collaboration with Dr. Kaufmann, HA, SHP, and a brilliant team of others committed to teaching black Tudors, the aim is to create and share more lessons so that black Tudors can feature in classrooms across the country.

REFERENCES

- ¹ Kaufmann, M. (2017) *Black Tudors: the untold story* London: Oneworld p. 261.
- ² *Ibid* pp. 5–6.

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