

Glasgow Life Museums

Anti-Racism Resource for Schools



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Anti-Racism Resource Teachers Notes

This resource has been designed for teachers using Glasgow Life Museums' collections for specific discussions around Legacies of Empire and Slavery and making connections to contemporary society and racism.

How to use –

As with all conversations that involve racism, we suggest that you are mindful of the needs of your pupils. These resources are useful for teachers:

- Scotdec Anti-racist toolkit for teachers - <https://scotdec.org.uk/download/anti-racist-toolkit-for-teachers/>
- Resources and support for anti-racist education practitioners across Scotland
<https://www.antiracisted.scot/>

Sections –

Please feel free to adapt content as needed to suit the needs of your group.

1. **A view in the island of Jamaica** – 1778, shows how in Great Britain people were presented with distorted views of life on plantations. It is also a visual example of racial hierarchies.
2. **Glassford Family Portrait** – from 1767–8, shows evidence of an enslaved child in Glasgow.
3. **Products of Empire** – Products produced by enslaved people changed lives in Scotland.
4. **Maps** – Empire shaped how people saw the world and still impacts us today.
5. **Glossary** – this is the glossary from our City of Empire exhibition.

For all the objects included we have provided short background information and discussion points to be used alongside the images. Please feel free to edit as required to suit the needs of your class.

Within each section you will find links to the objects on our online collection data base as well as more detailed collection information.

To enlarge the image right click on it, then select the 'Open image in a new tab' option.

Please follow this link for our collection groupings on British Imperialism and its legacies:

<https://collections.glasgowmuseums.com/mwebcgi/mweb?request=record;type=801;id=534947>

We would be delighted if you could provide some feedback on this resource. Was it helpful in supporting classwork? How did your pupils respond? Email museums.schoolbookings@glasgowlife.org.uk with your thoughts.

Section 1 View in the island of Jamaica



Title – *A View in the Island of Jamaica*

Artist Maker – James Mason

Materials – Print on paper

Date – 1778

Link to the object online - <https://collections.glasgowmuseums.com/mwebcgi/mweb?request=record;id=162700;type=101>

Background –

This print of one of his plantations in Jamaica was commissioned by enslaver and sugar planter William Beckford to show people in Britain what the plantations were like. As an enslaver Beckford intentionally distorted it to remove some of the violence.

There are enslaved people in this scene, but they are not working on sugar production. Sugar cultivation was hard work, leading to a high death rate for enslaved people; life expectancy was just 7 years after arrival on the plantation as work was so brutal. This image is acting like propaganda, as it is presenting a peaceful idyllic view of life on Jamaica.

Useful Definition –

Chattel slavery: a form of slavery in which the enslaved person is treated as property belonging to their owner. An enslaved person under this system has no rights, and they remain enslaved for life. Any children born to an enslaved person are also enslaved for life. During the era of transatlantic slavery, this form of slavery was racialised so people who were enslaved were of what we would today call Black African or Caribbean heritage.

Discussion points –

- How does the image make you feel? What words would you use to describe it. (This question might be best asked before students hear the background information.)
- Why do you think Beckford would have paid to have this image and others like it created? Beckford thought of himself as a historian, so what does this tell us of understanding of slavery at this time, if an enslaver is creating the historical narrative? Do you think they would have presented an unbiased view?
- Look carefully at the figures – the woman and man in the foreground are dressed differently and carefully positioned. The enslaved woman is thought to have lighter skin, and would have worked in the house and not been involved in sugar cultivation like the kneeling enslaved man. What does this tell us about life in plantations and how hierarchies around skin colour were enforced?
- The scene at first looks idyllic, but look at the trees, vegetation and the left-hand side and the sky, how would you describe it? Can you see any hints towards hidden dangers?

