



The National Archives

Education Service



Bound for Britain

Experiences of immigration to the UK

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Introduction

Between 1948 and 1970 nearly half a million people left their homes in the West Indies to live in Britain. The West Indies consists of over twenty islands in the Caribbean, including Jamaica, Barbados and Trinidad. These people changed the face of modern Britain. They were all British citizens and although they had never lived in Britain before, they had the right to enter, work and settle here if they wanted to.

West Indians came to Britain for many different reasons. Some were seeking better opportunities for themselves and their children. Some came to work for a while, save money and return home. Some had been recruited because Britain was short of workers to run the transport system, postal service and hospitals. Other West Indians were returning soldiers who had fought for Britain during World War Two (1939-1945).

Tasks

Look at Source 1 a, b & c

1. These photographs were all taken in Jamaica around 1950. They show the way people on the islands were used to living.

Look at the photographs carefully and answer the following questions:

- a) What animals can you see? What do you think they might be used for?
- b) What different forms of transport can you see?
- c) Look at the houses in the photographs, what are they made from?
- d)
- e) Do you think it would be comfortable to live in these houses? Give your reasons.
- f) Compare where you live to the city shown in photograph 1c. Is it similar or different?
- g) Look at the way the people in the photographs are dressed. Why do you think they dressed this way?

Look at Source 2 a, b & c

2. These photographs are of London and Leeds and were taken between 1946 and the 1960's:
 - a) Compare these photographs to the ones you looked at in Source 1. How are they different?
 - b) How are the types of transport different to the ones in Jamaica?
 - c) What are these buildings made out of? Why do you think there is a difference?

Look at Source 3

3. This is one of the pages from the passenger list of the Empire Windrush, a ship which brought people from the West Indies to the UK:

- a) Look at the Country of Last Permanent Residence column on the list, which parts of the West Indies did most of these people come from?
- b) Write a list of the kind of jobs you think people coming to the UK would do.
- c) Compare the list you have written to the occupations (jobs) shown on the passenger list, are they the same? (HINT : H.D. means Household Domestic, someone like a servant or a cleaner)

Look at Source 4

4. This is a report on conditions for black people living in Stepney, East London from 1949:
 - a) What difficulties would the people who came to Britain face?

Look at Source 5

5. This is a report on Negro migration in Britain by Eric Walrond 1947-1948.
 - a) Do you think Obidiah Jones was happy with his new job?
 - b) What clues are there to show he was settling in?
6. Now imagine you are one of the passengers who came to Britain on the Windrush. Write a letter home to your family in the West Indies describing how people are treating you and what Britain is like compared to home.

Background

Not all white Britons welcomed the black Britons. Many found that the colour of their skins provoked unfriendly reactions. For example, despite the desperate shortage of labour some West Indians still found it difficult to get good jobs. Often they were forced to accept jobs which they were over-qualified for, or they were paid less than other white workers.

West Indians also experienced difficulties in finding suitable places to live. Since few had much money, they had to find cheap housing to rent near to their workplace. This was often in the poor inner-cities. Even if they did have enough money to rent better quality housing, Many had to face the fact that some landlords refused to rent to black people. They would be confronted with insulting signs in house windows that said 'Rooms to Let: No dogs, no coloureds'. This meant that a lot of West Indians were forced to rent homes in the most rundown areas.

In 1958, in areas where bigger numbers of West Indians lived, there were outbreaks of violence against them. In particular, in Nottingham and London mobs of white people attacked black people in the streets, smashing and burning their homes.

West Indians had been invited to come to Britain, so they also felt that it was their home too. To be discriminated against was a shock which they had not been prepared for. Some returned to the West Indies, but many remained - despite the difficulties they faced. They have worked hard and made a contribution to British life.

Teachers Notes

The documents included here only show a very partial glimpse of the life experienced by West Indians during this time. Pupils will have many other questions. Teachers may wish to ask their pupils to write a list of questions they would like to ask one of the people in the Windrush passenger list if they were available for interview.

Other activities that are possible on the theme of immigration or multi-cultural Britain are:

- Pupils can use an atlas to find Jamaica, Trinidad or other West Indian islands. They can then trace the journey of the Windrush to Britain. The Empire Windrush started at Trinidad and headed north up the Caribbean via Kingston, Tampico, Havana and Bermuda.
- Pupils could find out from classmates, family or neighbours if they have other relatives or friends who came to Britain, where they came from and the reasons why they came. The information gathered could be presented to the class.
- Pupils can discuss the experience of moving to a new town or country; talking about how the West Indians would feel about moving and what they would like or dislike about being in a new place. Pupils could start by talking about their similar experience such as moving house, or starting a new school.
- Pupils could produce a leaflet to explain to anybody coming from another part of the world what to expect when they arrive in Britain.
- An exciting display could be produced on the theme of what Britain has gained from immigrants from the new Commonwealth countries - music, food, literature, fashions, new customs and pastimes.

