

Fulham Palace House & Garden

Exploring the Bishop of London's historical involvement
in colonialism and the transatlantic slavery

Explore
Interpret
Share

fulhampalace.org

Fulham Palace

About us

**Fulham
Palace
House &
Garden**

Origins

The Fulham Palace site was acquired by the Bishop of London (BoL) in 704. At that time it was part of a much bigger estate stretching up to Willesden in the north, Chiswick in the west, and Chelsea Creek in the east. The last Bishop of London to live at the Palace moved out in 1973.

Present day

The remaining 13 acre Palace site is now run by Fulham Palace Trust, a small independent charity. We are open 7 days a week, and have a museum, garden, cafe and shop. We have a small collection of paintings and objects, but very little original furniture. Most of the archives relating to the BoL are at Lambeth Palace, a short distance up river. We are not part of the Church of England structure and funding, although we lease the site from the Church Commission and we have a friendly relationship with the current BoL, Dame Sarah Mullally.



The Bishop of London, Colonialism & Transatlantic Slavery

PLACEMENT REPORT



Charles James Blomfield, Bishop of London © The Trustees of the British Museum.

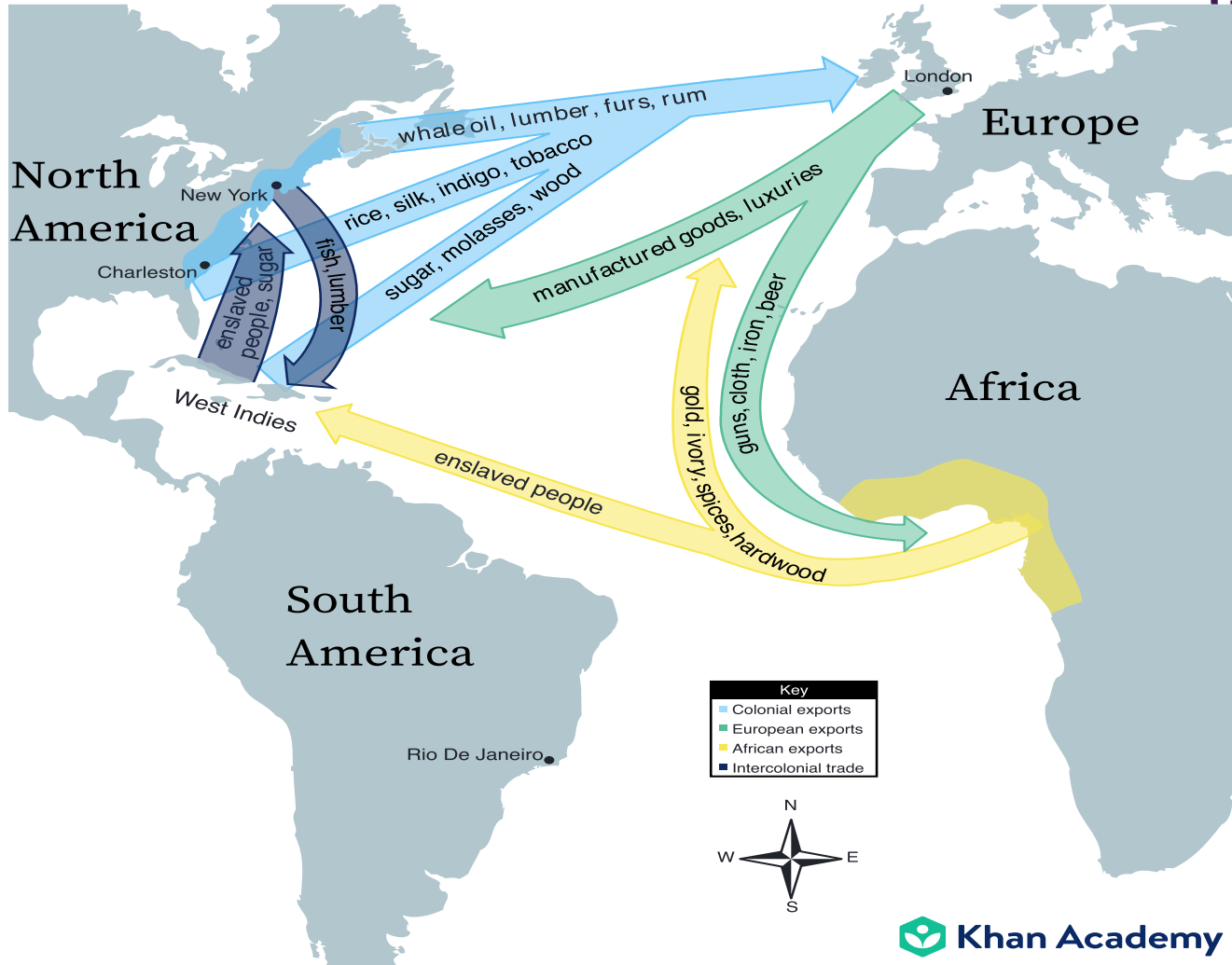


William Howley, Bishop of London © National Portrait Gallery, London.