Additional Information

Extra information on life on a sugar plantation - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zfqmg2p>

Additional Task –

It is important to learn about resistance, and that many enslaved people fought against their captors. Esher Estate, another of Beckford's Jamaican sugar plantations, was one of the sites of 'Tacky's Revolt', the largest uprising of enslaved people in the British Caribbean during the 1700s.. Find out more about it.

Section 2 - *The Glassford Family Portrait*



Title – *John Glassford and his Family*

Date – circa 1767–8

Artist/Maker – Archibald McLauchlan

Materials – oil on canvas



Link to the object online – <https://collections.glasgowmuseums.com/mwebcgi/mweb?request=record;id=1177;type=101>

Background -

This painting is important as it is evidence that people were trafficked to Scotland and enslaved as personal servants. They were forcibly taken from their homes and separated from their families. We have very few depictions of enslaved people in Scotland, but we know that in the 1700s enslaved people were not an uncommon sight in cities like Glasgow. Newspaper adverts from the time describe runaway enslaved people and the clothing they would have been wearing, giving us further clues as to what life would have been like.

John Glassford, known as a tobacco lord, was one of the richest men in Glasgow in the 1700s. He made his money by moving products produced by enslaved people around the British empire and Europe to sell. At one point his ships imported 10% of tobacco into Britain.

In 2007 the painting was cleaned gently in a conservation treatment that revealed that the enslaved boy had been obscured by centuries of dirt.

While nothing is known about the enslaved boy – his name, birthplace, death, and family history have yet to be discovered – we know so much about the Glassford family.

Discussion points –

Look carefully at the painting. Remember it is not a photograph and it would have taken a long time to arrange the people and objects; nothing is there by accident.

- Think about who is given most importance in the painting and who is given the least. What does this tell us about how people were treated/valued?
- What objects can you see? What do you think these objects tell us? What does Glassford want us to think about him?

Look closely at the enslaved child.

- What can we tell about him from the painting?
- Why do you think that he is behind Glassford? What might his job or role be in the household? Remember there would have been other paid servants.
- Why do you think they have included the enslaved boy at all?
- How do you think the enslaved boy would feel being included in this portrait?



Additional Task –

The painting was not given a name until it entered the museum collection in 1950, when it was given the descriptive title ‘John Glassford and his Family’. What would you rename it?

Write a 30-word description of the painting.

Extra background information

John Glassford (1715–1783), known as a tobacco lord, was one of the richest men in Glasgow. He made his money by moving products like tobacco produced by enslaved people around the British empire and Europe to sell. At one point his ships imported 10% of tobacco into Britain and Glasgow.

Tobacco lords were merchants in the 1700s who made fortunes trading in tobacco, a crop dependent on the exploitation of enslaved people working on American and Caribbean plantations. The Glasgow tobacco lords dominated the British market.

Glassford commissioned this portrait of himself and his family surrounded by the things that emphasised his wealthy status, including an enslaved child. Partly due to bad business decisions and gambling and the impact of the American War of Independence (1775–1783) in which he lost property and business, he died in debt.

The portrait entered the museum collection in 1950, and a myth grew about an enslaved child who had been painted over to erase Glasgow’s association with the slave trade. In 2007 the painting was cleaned gently in a conservation treatment that revealed that the enslaved boy had been obscured by centuries of dirt, not painted out. Cleaning and X-rays also revealed that Glassford’s second wife, Ann Nesbit, had been painted over to make way for his third wife, Lady Margaret Mackenzie, and her children, seen to the right.

The myth of the enslaved boy being painted over persists, which is also interesting. As yet, nothing is known about him: his name, birthplace, death, and family history have yet to be discovered, yet we know so much about the Glassford family.

For more in-depth information –

Glasgow Life Museums’ legacies of slavery and empire blog - <https://www.glasgowlife.org.uk/museums/glasgow-life-museums-blogs/legacies-of-slavery-and-empire/john-glassford-s-family-portrait>

<https://collections.glasgowmuseums.com/mwebcgi/mweb?request=record;id=1177;type=101> – follow the links for ‘Related People’ to find out more about the individual sitters in this painting.