Teachers should bear in mind that the documents and the vocabulary used are of their time and as such care should be taken to make this point to pupils and to stress the appropriate vocabulary to use.

Schemes of Work

How has life in Britain changed since 1948?

Key Stage 1&2 Unit 13

Source 1a : Jamaican village scene with women carrying produce on their heads c1950 (INF 10/153)



Source 1b : Jamaican village scene c1950 (INF 10/149)



Source 1c : A large Jamaican city c1950 (INF 10/153)



Source 2a : Trafalgar Square London 1946 (WORK 21/290)



Source 2b : Oxford St, London 1960's (INF 14/139)



Source 2c : City Square Leeds, 1949 (WORK 25/197)



Source 3 : Page from the Empire Windrush passenger lists 1948 (BT 26/237)

NAMES AND DESCRIPTIONS OF BRITISH PASSENGERS.																						
(1) Port of Embarkation	(2) Port at which Passengers have been landed	(3) NAMES OF PASSENGERS	(4) CLASS (Wholesale 1st, 2nd, Tourist & 3rd)	(5) AGES OF PASSENGERS								(6) Proposed Address in the United Kingdom	(7) Profession, Occupation, or Calling of Passengers	(8) Country of last Permanent Residence*	(9) Country of Intended Future Permanent Residence*							
				Points of 12 years		Not Accompanied by husband or wife		Chil. Area between 1 and 12		Infants					England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland	Eire	Other parts of the British Empire	Foreign Countries	
				Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females											
23. KINGSTON.		STEWART	Vreni	"A"	28 M 34 F 18 M 3 F								11	c/o Grindlays Bank Ltd., 54, Parliament St., S.W.2.	Scholar.	Burma.						
24. "		"	Massy	"									3	- do -	-	"						
25. "		"	Dorinda	"									1 1/2	- do -	-	"						
26. "		SPICER	Beryl	"									29	52, Cadogan Square, W.1.	Cook.	Jamaica.						
27. "		SEVENS	John	"									52	c/o Lloyds Bank Ltd., Falmouth, S.W.1.	Army Officer.	England.						
28. "		"	Hamil	"									57	W. Middx. Co. H. Hospital.	H.D.	"						
29. "		SULLIVAN	Ene	"									35	Isleworth, Middx.	Nurse.	Jamaica.						
30. "		TRAYLOR	Julita	"									26	R.A.F.C.	H.D.	England.						
31. "		"	Cedric	"									4	c/o War Office, W.1.	H.D.	"						
32. "		"	Stewart	"									2	- do -	-	"						
33. "		"	Neil	"									1 1/2	- do -	-	"						
34. "		TUOHY	Alex	"									54	6, Park Place, Trinity, Edinburgh.	Newspaper Manager.	Jamaica.						
35. "		"	Annie	"									54	- do -	H.D.	"						
36. "		TIPPENHILL	Lloyd	"									20	c/o H.S. House, 215 Strand, London.	Seaman.	New Zealand.						
37. "		VAFFIER	Lillian	"									51	7, Kingdown Rd., Epsom, Surrey.	H.D.	Jamaica.						
38. "		VAZ	Gloria	"									20	5, St. Marks Sq., E.W.1.	Student.	"						
39. "		WHITEHEAD	Gertrude	"									80	Starling, W.1.	H.D.	Scotland.						
40. "		WILLIAMS	Winifred	"									55	ALXANDRIA HOTEL, Hove, Sussex.	"	England.						
41. "		WINDATE	Allen	"									51	Hydal, Durrington, Worthing, Sussex.	Agricultural Contractor.	"						
42. "		WILLIAMS	Marilyn	"									34	95, Banners Hill, Dorchester, S.W.5.	Hairdresser.	Jamaica.						
43. "		WILSON	Jeanne	"									28	25, Western Avenue, Bastote, Pinner.	H.D.	"						
44. "		"	Roger	"									31	- do -	-	"						
45. "		WOODS	Kathleen	"									27	Fairview, Corton, Lovestoft, Suffolk.	H.D.	England.						
46. "		"	Mark	"									1	- do -	-	"						
47. "		WEIGHT	Edwin	"									70	Flaidy, Looe, Cornwall.	Retired.	"						
48. "		"	Amy	"									65	- do -	H.D.	"						
49. "		ZAYNE	Doreen	"									22	10, Amberbank Grove, Lytham Rd., Blackpool.	"	Jamaica.						
50. "		"	Vanessa	"									2	- do -	-	"						
51. "		"	David	"									2	- do -	-	"						
52. BERMUDA.		RANTUM	Kate	"									68	32, Willoughty Rd., Hampstead, N.W.3.	H.D.	England.						
53. "		BROWN	Clifford	"									45	25, Reform Rd., Luton, Chesham, Kent.	Plumber.	Bermuda.						
54. "		"	Nellie	"									39	- do -	H.D.	"						
55. "		BENDALL	Elisabeth	"									32	8, Townsend Ave., Plymouth.	"	"						
56. "		"	Roger	"									4	- do -	-	"						
57. "		"	David	"									7	- do -	-	"						
58. "		BARTLETT	Edna	"									22	49, Vicarage Rd., Whitchall, Bristol.5.	H.D.	"						
59. "		"	Ronald	"									1	- do -	-	"						
60. "		BESSTON	Ethel	"									26	16, Southampton Rd., Kentish Town, N.W.5.	H.D.	"						
61. "		"	Alan	"									3	- do -	-	"						
62. "		"	Colin	"									3	- do -	-	"						
63. "		BRADLEY	Olive	"									57	6, Higher Spring Gdns., Ottery St. Mary, Devon.	H.D.	"						
64. "		"	David	"									21	- do -	Shipwright.	"						
65. "		"	Stephen	"									20	- do -	Locksmith.	"						
66. "		BLACK	Math	"									14	Lisnaskia, Ireland.	H.D.	"						
67. "		BEVIN		"									30	"The Meadow" 31, Crossingham Rd., Reading, Berks.	"	"						