Christopher Lipscomb, Bishop of Jamaica © The Trustees of the British Museum.

What was the Transatlantic Slave trade?



The church of England and transatlantic slavery

Research

The Church of England was part of the British establishment and as such participated in the creation and development of slave societies in English colonies across the Atlantic. The Bishop of London (BoL) was a key figure in the Church and some Bishops were directly involved with or benefitted from colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade. Some examples below:

- Bishop William Juxon (BoL: 1633-1646) was Lord of the Admiralty and sat on the Board of Trade, both of which had official involvement in the trade of enslaved Africans. Most subsequent Bishops were also a member of the board
- Bishop Beilby Porteus (BoL: 1787-1809) inherited a Virginian plantation and enslaved people from his father and brother. He became a campaigner for the better treatment of enslaved Africans and the abolition of the trade in enslaved Africans, but initially did not object to the practice of slavery itself



Port Tobacco houses, Charles County, Maryland. Bishop Porteus's family owned land like this

The church of England and transatlantic slavery

Project overview

In 2021 Fulham Palace commissioned a detailed research project, to explore the role of the Bishop of London in colonialism and the transatlantic slavery. The research has informed our decision to work with and empower people who are descended from those who were enslaved or indentured to shape and lead on the project. Further research has been undertaken to enable the project artist to focus on the ways enslaved people showed resistance to a life in Bondage, bringing an important perspective to the story we are telling.

Adisa the verbalizer

The artist

Adisa a London based poet and a winner of 'New Performance Poet of the Tear', is the commissioned artist for our project. He is an educationalist and workshop facilitator with aims to make poetry and performance accessible. During the workshop he will use poetry to explore the expression and importance of resistance by enslaved people. Adisa is on a mission to take poetry to the people wherever he find them; taking his words from place to place and promoting the value and impact of powerful performance which can both entertain an audience and take great delight in words and self-expression.



Adisa the verbalizer

The workshops

During the series of workshops, Adisa will use poetry to explore the expression and importance of resistance by enslaved individuals and groups which counted as acts of rebellion against the system of slavery.

Participants will be exploring resistance in the Caribbean in four different areas.

- Obeah
- Dance
- Hair
- Songs of resistance



HISTORY OF HAIR

“Depictions of women with cornrows have been found in Stone Age paintings in the Tassili Plateau of the Sahara, dating as far back as 3000 B.C.

There are also Native American paintings as far back as 1,000 years showing cornrows as a hairstyle. This tradition of female styling in cornrows has remained popular throughout Africa, particularly in the Horn of Africa and West Africa





This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY-SA

Cornrows was much more than a hairstyle. It was used to hide things to help the enslaved Africans escape.

In pairs write down what you think these clever women hid in their hair.

Hair

Resistance

- The word 'cornrows' originated somewhere between the sixteenth and nineteenth century in colonial America and was named after the agricultural fields that many enslaved people worked in, because they had a similar pattern
- In the Caribbean they are sometimes referred to as 'canerows' linking back to work in the sugar fields. Prior, this style was literally called 'Kolese' which means 'a creature without legs' in the Yoruba language
- The enslaved wore cornrows as a simple way to wear their hair during the week, and they were also used as a way of communicating in code
- **They were also used to hide gold fragments or seeds, in order to give the wearer some nourishment if ever they were able to escape**

