



RUNAWAYS LONDON

TEACHING RESOURCE KS3/4
TASIA GRAHAM



WHAT'S INSIDE

INTRODUCTION

ABOUT RUNAWAYS LONDON

RESEARCHING THE LIVES OF ENSLAVED LONDONERS

Professor Simon P. Newman

ACTIVITIES

RESOURCES

- *Forgotten journey of the enslaved* by Tasia Graham

THANKS

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INTRODUCTION

Between the 1650s and 1780s many hundreds of enslaved people were brought to London. Most were African although a significant minority were South Asian and a smaller number were indigenous American.

While enslaved in the capital some attempted to escape and, on occasions, those who pursued them placed advertisements in London newspapers seeking the capture and return of these freedom-seekers.

The Runaways London project has commissioned five poets and two artists to respond to these historical advertisements and create new poems and artworks which investigate the lives, stories and histories excluded from the advertisements.

This resource by artist Tasia Graham takes your class through their creative process to produce their own artworks responding to this theme.

The Runaways London anthology containing all commissioned poems and artworks, further teaching resources and a short film about the project can be found at: spreadtheword.org.uk/runaways

ABOUT RUNAWAYS LONDON

Runaways London is an arts heritage programme which engages with archival evidence of enslaved Londoners of the 17th and 18th Century, who escaped their enslavement to find new lives in the City.

Working with research by University of Glasgow's Runaway Slaves in Britain project (runaways.glasgow.ac.uk), a team of young poets and artists of African and South Asian heritage developed a series of poems and artworks responding to so called 'runaway slave' advertisements published in London newspapers between the 1650s and 1780s.

Working on the project are poets: Momtaza Mehri, Gboyega Odubanjo, Abena Essah, Memoona Zahid and Oluwaseun Olayiwola and artists: Olivia Twist and Tasia Graham. Runaways London is managed by Spread the Word and the project publisher is Ink Sweat & Tears Press.

RESEARCHING THE LIVES OF ENSLAVED LONDONERS

Who inhabited 17th and 18th century London? Kings, courtiers and a few of the city's more affluent citizens have left us portraits of themselves and their families, and some of the buildings they constructed and the things that they owned survive, allowing us to feel the tenor of their lives. A few people like Samuel Pepys have left diaries and documentary records, while still more can be traced in court or church records. But although a few seventeenth-century Londoners speak to us through the archives most have left little or even no trace and we can imagine their lives in only the broadest and vaguest terms.

Londoners of African and South Asian origin are amongst the most invisible and silent of these historical figures, although there were a significant number in the capital. A number of them were sailors and dock workers, while a few were craftsmen, labourers and washerwomen. Most, however, were domestic servants in the households of elite and mercantile families who had spent time in or had connections with the British Empire's colonies. Some were free, a few were bound and indentured servants, but others were enslaved.