*By permanent residence is to be understood residence for a year or more. Northern Ireland and Eire are to be regarded as separate countries.

22 M 163 F 27 M 1 F

31 11 46

Source 3 : Transcript of page from the Empire Windrush passenger lists 1948 (BT 26/237)

NAMES AND DESCRIPTIONS OF BRITISH PASSENGERS.																					
(1) Port of Embarkation	(2) Port at which Passengers have been landed	(3) NAMES OF PASSENGERS	(4) CLASS (Whether 1st, 2nd, Tourist or 3rd)	(5) AGES OF PASSENGERS								(6) Proposed Address in the United Kingdom	(7) Profession, Occupation or Calling of Passengers	(8) Country of last Permanent Residence	(9) Country of Intended Future Permanent Residence						
				Accompanied by husband or wife		Not Accompanied by husband or wife		Children between 1 and 12		Infants					England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland	Other parts of the British Empire	Foreign Countries	
				Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females										
240. Kingston	"	STEWART Vreni	"A"								11	c/o Grindlays Bank Ltd., 54, Parliament St.S.W.1.	Scholar.	Burma							*
241. "	"	" Massy	"								3	-do-	-	"							*
242. "	"	" Dorinda	"								1 1/2	-do-	-	"							*
243. "	"	SPENCE Beryl	"								29	52, Cadogan Square W.1.	Cook	Jamaica	*						*
244. "	"	STEVENS John	"								58	c/o Lloyds Bank Ltd., Pall Mall, S.W.1.	Army Officer	England							*
245. "	"	" Hamil	"								57	-do-	H.D.	"							*
246. "	"	SULLIVAN Ena	"								35	W.Middx.County Hospital R.A.P.C	Nurse	Jamaica	*						*
247. "	"	TRAYLEN Juilita	"								26	c/o War Office.W.1.	H.D.	England	*						*
248. "	"	" Cedric	"									4	-do-	-	"						*
249. "	"	" Stewart	"									2	-do-	-	"						*
250. "	"	" Neil	"								1 1/2	-do-	-	"							*
251. "	"	TUACH Alex	"								54	6, Park Place, Trinity Edinburgh	Newspaper Manager	Jamaica							*
252. "	"	" Annie	"								54	-do-	H.D.	"							*
253. "	"	TUFFNELL Lloyd	"								20	c/o N.Z.House, 15 Strand, London	Seaman	New Zealand							*
254. "	"	VAUTIER Lillian	"								51	7, Kingsdown Rdm Epsom, Surrey	H.D.	Jamaica	*						*
255. "	"	VAZ Gloria	"								20	5, St.Marks Sq.N.W.1.	Student	"							*
256. "	"	WHITELAW Gertrude	"								80	Toravon, Polmont Sterlingshire	H.D.	Scotland		*					*
257. "	"	WILLIAMS Winifred	"								55	Alexandra Hotel Hove Sussex.	"	England	*						*
258. "	"	WINGATE Allan	"								51	Rydal, Durrington, Worthing, Sussex	Agricultural Contractor	"	*						*
259. "	"	WILLIAMS Marilyn	"								34	93, Tanners Hill, Deptford, S.E. 6.	Hairdresser	Jamaica	*						*
260. "	"	WILSON Jeanne	"								28	25, Eastern Avenue, Eastcote, Pinner	H.D.	"	*						*
261. "	"	" Roger	"								3 1/2	-do-	-	"	*						*
262. "	"	WOODS Kathleen	"								27	Fairview, Corton, Lowestoft, Suffolk	H.D.	England	*						*
263. "	"	" Mark	"								1	-do-	-	"	*						*
264. "	"	WEIGHT Edwin	"								70	Plaiddy, Looe, Cornwall	Retired.	"	*						*
265. "	"	" Amy	"								65	-do-	H.D.	"	*						*