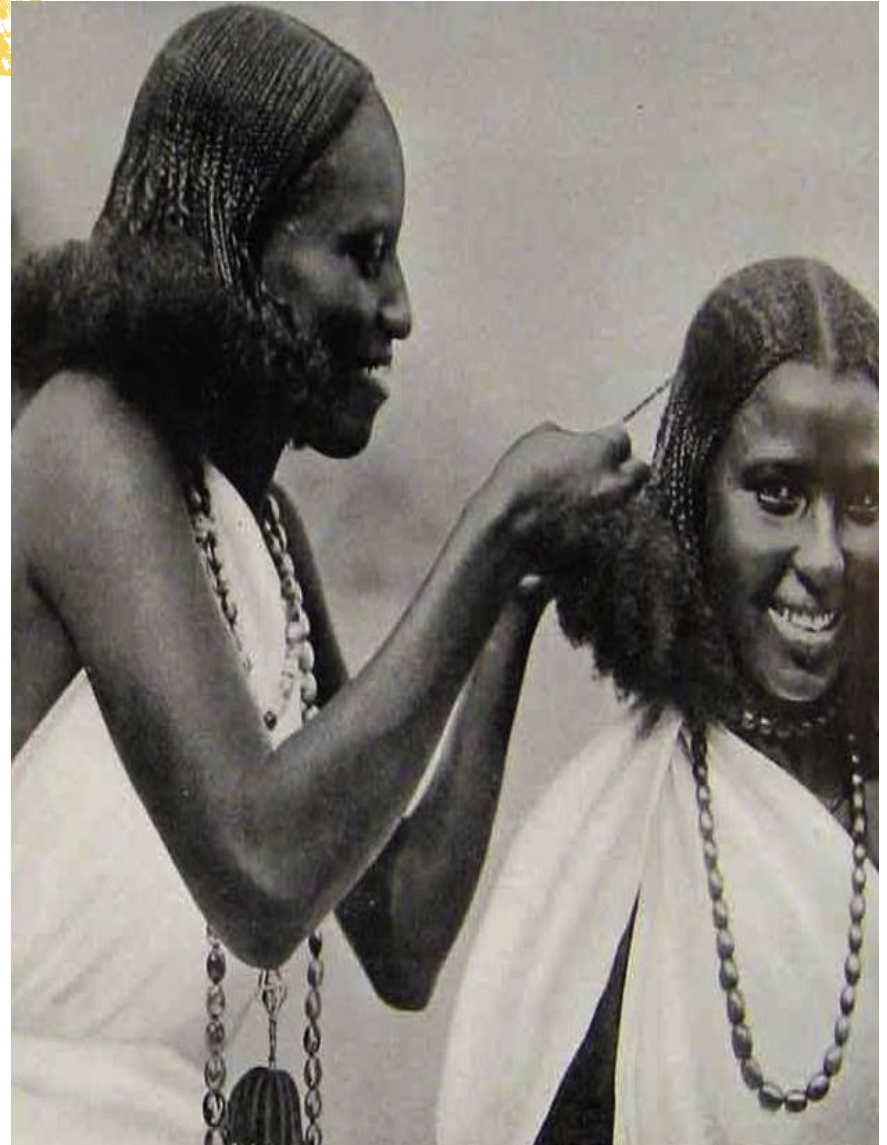
They also used the designs in their hair to create maps to help them navigate their way out of the plantations.

THE OVERGROUND HAIRWAY

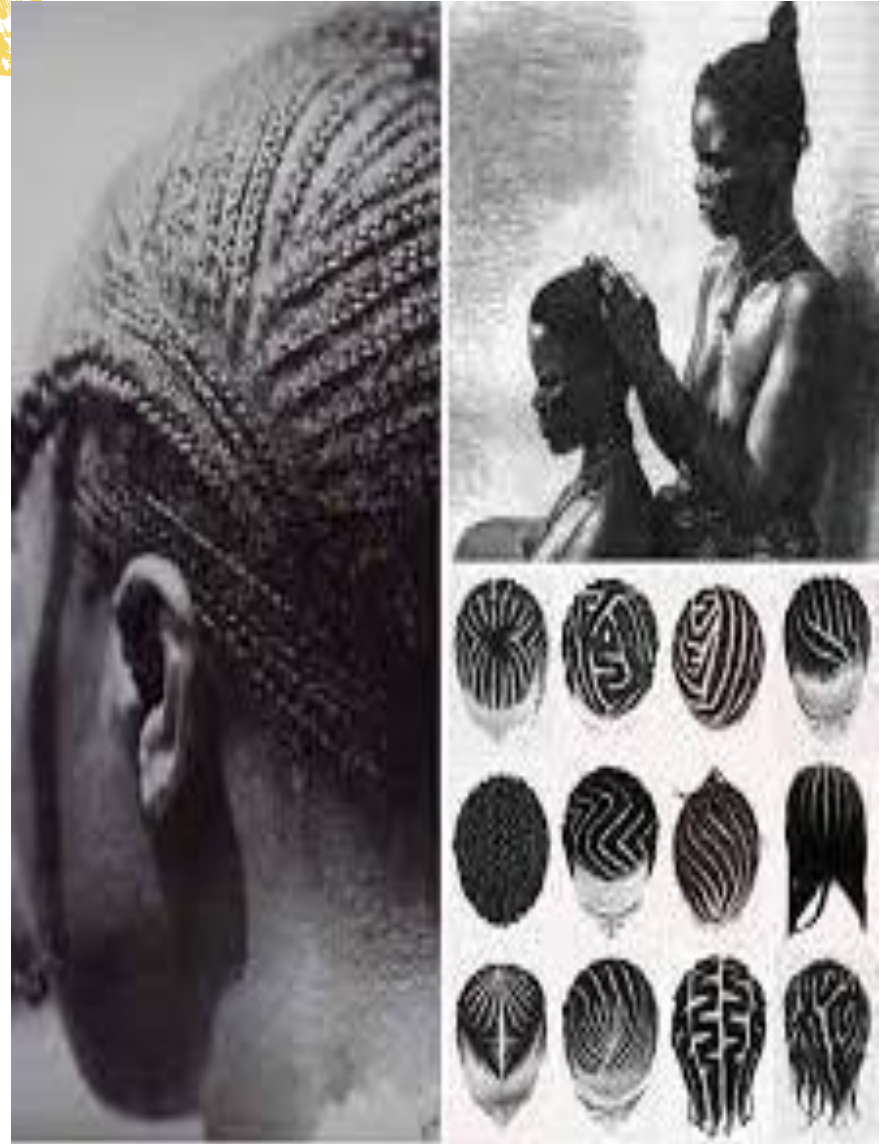
During the period of the transatlantic slave trade many enslaved Africans were forced to shave their heads for sanitary purposes and also to break all connections to one's past history and culture.