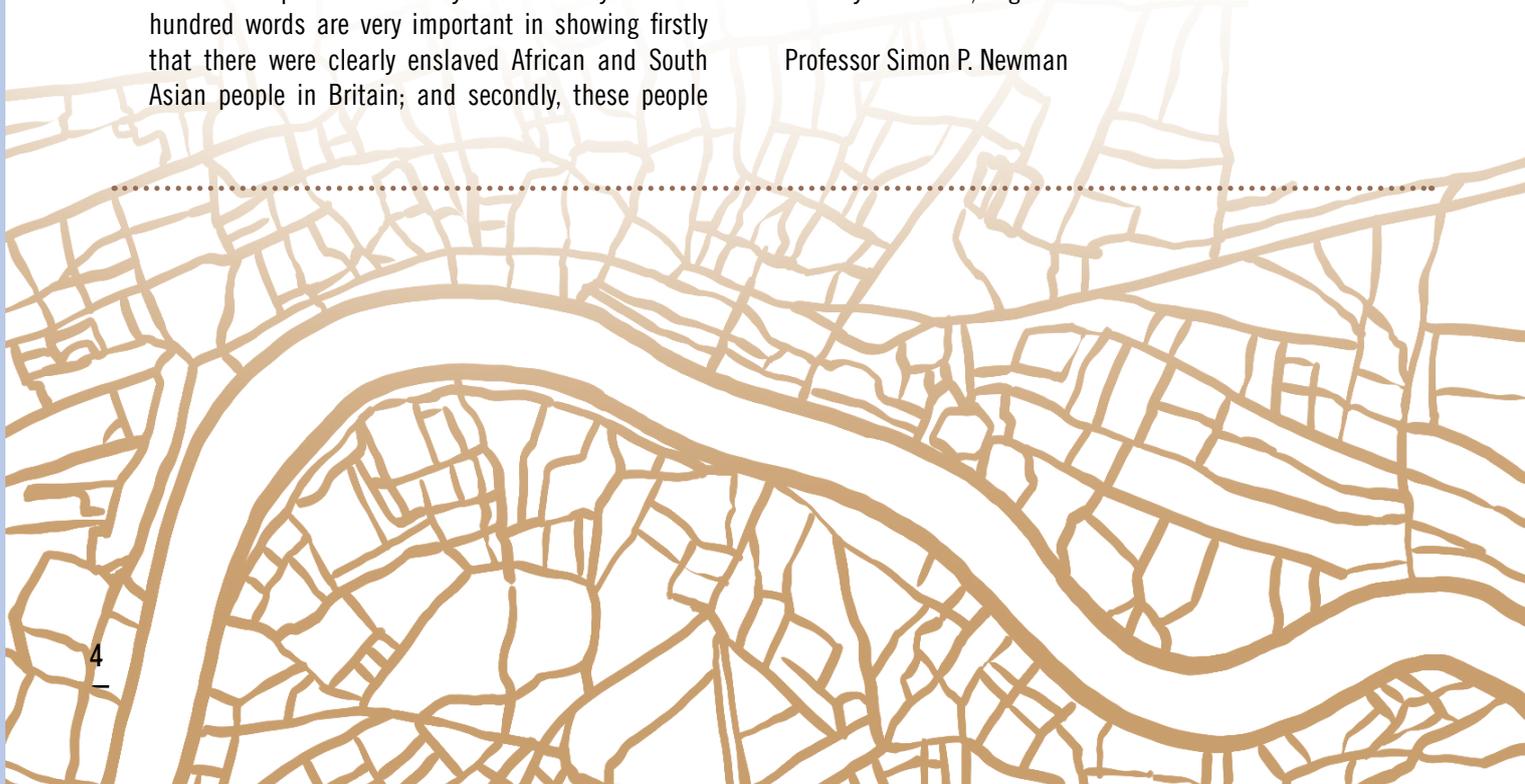
Without portraits or diaries, one of the ways we know about the existence of these enslaved Londoners is through many hundreds of short newspaper advertisements placed in newspapers by masters and enslavers who described and offered rewards for the capture and return of enslaved people who had escaped. Often called 'runaway slave' advertisements, these short pieces of usually between fifty and one hundred words are very important in showing firstly that there were clearly enslaved African and South Asian people in Britain; and secondly, these people

resisted by attempting to escape. The records also reveal that more of these advertisements appeared in London's newspapers than in those of any other city; and that the average age of these freedom-seekers was just 16 years old.

The Runaway Slaves in Britain project has located many hundreds of newspaper advertisements about enslaved escapees in the British Isles and made them accessible in an easily searchable database. In many cases these short advertisements are the only surviving record we have of a particular enslaved person, but even then they may tell us very little. Sometimes we don't even know the name of the freedom-seeker. We might learn whether they were of African or South Asian descent, how well they spoke English, the clothes they had been wearing when they escaped, and in some cases whether they were scarred by slave brands or had been forced to wear metal slave collars around their necks.

It is all that we don't know about London's freedom-seekers that encouraged us to develop this project, Runaways London. Compiling as much historical data as possible about enslaved people in London we gave this information to young poets and artists based in London and of African and South Asian heritage. We asked them to create works speaking to these archival silences; building from short runaway advertisements and developing ideas, impressions and stories about the brave Londoners, some of them little more than children, who dared to challenge their enslavers and run away into the City of London, eager to find better and freer lives.

Professor Simon P. Newman



ACTIVITIES

Run away from her Mistress, last Saturday Morning, a young Negro Woman, about 15 Years old. She has a remarkable large Cut over each of her Cheeks, being her Country Mark in Guinea, is marked on the left Shoulder E.P. speaks English very indifferently, is short of stature, and had on when she went away, a Stuff Black and White Cross-barr'd Gown, Check'd Apron, Handkerchief and Petticoat, Red Cloak and Black Silk Hat; and stole two silver Spoons mark'd in a Cypher M G. Whoever will give Information of her, so that she may be got again, shall receive a Reward of Five Guineas, by applying at the Bar of the Jamaica Coffee-house in St. Michael's Alley, Cornhill; and if the Spoons are offered for Sale or Pawn, please to stop them and the Party, and give Notice to Sir John Fielding, and you shall receive the same Reward.

— The Public Advertiser, 6th November 1764



COLLAGE ILLUSTRATIONS BY TASIA GRAHAM

Creating a visual collage illustration of the journey of enslaved Londoners



- Discuss the forced journeys undertaken by enslaved people in 17th and 18th century London
- Sketch elements of the journey
- Collate historical and contemporary images to build a narrative
- Create visual collage illustrations evoking the journeys of enslaved people

INTRODUCTION

In the 17th and 18th centuries there were many hundreds of enslaved people living and working in London. Most were African although a significant minority were South Asian and a smaller number were indigenous American. In each case they or their parents or grandparents would have been brought to London from their homelands.

The aim of this session is to create a collage illustration looking at the journey of an enslaved Londoner.

DISCUSSION

Ask the class to put themselves in the shoes of the captured and to try and understand their lives and backgrounds. What must it have felt like to be transported to a new land with no rights?