266. "	"	ZAYNE Doreen	"								22	10, Amberbanks Grove, Lytham Rd, Blackpool.	"	Jamaica	*						*
267. "	"	" Vanessa	"									2	-do-	-	"	*					*
268. "	"	" David	"								2	-do-	-	"	*						*
269. Bermuda	"	BARTRUM Kate	"								68	32, Willoughby Rd, Hampstead, N.W.3.	H.D.	England	*						*
270. "	"	BROWN Clifford	"								43	25, Reform Rd, Luton, Chatham, Kent.	Plumber	Bermuda	*						*
271. "	"	" Nellie	"								39	-do-	H.D.	"	*						*
272. "	"	BENDALL Elizabeth	"								32	8, Townsend Ave, Plymouth	"	"	*						*
273. "	"	" Roger	"								4	-do-	-	"	*						*
274. "	"	" David	"								7	-do-	-	"	*						*
275. "	"	BARTLETT Edna	"								22	49, Vicarage Rd, Whitehall, Bristol.5.	H.D.	"	*						*
276. "	"	" Ronald	"								1	-do-	-	"	*						*
277. "	"	BEESTON Ethel	"								26	16, Southampton Rd, Kentish Town, N.W.5.	H.D.	"	*						*
278. "	"	" Alan	"								3	-do-	-	"	*						*
279. "	"	" Colin	"									9 mos	-do-	-	"	*					*
280. "	"	BRAMBLE Clive	"								57	8, Higher Spring Gdns, Ottery St. Mary, Devon.	H.D.	"	*						*
281. "	"	" David	"								21	-do-	Shipwright	"	*						*
282. "	"	" Stephen	"								20	-do-	Locksmith	"	*						*
283. "	"	BLACK [eliza]beth	"								34	Lispaskie, N. Ireland "The Meadow"	H.D.	"	*						*
284. "	"	BELVIN	"								30	31, Cressingham Rd, Reading, Berks.	"	"	*						*

Source 4 : Report on an investigation into conditions of the coloured people in Stepney E1 1949 (CO 876/247)

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES.

These are very poor indeed. There are one or two clubs; the Colonial, which I understand is very limited. There is a club in Cable Street run by some Franciscan Brothers. Although it is a very fine effort made by these Brothers, the place is situated in rather a bad area, and the surroundings are not the ideal. Another club is the Jamaican Club - this is more of a dancing place with drinks.

5.

In other words, there is no properly organised way in which these people could spend their leisure. To break the monotony of their very bad living rooms, there is the street with the cafes, and in the evenings the pubs, or when they have money, the cinema, or to the West End to dance halls.

Source 4 : Transcript of a report on an investigation into conditions of the coloured people in Stepney E1 1949 (CO 876/247)

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Source 5 : Negro migration in Britain by Eric Walrond 1947-1948 (CO 867/88)

"It's fine up to now," declared O.Jones, the sole Negro blacksmith in the works, when I asked him ^{how} he was getting on. A big, heavily built man of fifty he was another of the migrants from the 'Isle of Springs'. For 23 years he had worked on the Jamaica Government Railways. The little shed roofed with corrugated iron in which he stood perspiring in blue overalls beside the forge was shared with another blacksmith, a white man.

"I have applied to join the union," he went on, "but I have not heard from them yet."

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