Runaway Slaves in Britain: bondage, freedom and race in the eighteenth century <https://www.runaways.gla.ac.uk/> This website has a database of newspaper adverts.

Section 3 - Products of Empire



Tea

Object type - Teapot

Artist/Maker - Britannia Pottery Co. Ltd

Date – circa 1840s

Materials – semi-porcelain

Supplying Britain's desire for products such as tea and sugar became an important way for firms to make fortunes and generate wealth via the Empire. On behalf of the East India Company, Scottish botanist Robert Fortune (1812–1880) illegally smuggled 20,000 tea plants and 8 tea masters out of China. The plants were then sent to India, where many Scottish-owned tea estates were established.

It took the British a long time to recognise the expertise and knowledge of the Indian tea growers, and to appreciate the native Indian tea plants that they grew.

Tea is still popular today.

Link to the object online - <https://collections.glasgowmuseums.com/mwebcgi/mweb?request=record;id=49953;type=101>



Title – The Woman Shopkeeper

Artist Maker – Unknown

Date – circa 1790–1800

Materials – Oil on board

This painting shows an early shopkeeper in Glasgow. On her shelves are a range of products such as tea, sugar cones wrapped in purple paper, candles, even party supplies like the rum and lemons needed for a drink called punch.

Shops like this one show how businesses benefited from easy access to these goods, and how interconnected Glasgow's economy had become with the British Empire and products produced by enslaved people in the Caribbean. These businesses impacted the development of the city, changed Glaswegians' diet with the availability of cheap sugar, and introduced social habits such as tea drinking.

Link to the object online - <https://collections.glasgowmuseums.com/mwebcgi/mweb?request=record;id=203710;type=101>

Discussion points –

- As mentioned above, the British Empire had a lasting impact on both Glasgow and the world. Can you think of any other examples of the impact of empire? Many of these will still be around today.
- What does it say about British views that they failed to recognise the expertise and knowledge of Indian tea growers?
- Countries today are still exploited for their resources by companies and other countries – can you think of any examples?
- Consumers, particularly women who did not have the vote, were aware of the connection between chattel slavery and sugar. 300,000 people boycotted the sale of sugar produced by enslaved people, meaning sales dropped significantly, helping push forward abolition. Are you aware of any ethical campaigns today to boycott certain products or firms?

Additional Task

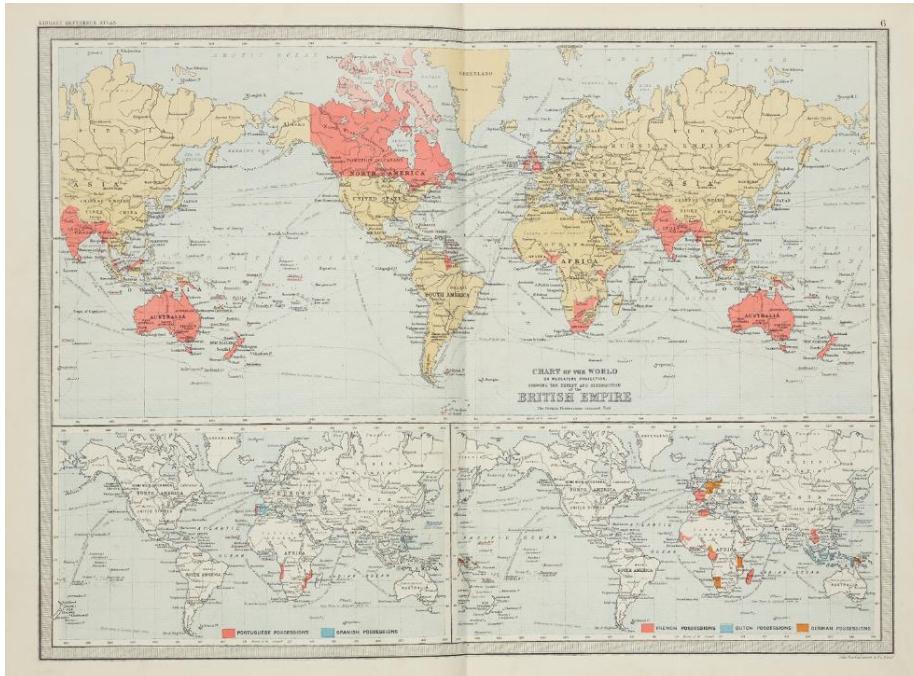
Research the production line for sugar from a plantation in the Caribbean to a consumer in the UK. Think of all the different processes and products that sugar was used for.