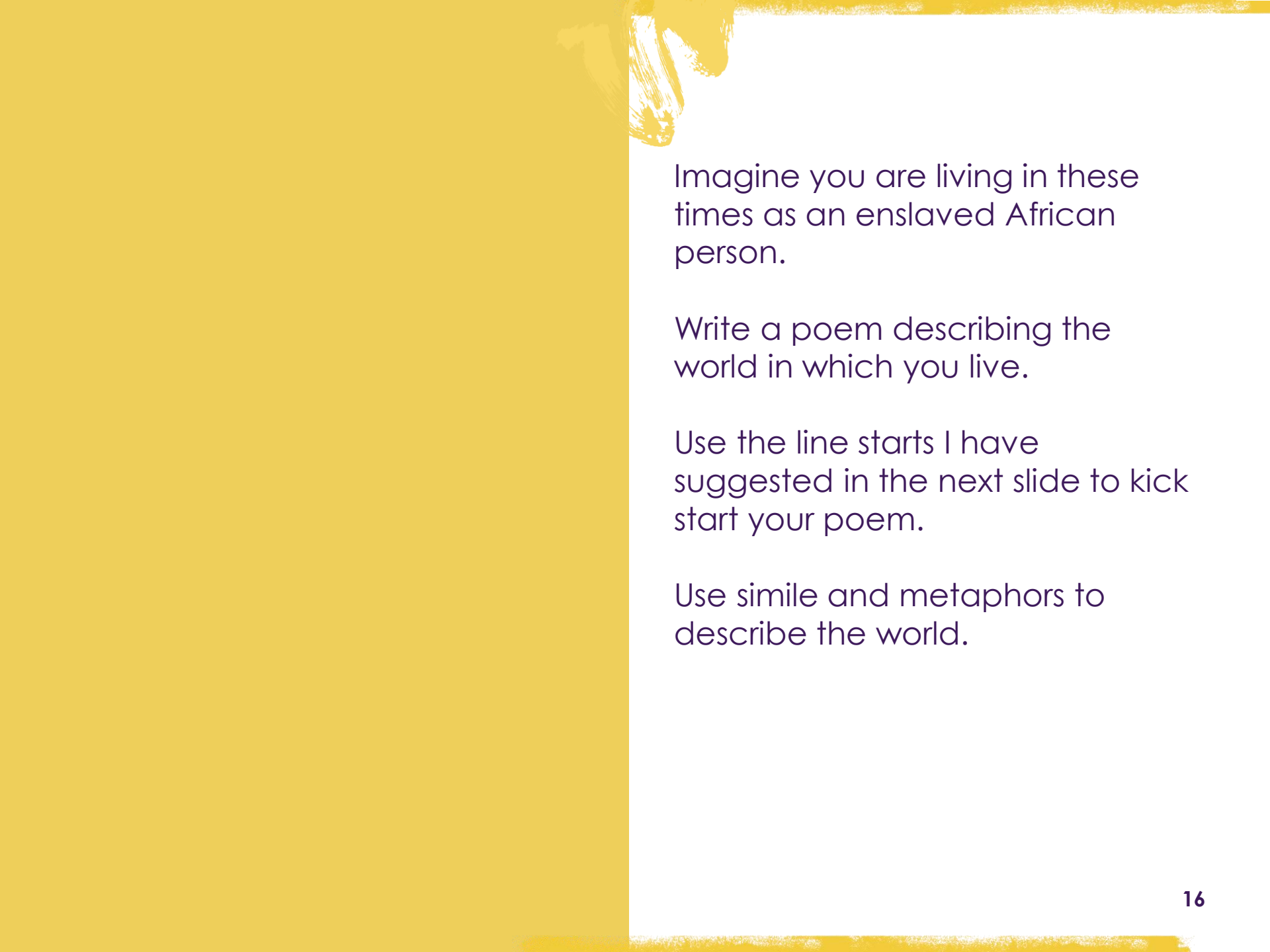
There were many who did not shave their heads and instead they would braid their hair tightly in cornrows to maintain a neat and tidy appearance.