Think about the physical environment. What is the world they were leaving behind like? What about the ship? The ocean? What were they greeted with when they arrived at the docks in London? Discuss, and ask the class to jot down notes or quick ideas.

Now make your focus narrower. What about the ship? Where did people sleep? What noises could they hear? Again jot down ideas.

Finally, make the focus as tight as possible on the enslaved people. What would their physical condition have been? What were they wearing? How are their hands? Their feet? Their shackles? Again jot down ideas.

Although referring to enslaved people transported to America rather than the UK, the American Library of Congress has freely available resources covering some of these experiences which can provide useful background research to this exercise.

loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/african/journey-in-chains/

Instead of or as well as jotting down ideas, it can help to quickly search online for images that relate to each idea, pulling these up as an image bank for the class.



FORGOTTEN JOURNEY OF THE ENSLAVED

Now look at the illustration *Forgotten journey of the enslaved* below (bit.ly/3pbyp24). What different elements can the class pick out which show the journey of these enslaved people? What do they think about the placement of the different elements? Why do they think individual parts have been placed where they have?



Ask the class to each get out a pencil and paper. They should look at the ideas and images collected in the discussion and ask themselves: 'what I am thinking about when I see these images?'

Ask them to create five drawings around this question. They can be big or small but make sure the lines are thick enough to cut around.

Give the class 15 minutes to draw, referencing the imagery you have discussed.

Afterwards, ask for volunteers to talk about their sketch. How are the images successful in revealing the journey of enslaved people?

CREATING A VISUAL COLLAGE ILLUSTRATION

The students' sketches will act as the beginnings of their designs, so ask them to carefully cut out their sketches.

Whilst the class is cutting, place large bold-coloured pieces of paper on the tables. Ask them to each select a coloured piece of paper as the base of their illustration. They should think about what feeling they want the illustration to express. Is the atmosphere gloomy, frightening? Is it claustrophobic? Use the colours to your advantage to create an atmosphere.

Have the class glue their sketches onto their chosen piece of paper. Remind them to be mindful of placement to create a story.



Now allow the class time to go off and find second imagery sources to add to their designs. (Alternatively you may want to provide images/resources to save time.)

They can take images from Google as well as magazines, newspapers, social media. They don't all have to be historical images from the 17th and 18th century. Remind the class they can interpret their design however they like, but be sure to think of the story and the context of their design as they make their selections.

As they find images, students should print and/or cut them out. They should use this time to talk to peers about their intentions, and bounce ideas off each other.

When imagery has been collected the design process can start.

Remind students that they can layer images, strategically placing content and considering the narrative behind the imagery to create a story.

Turn on some music, relax the room and let the class create!

Give the pupils roughly 30 minutes to create the illustration.

SHARING

Students should finish with a collage illustration on a coloured background, with imagery producing a narrative on a Black British enslaved person's experience.

Choose five random pieces of the work produced and have the pupils talk through their ideas.

Use this time to lead a discussion on how they felt. What did they learn? Why is this an important topic to explore?

ABOUT THE ARTIST: TASIA GRAHAM

Tasia Graham explores bold, atmospheric, narrative illustration, using her colourful palette and fluid, stylised drawing techniques.

Working in both digital format and traditional painting, Tasia explores womanhood, culture, and identity, depicting moods and scenes formed into illustrative storytelling. Tasia draws inspiration from real life experiences and people to create authentic storytelling art.



RESOURCES

RUN away, two Negro Girls, and Sisters, named Jane Gray and Maria Gray; Jane is short and well-set, with the Evil in her Neck, and now very much swelled, 18 Years of Age, and speaks good English; Maria is slender, and rather taller than the other, 16 Years of Age. Whoever will bring either of the above Negro Girls to Capt. Barrett, near Shadwell Church, or to John Fielding, Esq; shall receive one Guinea Reward for ea[c]h. They are Captain Barrett's Property, and any Person harbouring or secreting them, will be prosecuted for the same.

- Public Advertiser, 20 November 1758

FORGOTTEN JOURNEY OF THE ENSLAVED

BY TASIA GRAHAM



Runaways London is an arts heritage programme which engages with archival evidence of enslaved Londoners of the 17th and 18th Century, who escaped their enslavement to find new lives in the City.

A team of young poets and artists of African and South Asian heritage developed a series of poems and artworks responding to so called 'runaway slave' advertisements published in London newspapers between the 1650s and 1780s.

These resources, created by the participating artists, lead your class through their creative processes to produce poems and artworks responding to the project.

Resources in this series are:

Black Balls and Shaped Poems by Abena Essah

Collage Illustrations by Tasia Graham

Reimagining 17th and 18th Century Runaways by Momtaza Mehri

Found Poems by Gboyega Odubanjo

Ekphrastic Poems by Oluwaseun Olayiwola

Black-Owned Tavern Portraits by Olivia Twist

Fragmentary Narratives by Memoona Zahid

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