Section 4 Maps

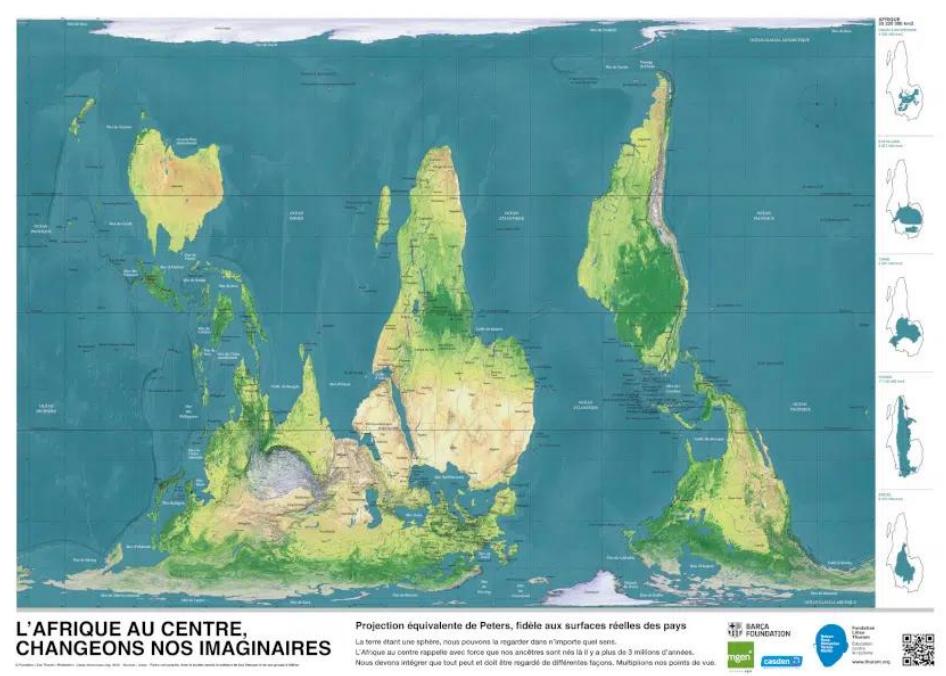
Introduction – Maps are often seen as neutral and scientific, a way to communicate what the world looks like.

Lilian Thuram, the French international football player and now anti-racism campaigner, states that ‘Nothing is neutral when it comes to representation’. Have a look at the two maps below. With Thuram’s quote in mind, what do you think the people who made these maps are trying to tell you? (See larger versions on additional sheets.)

Map 1



Map 2



Discussion points –

- Where is North? How does it make you feel seeing the map a different way up?
- Look at the size of the countries and continents, do you notice anything interesting?
- Why would certain countries be portrayed bigger than they actually are? Whose point of view is represented in these maps?
- Look at the language used on the British Empire map, what do you think of it?
- Museums are like maps, often seen as neutral spaces, but are they?

Extra information –

We often assume that maps are neutral and that we are presented with a view of the world as it really is. Often, they represent how the people who created the map see themselves and their place in the world.