Enslaved Africans also used cornrows to transfer and create maps to leave plantations and the home of their captors. This act of using hair as a tool for resistance is said to have been evident across South America.



It is most documented in Colombia where Benkos Bioho, a King captured from Africa by the Portuguese who escaped slavery, built San Basilio de Palenque, a village in Northern Colombia around the 17th century. Bioho created his own language as well as intelligence network and also came up with the idea to have women create maps and deliver messages through their cornrows.





Imagine you are living in these times as an enslaved African person.

Write a poem describing the world in which you live.

Use the line starts I have suggested in the next slide to kick start your poem.

Use simile and metaphors to describe the world.

I live in a world...

Inside I feel

But outside

I hide



Example

le.

I live in a world where the sun never
rises and the sky is a grey blanket.

Inside I feel trapped
Like a fly caught in a web
Each move I make
The tighter the grip

But outside I am bamboo
Bending but never breaking
Growing even when unseen
I continue to chase my dream

I hide wisdom in my hair

TITLE HERE

Read the Roger Robinson poem (And If I speak of paradise)

Ask the students to use the same framework that Roger used in his poem, but this time use the word Hair instead of paradise.

And If I speak of my hair.....
Then I am speaking about....

Really imagine what your hair would mean to you if you were living in those times and you realized your hair could aid in your escape and freedom.

TITLE HERE

**And if I speak of my hair
Then I am speaking of freedom
And If I speak of freedom
Then I am speaking of revolution
And I speak of revolution
Then I am speaking about unity
And If I speak of unity
Then I am speaking of power
And I speak of power
Then I am speaking about language
And If I speak of language
I am speaking about culture
And If I speak of culture
Then I am speaking about my hair**

TITLE HERE

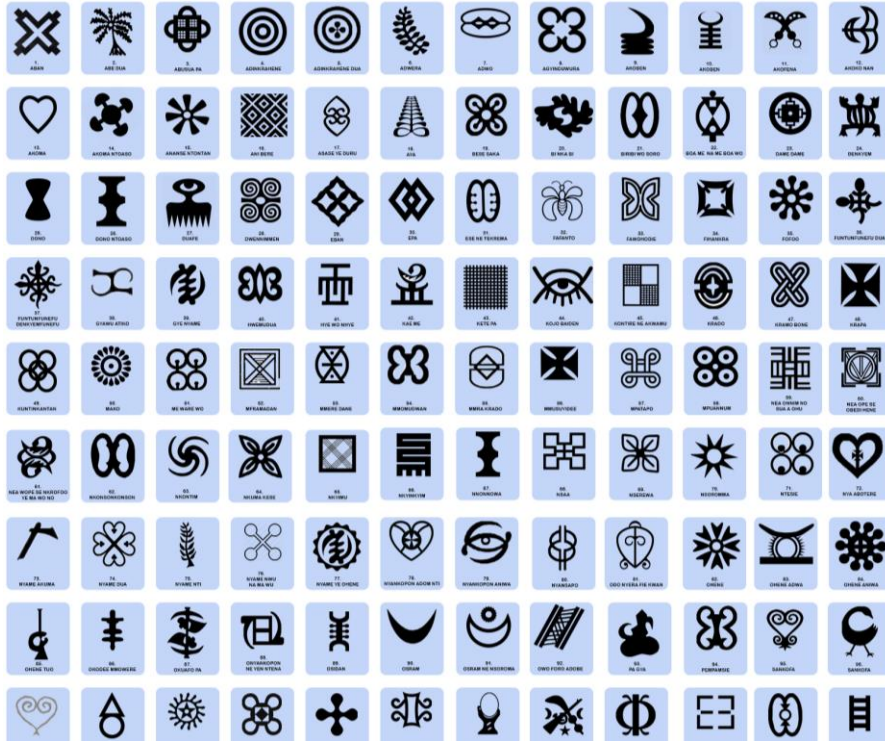
Lesson 2



ADINKRA SYMBOLS

TITLE HERE

TITLE HERE ADINKRA SYMBOLS



TITLE HERE

What are Adinkra symbols?

