

Understanding Slavery Initiative

In what ways could objects be used symbolically to allow and encourage creative responses to this history? (Video transcript)

Speaker: Jean Campbell

Time-code	Speech
00:00:08	I'm going to talk about a piece of rope. Now, if you handle the rope, you know it is quite a thick piece of rope. If I have the rope, and then I introduce this image here, you start making a connection between the rope and the slaving ship that's on here. These two connected points...
00:00:40	This is a symbolic object that we're going to use to connect us with a huge range of themes within this history. I can use the rope to talk about sailors and the conditions for sailors aboard the... aboard the slaving ships. I can use the rope to them make a comparison between the conditions on board the ships, between... for enslaved people and sailors.
00:01:07	And don't forget that the conditions aboard the ship, the terrible conditions for sailors was one of the reasons that were used to actually bring an end to the trade. Because people were so appalled about how their poor sailors were suffering. I can use the same rope to talk about the growth of manufacturing industries that would have helped to feed the trade.
00:01:32	These are part of the economic drivers of the trade. So when I ask the question, for example, why do you think the trade continued so long? This very simple symbolic object enables us to have an understanding how whole towns could have profited from making the rope that went into the many, many thousands of miles of riggings on the ship.
00:01:56	And the same thing goes for when we talk about a manilla. Now, manillas are beautiful objects. They can be drawn around. If I just hand this to you and talk about it, and you go away, you're less likely to remember the importance of this manilla as an object within the trade than if you've done a drawing of it.
00:02:20	If you do a drawing of this, which I've got here, and then you add facts that you've found out about that, and you take away that with you, you will forever remember what a manilla is, how it's shaped, and what it was used for. The same thing goes for the beads. Slave beads, they're literally called slave beads.
00:02:41	And they were made in their millions, absolute millions, all over Europe, Czechoslovakia, but many, many here. And there, of course, again used to trade for enslaved for people. They come in lots of shapes and sizes. Students love drawing around these, because again it's an object that they... it is small to handle, but huge learning can be attached to that.
00:03:04	So again, if they annotate it, they draw around the object and then add the information they're finding out about it. Why is this an important object? So not only what is it made of? It would have been made originally of glass. And what it was used for... and also, this is an example of an economic driver within the trade.
00:03:27	This is an example of people who were making money within one leg of the trading system. So very simple objects can be used symbolically. We have an

	object that is a replica. We have an object that's almost an everyday object, that is used symbolically. And we have these objects that are actually based on the kinds of beads that were used then.
00:03:56	So again, these objects are replicas. So very, very important to use the objects alongside the images to deepen their understanding. You can draw around them. Some objects you can take rubbings of them. Some objects... you can actually shake some objects.
00:04:19	But I am really very cautious about people playing with drums, because I think that takes us into a whole other realm that's not... not necessarily useful in the teaching of this history. And as many ways as you can for offering students opportunities to respond to what they are touching, and to link what they are learning with the responses they have made.
00:04:43	And for have finally opportunity to share their learning in discussion, and having challenging questions that get them to use the object to demonstrate and illustrate their answers.