We assume that North is at the top of the world, but there is no right way up! Putting North at the top of the map is a choice; maps used to be made with either East or South at the top, see <https://www.bbc.co.uk/future/article/20160614-maps-have-north-at-the-top-but-it-couldve-been-different>

Recently the African Union has called for how Africa is represented on maps to change - <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/aug/15/african-union-true-size-world-map-replace-mercator-version>

Gall-Peters projection – originally the idea of a Scottish man called James Gall in the 1850s, and then introduced to a wider audience by German historian Arno Peters in the 1960s/70s. More on Gall here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Gall

Additional map – you may also want to show this illustrated Imperial world map showing the extent of the British Empire in 1886 :
<https://writersinspire.podcasts.ox.ac.uk/content/imperial-federation-map-world-showing-extent-british-empire-1886-0>

Translation of the caption in French at the bottom of map 2

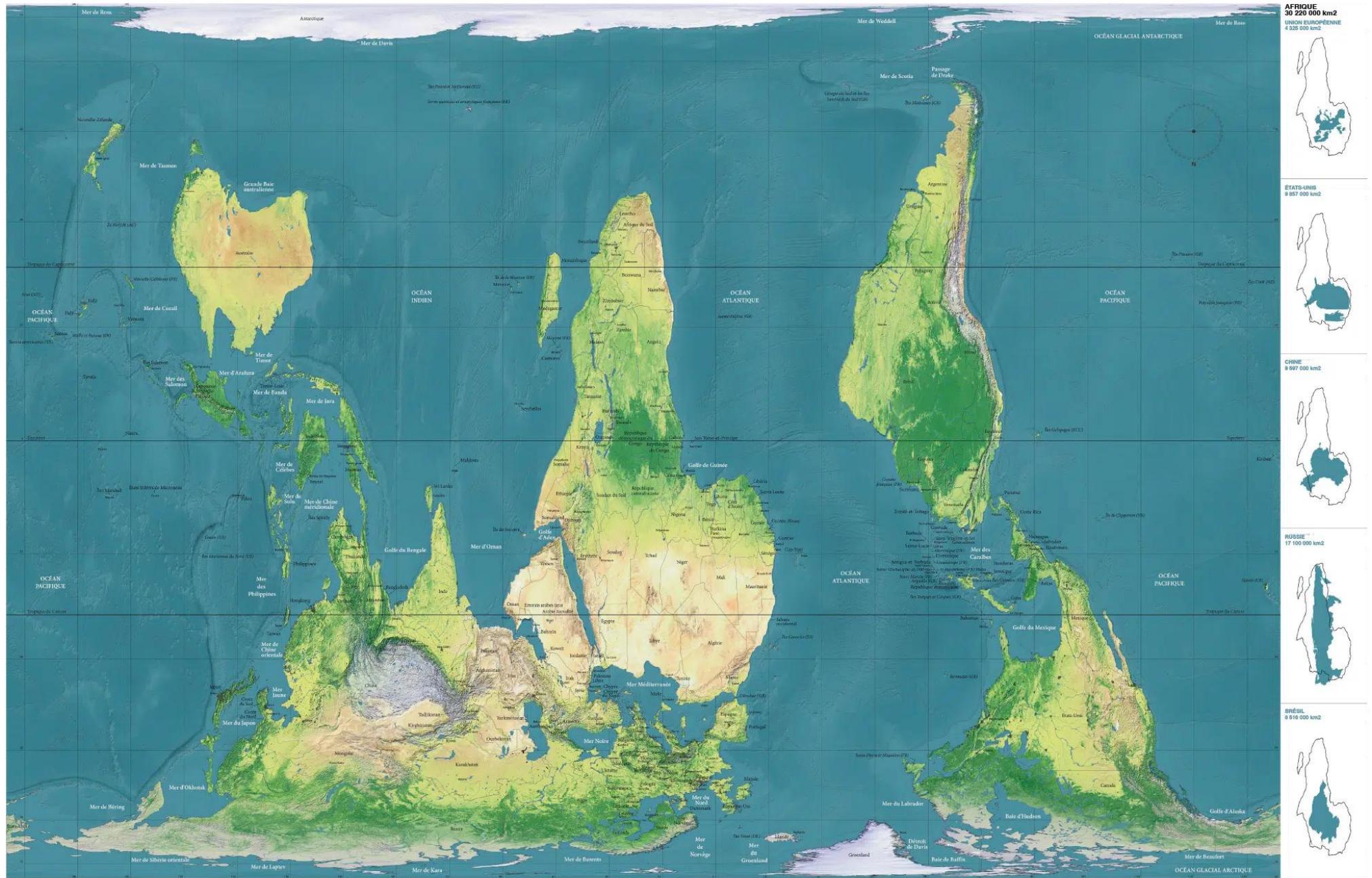
AFRICA AT THE CENTRE, LET'S CHANGE OUR IMAGINATIONS

Peters equal-area projection, faithful to the actual surfaces of countries. Since the Earth is a sphere, we can look at it in any direction. Africa in the centre is a powerful reminder that our ancestors were born there more than 3 million years ago. We must understand that everything can and should be viewed in different ways. Let's multiply our points of view.

Sources –

Map 1 – Library Reference of the World, John Bartholomew, 1890

Map 2 – Africa at the Centre - <https://www.thuram.org/ressource/lafrique-au-centre/> Source - Lilian Thuram Foundation 2019



L'AFRIQUE AU CENTRE, CHANGEONS NOS IMAGINAIRES

© Fondation Lilian Thuram / Réalisation : Lépac (www.lepac.org), 2015. - Sources : Lépac - Peche cartographie. Avec le soutien amical et solidaire de Guy Delcourt et de son groupe d'édition.

Projection équivalente de Peters, fidèle aux surfaces réelles des pays

La terre étant une sphère, nous pouvons la regarder dans n'importe quel sens.