Adinkra are used extensively in fabrics, logos and pottery. They are incorporated into walls and other architectural features. *Adinkra* symbols appear on some traditional Akan goldweights.

The symbols have a decorative function but also represent objects that encapsulate evocative messages conveying traditional wisdom, aspects of life, or the environment. There are many symbols with distinct meanings, often linked with proverbs.

TITLE HERE

**ARE YOU
UP FOR THE
CHALLENGE?**

TITLE HERE

- WORKING IN GROUPS OF 4/5
- Think of 3 words that tells each symbols story.
- Bring these 3 words to life with a physical metaphor. The team must create a freeze frame using all the members of the teams bodies
- Each word is a freeze frame.
- Join the 3 freeze frames together to create one movement

TITLE HERE

ADINKRA SYMBOLS



TITLE HERE

The symbol is called **Sankofa**

It represents a bird that has the ability turn its head to the back and bring forth an egg.

The symbolism behind the bird is :

Don't be afraid to look back into your past learn from the good and bad in order to have a brighter future!

TITLE HERE



TITLE HERE

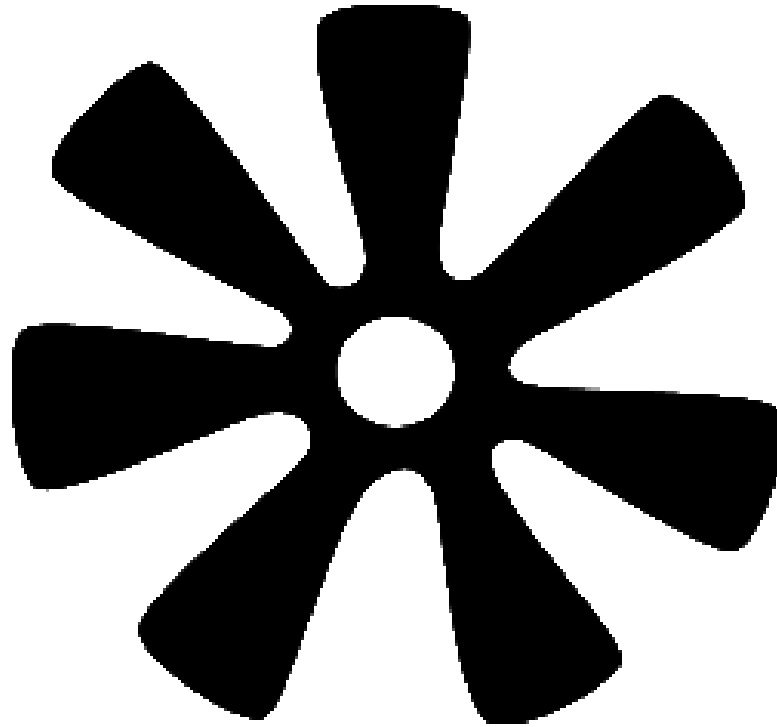
This symbol is the **two headed crocodile!**

The symbol shows two conjoined crocodiles, which symbolizes democracy and cooperation.

While normally being independent creatures, the crocodiles are forced to work together and unite in order to survive.

The symbol also represents unity among different religions and cultural tolerance.

TITLE HERE



TITLE HERE

This symbol is called Ananse's web

ANANSE NTONTAN
"spider's web"

symbol of wisdom, creativity and the complexities of life
Ananse, the spider, is a well-known character in African folktales.

TITLE HERE

Lets create a poem using the true meaning of the adinkra symbols and all the ideas we gathered from our brainstorm.

You can also use the 3 key words that came out of the physical metaphor game.

WE are going to create a very special poem called a cinquain poem.

- It has 5 lines
- You have to follow a syllable count on each line
- 2,4,6,8,2

- See my example on The next slide!

- Do these poems on your own.

- Have fun!!!!!!!

TITLE HERE

CINQUAINS

2 Twisting

4 Unlock the past

6 Hair speaks in its own tounge

8 The language of revolution

2 Lets talk

Session 3





Hip Hop x Capoeira Behind the scenes





Resistance

- **Enslaved Africans brought their cultural traditions with them to the Americas. One particularly useful practice given the violence of slave societies was martial arts.**
- **• Kalenda was a stick fighting martial art, created through the blending of different West African stick fighting traditions. Its practice amongst the enslaved helped to develop their skill at sword fighting, and the moves could easily be adapted for the use of blades. •**
- **This is exactly what happened in the early stages of the Haitian Revolution (1793), when the rebels armed themselves with the same machetes they had used to cut cane.**
- **It is still practiced in Haiti and across the Caribbean, including in Trinidad where special competitions are held during Carnival. These fights are accompanied by music and song, and the fighters perform dances.**



Trinidad

Stick Fighter

**Fulham
Palace
House &
Garden**



Lets create a kenning poem to capture the energy of the fight and the skill of the fighters/Dancers.

