

# The Empire in South Yorkshire

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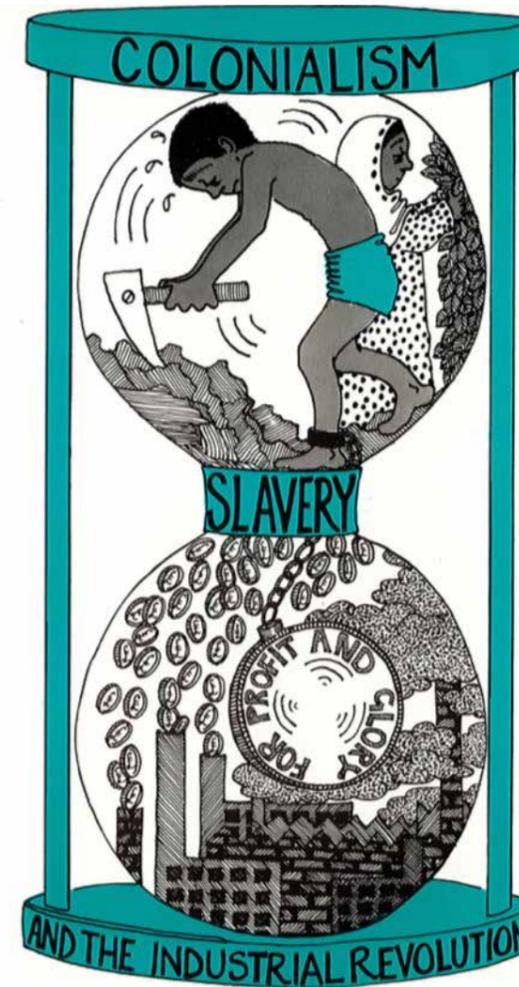
## Colonialism, Slavery & the Industrial Revolution [CSIR]

This publication was developed in collaboration with local history teachers concerned by the then emergent National Curriculum's narrow definition of 'British' history. It explored Britain's industrial revolution by: focusing on the relationship between development in Britain and colonial under-development; making connections with inequalities between countries of the Global North and South today; and providing a flexible course of study based around enquiry, experiential learning and small group work.

It draws on original research to relate 'local' history and British colonialism in West Africa, the Caribbean, Ireland and India, and includes: papers of a local slave trader; reports of the visit in 1790 of Black anti-slavery campaigner, Olaudah Equiano (who appears in Tide~'s [Writing Our Past](#)); records of a landed family's estates in Ireland; and letters from Sheffield missionaries who travelled to India and Africa in the 1820s.

Demonstrating the significance of colonialism to the development of Britain during the C18th and C19th, the pack **contests versions of British history which consider these islands alone, arguing that not only did the British empire shape much of the world, but that Britain was shaped by those relationships too, including through contributions of non-European peoples to British society.** The resource invites students to become aware of Britain's imperial past and of the ways in which they are connected to those histories.

One evaluation found that many teachers used CSIR to support the KS3 study unit, '**Ideas, political power, industry and empire: Britain, 1745-1901**'. South Yorkshire teachers found that the 'local angle' increased motivation, and helped students connect the 'local' and the 'world'.



CSIR received encouraging reviews and was a runner-up in the TES/Directory of Social Change Awards 1993, for '*Outstanding Classroom Resources Published by Voluntary Organisations*'.

Dr Isobel Jenkins of the University of Leeds said that the pack enabled teachers to '*make the history in our schools reflect the history of all groups in our society*'.

Dr Sneh Shah of the University of Hertfordshire saw the specific value of the pack 'in its coverage of the experience of both colonising and colonised countries, but with differences both within and between nations according to issues of race, class and gender'.

Dr Lee Jerome, Queen's University, Belfast wrote, '*This is the best teacher resource I've encountered, not just in relation to this topic, but across all of my teaching. It incorporates multiple perspectives, provides real (and really interesting) source material and includes some fantastic classroom activities that work brilliantly*'.

CSIR concluded in the mid-C19th. There is scope to extend it into the C20th and to explore issues surrounding local industry, the Scramble for Africa and the Boer Wars. Indeed, the structure of the resource generally – **starting with the 'internal colonialism' that led to the formation of the United Kingdom, then covering the Americas and the Caribbean, and India, and adding the Pacific and Australasia and then Africa** - provides both a comprehensive overview of the British Empire, whilst also suggesting a framework for a 'Local Curriculum' in any locality in Britain.

Several teachers felt that the resource had potential to challenge racism. Many white students had a strong sense of injustice and welcomed the incorporation of a range of perspectives including those which presented Black and white people of different classes opposing slavery. Teachers felt, moreover, that Black students welcome opportunities to grapple with these questions, particularly if they felt secure in the teacher's ability to deal with racist arguments that might emerge.

An aspect of the resource that does need to be revised concerns an absence of sources on pre-colonial Africa. There are now resources available for teachers such as the [African Kingdoms](#) website. There is a need for more resources in the mainstream to respond to the interest generated by Black Lives Matter.

An old resource with a fresh message about our complex history.

In 1993, Development Education Centre South Yorkshire (DECSY) published '*Colonialism, Slavery and the Industrial Revolution: The Empire in South Yorkshire*' (CSIR).

See [DECSY website](#)

Alison & Rob, who developed the resource, reflect on the experience.