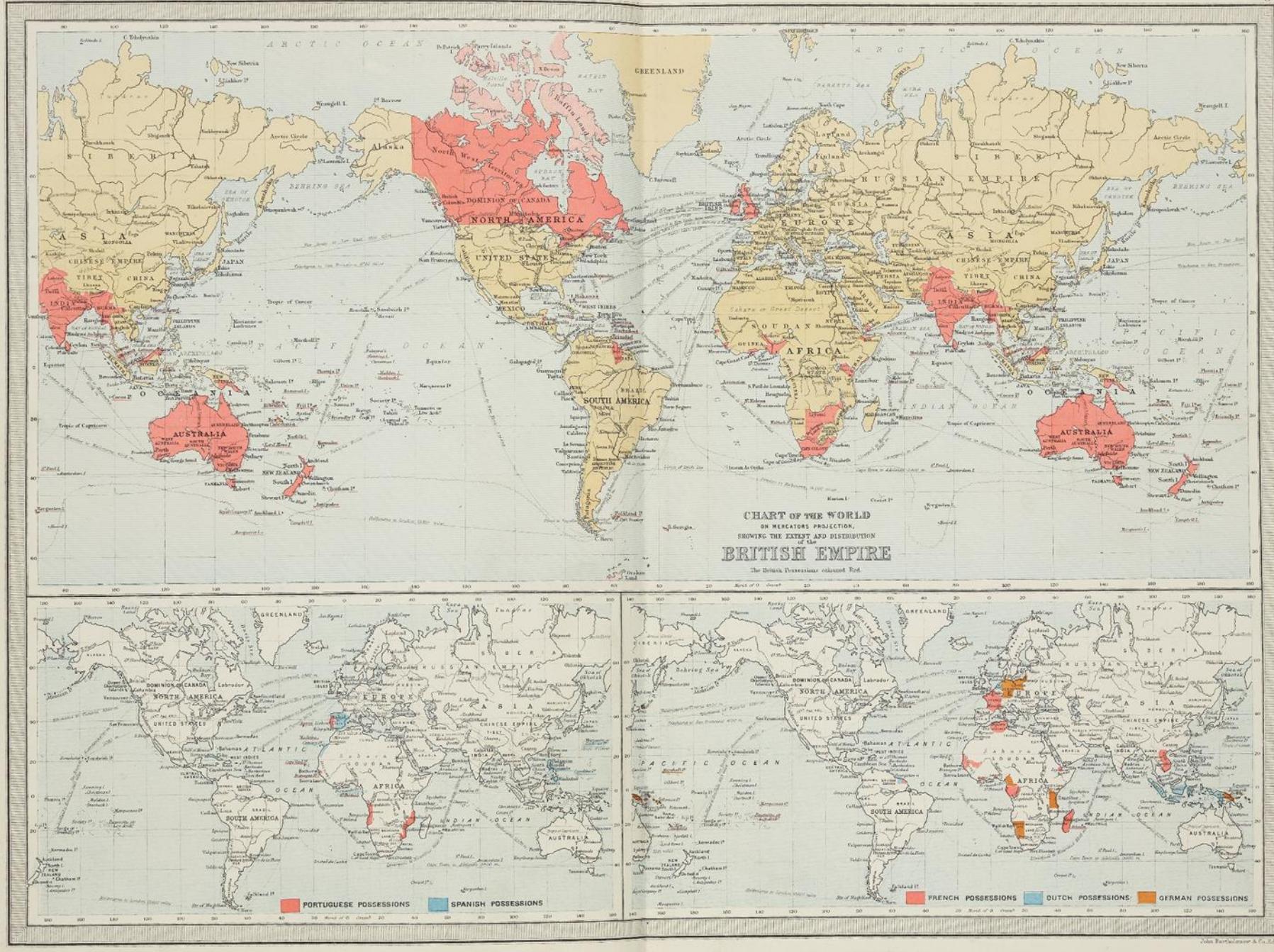
L'Afrique au centre rappelle avec force que nos ancêtres sont nés là il y a plus de 3 millions d'années.

Nous devons intégrer que tout peut et doit être regardé de différentes façons. Multiplions nos points de vue.



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Glossary

When preparing Glasgow Museums' new [Glasgow – City of Empire display](#) in Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, we worked with the Our Shared Cultural Heritage Changemakers on putting together a glossary of key terms related to slavery and empire and their legacies. This glossary is displayed as a part of the exhibition and was designed to support visitors engaging with the display, as we were aware that some of the topics and language explored are not always widely taught or discussed.

Language plays a key role in shaping our understanding, and particularly in this context language plays a key role in shaping power and identity. For example, being able to understand and clearly define a term such as chattel slavery is key to understanding how chattel slavery differed from other systems, such as indentured servitude, and how it has shaped and influenced modern-day issues such as anti-Black racism.

In creating this glossary, we drew on sources such as Oxford Languages, Museums Galleries Scotland, The Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights, the Merriam-Webster Dictionary and at times on our own knowledge. It is not a complete glossary but represents a useful tool when thinking about slavery and empire and its legacies.

Abolition: to end a system or institution. The abolition movement refers to actions taken globally to end transatlantic slavery.

British Raj: in 1857, following the failed rebellion known as the First War of Indian Independence the British government seized the assets of the East India Company, while the company continued to operate until 1874 its influence declined. The British Raj refers to the following time period, during which the British Crown and government had direct rule over the Indian subcontinent. This rule ended with the Partition of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh in 1947.

Chattel slavery: a form of slavery in which the enslaved person is treated as property belonging to their owner. An enslaved person under this system has no rights, and they remain enslaved for life. Any children born to an enslaved person are also enslaved for life.

Colonies: refers to territories or regions that are controlled by another country, known as the 'colonial power'. They are typically subject to direct rule or indirect control by the colonial power, which may involve military, economic, and political domination.