Stick fighter

Snake charmer

Lightning striker

Wild hurricane

Spinning top

Burning flame

Human dynamite



Call and Response

Kalinda fighter/Dancer

Kalinda Fighter
Keep on moving,
Kalinda Fighter
Rolling, Rolling
Kalinda Fighter
Whining slowly,
Kalinda Fighter
Bodies intertwine
Kalinda Fighter

The Drum is.....

The drum is organic like mothers milk,
Like a whispered lullaby, the drum has sung
Loudly, unashamedly speaking of times gone by
And times to come

Bombarding my wall of pretence
Like popcorn head butting the pan
Dissolving my mask like aspirin in water
Expression floods my creativity dam

Ambushed by the rhythm
I surrender, autopilot takes control
Syllables of sound send Morse code vibrations
To my hungry soul

I dance like a butterfly, creating 3d images
On the canvas of life with my oil painted feet
Only the dead remain still
When the Djembe speaks

Let's Dance!

Obeah

Resistance

- Obeah is a catchall term applied to the use of African spiritual traditions by the enslaved in British slave societies. It first came to the attention of colonisers due to its centrality in the planning and execution of the slave uprising known as Tacky's Revolt (1760) which took place in Jamaica. Thereafter, it was made illegal in Jamaica and eventually much of the British Caribbean
- As well as being used in active resistance, Obeah and other African spiritual traditions were used to settle disputes, poison enemies, heal the sick and in personal divination
- Obeah practitioners known contemporaneously as Obeahmen, were respected individuals amongst the enslaved and carried authority which the colonisers found threatening. As such, the punishments for the practice of Obeah were severe

Dance

Resistance

The Early Caribbean digital archive describes the importance of movement to enslaved Africans in the Caribbean in the following way:

- “those who enslaved others tried to strip West Indian people of their culture, heritage, and ancestry through isolation, mental and physical abuse, and erasure”
- “Performance is a means of story-telling used to rebel against the mere idea of enslavement, because performance and oral tradition go hand and hand through their use of song, dance, and masquerade”

