



Remembering Ignatius Sancho – teachers' notes

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SLIDE 3: Mystery Sources

Play a section of the piece of music via the YouTube link(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LxwaB3awofU>). This piece was composed by Ignatius Sancho.

Following this, read the short extract of Sancho's writing.

Ask your students what kind of a person might have created these sources? Ask them to write down three words to describe the person they are imagining. For example, creative, educated, eccentric, etc.

SLIDE 4:

This is an image of the composer and author of these two sources, Ignatius Sancho. This image was painted by Thomas Gainsborough, a famous portrait artist, in 1768. Why was this person chosen to be painted by one of the most famous artists of the time?

Ask your students if this is the person they imagined? How might he be different? Ask them if they would add to/change the descriptive words they wrote down from the first sources. Based on these three sources, how would they describe this person now.

Let's find out who Ignatius Sancho really was.

SLIDE 5: Ignatius Sancho's Memorial

On 19th December 2023, Westminster Abbey unveiled a new memorial to Ignatius Sancho and his wife Ann Osbourne.

The memorial is within St Margaret's Church. St Margaret's is a 12th Century church next to Westminster Abbey. Its location within Parliament Square means it is known as 'the parish Church of the House of Commons' or the 'Parliamentary Church'.

The memorial was given by The Equiano Society, unveiled by Arthur Torrington CBE. Torrington is a community advocate and historian who co-founded the Windrush Foundation and the Equiano Society. The objective of The Equiano Society is to celebrate the life and work of Olaudah Equiano and the legacy of Equiano's African contemporaries, of which Sancho was one.



Letters for the memorial were cut by Marcia Bennett-Male, a London based stone carver and sculptor of colour.

At the dedication ceremony for this memorial there were readings from Sancho's letters and one of his compositions was played. The order of service can be found here - [charles-ignatius-sancho-ann-osborne-memorial-dedication-order-of-service.pdf \(westminster-abbey.org\)](https://www.westminster-abbey.org/charles-ignatius-sancho-ann-osborne-memorial-dedication-order-of-service.pdf)

SLIDE 6:

Image of the Ignatius Sancho memorial.

SLIDE 7: Who was Ignatius Sancho?

In pairs or small groups, students should use the fact sheet provided to learn about the life of Ignatius Sancho. Once they have been through his life story, they should select what they believe are the five most important things to happen in his life.

This activity is to help students to start thinking about what Sancho might/should be remembered for.

The groups could then share their thoughts with others around their table or the whole class and explain their choices. See if groups have picked the same events as others or different ones.

SLIDE 8: Context – The transatlantic slave trade

The transatlantic slave trade was the largest forced migration in history. Transported between 10-12 million people from African to be used as enslaved labour in the Caribbean, North, Central and South America.

The 18th Century was a time when Britain's involvement in the transatlantic slave trade was at its height creating huge wealth for the country – both through the trading of enslaved people and the trade of goods produced by enslaved people. It is estimated that British ships transported 3.4 million people from Africa to European colonies.

This period also saw a large growth in the British abolitionist movement with both black and white abolitionists working to keep the issue of enslavement in the public eye.

The abolitionist movement was the movement to end the practice of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. Those that worked to dismantle slavery were known as abolitionists.

Sancho was part of this history, having been born into enslavement.

SLIDE 9:

This painting was created c. 1745, during Sancho's lifetime, therefore it is a historical source. It shows a busy scene in St James's Park, illustrating the society of London during this time. You might like to ask students to look closely at this image and discuss what they notice. Student's might spot a well-dressed



woman of colour at the centre of the scene. What might this suggest about people of colour in Georgian England?

SLIDE 10: Black people in Georgian England

"By the 18th C the black population in England, particularly in London, had indeed become a community... in the later 18thC there were black pubs, churches, and community meeting places, changing the picture of isolated individual domestic servants and roving beggars on London streets to that of a thriving and structured black community" - Gretchen Gerzina, Black England: A Forgotten Georgian History, 2022, page 6

It is estimated that there were over 15,000 black people living in Britain in the 18th Century. The experience of black people in Georgian England varied – whilst many came as enslaved people, many others gained their freedom or arrived as free people.

Sancho illustrates that it was possible for a black family to exist in domestic harmony and as part of a community with both white and black friends and neighbours – there are other examples of this during this period. However, thousands of people of colour were never able to rise to this level of financial and social independence.

SLIDE 11: Ignatius Sancho's Memorial

Why has Ignatius Sancho been memorialised in St Margaret's Church, Westminster Abbey? Bring the focus back to Sancho, based on the context we've just been given about his life, the transatlantic slave trade and the experience of black people in Georgian England, why has he been memorialised? And why specifically in St Margaret's Church?

Remind students that Sancho got married in this church and his children were baptised here. He had a personal connection to this space.

Why is the language used in memorials important? Memorials often have limited space and phrasing must be brief but impactful.

Every word in Sancho's memorial was carefully considered before being chosen. It was discussed and debated, and several iterations existed before the design was confirmed.

Go through the wording used in the memorial and consider why it has been chosen.

SLIDE 12:

Questions for students to support analysis of the memorial;

What do you think are the most important words on the memorial?

African abolitionist

- Why does it specify that he was African?



- Why is this important?

His personal experience is vital to his efforts to promote abolition in Britain, making his work and legacy different to a white British abolitionist.

His largest and most longstanding impact was his abolitionist work, even though most of this impact occurred after his death when his writings were published.

Polymath

- What does this mean?
- Why has this word been used?

Polymath means a person of great and varied learning, someone who knows a lot about many different subjects.

Sancho was not just an abolitionist; he was a composer, a writer, an actor and a businessman. As a formerly enslaved person it is easy to define him by his personal experiences and his work relating to freedom for other enslaved people. However, he was much more than those things and a reminder that a black man in Georgian England could be accomplished.

Married to Ann Osborne in this church

- Why mention this?
- It doesn't mention their children, what was Ann's significance?

Ann was a black woman; they created a strong family unit which should be celebrated. It might also be highlighting that marriages between people of colour happened within churches during this period. It reminds us of the connection between this family and St Margaret's Church.

Are there other words or phrases you think are important in this memorial and why?

What is Sancho being remembered for through these words?

SLIDE 13: Memorial and Legacy

Having learnt about Ignatius Sancho's life and work, do you think there is anything missing from his memorial? How would you change it?

Thinking back to the examples of Sancho's creative work at the beginning of the lesson, his music and writings, do you think Sancho would have considered himself, first and foremost, an abolitionist?

Ignatius Sancho had a significant impact on the British abolition movement. The popularisation of his first-hand account had a large influence on changing public opinion on the transatlantic slave trade and enslavement. He is remembered as an integral part of the timeline of British abolition.



“Consider slavery – what it is – how bitter a draught – and how many millions are made to drink it! – Of all my favourite authors, not one has drawn a tear in favour of my miserable black brethren”