British colonies: British colonialism involved direct rule and indirect control over its colonies, often resulting in the suppression of local cultures, languages, and traditions, as well as the exploitation of natural resources and labour.

Colonisation: acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically.

East India Company: a militarised multi-national corporation that acted as an agent of British Imperialism from its foundation in the 1600s to its dissolution in 1874. During this period the Company waged wars, plundered, and colonised modern-day India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar. It supported the illegal trade in opium by British merchants with China and was involved in the transportation and use of enslaved African people.

Empire: where a central or main power rules over other territories outside of its own borders.

Exploitation: refers to the act of taking advantage of someone or something for personal gain or benefit, usually without regard for the wellbeing of the exploited party.

Indentured servitude: this comes in many forms. For example, after the abolition of slavery, plantation owners in the Caribbean coerced over 400,000 Indians to replace enslaved workers, with false promises on pay and conditions. They received little to no pay and were bound by contracts.

‘Indentured labour’ or ‘forced labour’ should not be confused with enslavement. Some indentured labourers (including white Scottish indentured labourers) worked on British overseas plantations alongside enslaved African labourers. Although they have been labelled as ‘white slaves’, their contracts were temporary, and they retained certain rights. They were not incorporated into the system of chattel slavery in which Black people were denied the status of human beings, and which was hereditary, perpetual, racialised, and denied Black people any legal personhood.

Loot: this word comes from the Hindi *lut*, meaning the spoils of war. Looting is a political act shaped by systems of power and oppression.

Missionaries: individuals sent by governments or religious organisations to foreign countries with the aim of converting people to their faith. These missions have, historically, often led to the erasure, or attempted erasure, of people’s culture and languages.

Plantation: a plot of land dedicated to growing a single crop solely for the purpose of selling it. These crops can include cotton, coffee, sugar, palm oil, and rubber, and are known as cash crops.

Police brutality: the use of excessive force, physical or verbal attacks, and psychological intimidation by a police officer. Research shows that this action is disproportionately aimed towards people in minority groups.

Racial hate crime: a crime committed against a person, or a group of people, based on their perceived race or ethnicity, and motivated by the perpetrator’s racism.

Racism: a belief that one group of people is inferior or superior to another because of their race.

Reparations: the act of amending a past wrong or injustice inflicted by a country or empire upon another individual group or state. Examples of these include providing payment or other assistance to those who have been wronged. In its truest sense, reparations involve the elimination of structures created by colonial atrocities, as well as the acceptance of the moral responsibility for the crimes committed – *Shashi Tharoor*.

Transatlantic Slavery trade: this refers to the practice of buying and selling human beings against their will. The transatlantic slave trade lasted over 400 years and was driven by European powers, needing a labour force to work on plantations and mines in their colonies across the Americas. This led to the enslavement and trafficking of Black African peoples.

Slavery: a system in which a person or company has ownership of another person who is forced to work and unable to leave.

Racial Slur: rooted in prejudice and often originating from historical periods of oppression, a ‘slur’ is a derogatory term that targets, dehumanises, and oppresses a specific individual or group of people. Racial slurs refer to members of racial or ethnic groups in a derogatory way.

Stereotype: a widely held, oversimplified, view of a specific group or thing, rooted in some form of prejudice, which often has limited or no basis within reality. This view can lead to offence and harm for the person or group it applies to.

Structural inequality: Inequalities in wealth, resources, and other outcomes that result from discrimination on an institutional level. This is shaped by the existence of biases in key societal institutions such as education, health, law, and government. This leads some groups in society to experience marginalisation and discrimination.

Structural inequalities are often a legacy of historical imbalances in power and societal influence.

Trafficking: to trade in something illegal.

White supremacy: the belief that white people are a superior race and should dominate society, typically to the exclusion of other racial and ethnic groups.