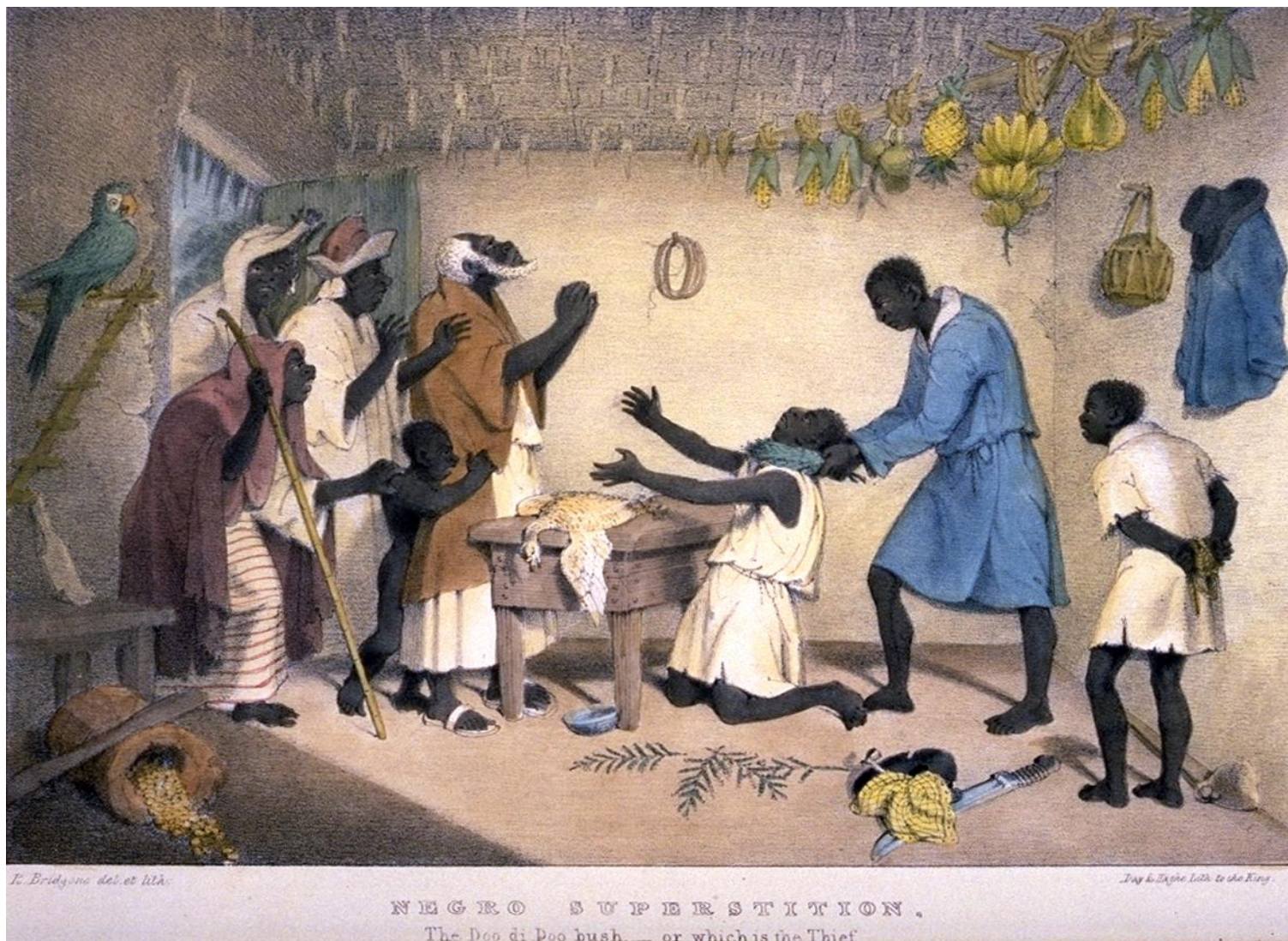


Cudgelling match, agostino brunias, c.1810

What to expect from the workshop

Obeah the secret weapon

- In these sessions Obeah takes centre stage, we will expose how this African spiritual system helped the enslaved Africans prepare mentality, spiritually and physically for battle and ultimately empower them to take back their freedom
- We will look at the impact this practice had on the slave owners and why they outlawed it to erase its practice. We will also look at the role amulets played in protecting a person from physical harm



An obeah practitioner at work, Trinidad, 1836

What to expect from the workshop

The warrior spirit of dance

- In these sessions we will look at some of the dances the enslaved Africans would do at important ceremonies
- Funerals, birth, and preparing for uprisings on the plantations. The beauty of many of these dances/martial movement was the hidden agenda of martial art training concealed behind the rhythm and beauty of the flowing dances



What to expect from the workshop

My hair speaks the language of revolution

- In these sessions we will look at the ingenious ways enslaved Africans used hairstyles like cornrows to hide maps. The styling of hair was used a secret code to carry information on routes out of the plantation and onto the freedom road
- We will also explore how foods were also concealed within the hair and transported around the plantations. We will look at the Adinkra symbols to explore the power of symbolism and proverbs

What to expect from the workshop

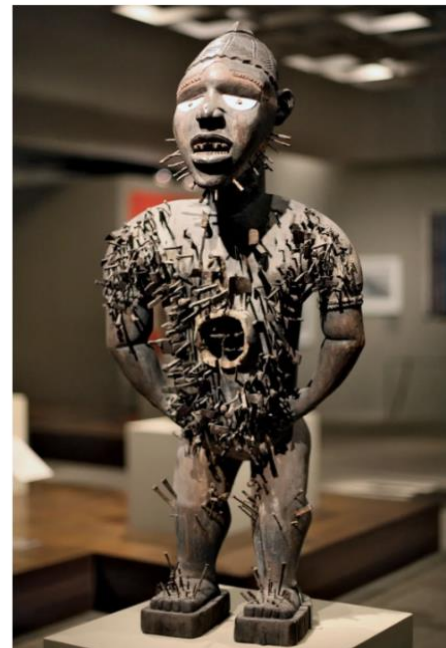
Songs of resistance

- In these sessions we will focus on the power of songs. We will look at some of the song lyrics that had hidden meaning and sometimes instructions on when and how to escape the plantation
- Music and songs were a constant thread that ran through the fabric of an enslaved African's life, it gave encouragement, but it also inspired the warrior within

Project output

Share

Creative responses from the series of workshops will be shared with the wider local community and with our peers - through an exhibition, a film and a series of talks at Fulham Palace.



Power Figure (Nkisi N'Kondi: Mangaaka)
wood, paint, metal, resin, and ceramic sculpture by the Kongo peoples, 19th century; in the
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City. Photograph by Katie Chao

Fulham Palace House & Garden

Bimpe Adeyemi (she/her)
Outreach and participation coordinator
+44 (0)7305 316075
bimpe.adeyemi@fulhampalace.org

Registered charity number 1140088

fulhampalace.org