

Artistic interpretation

Working with artists, performers and writers can be useful when teaching this subject, to compensate for the lack of primary evidence in various areas, particularly of first-hand accounts by those who were enslaved.



You have to have lay interpretation alongside academic interpretation or you're lost.
Museum Director

Artistic interpretation

Teaching approaches



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THE NOTTING HILL CARNIVAL 1975

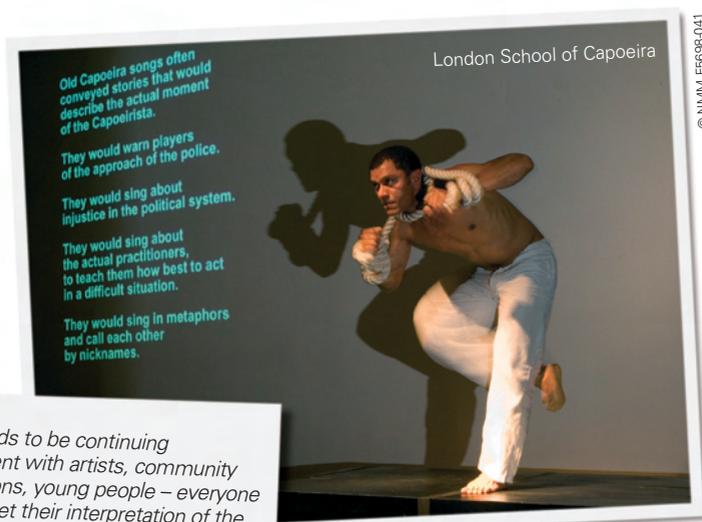
- Re-creation is best used in conjunction with museum collections and archival material to support the learning experience.
- Some well-designed drama techniques, particularly status activities, improvisation and scripting, can be used very effectively to develop a sense of perspective and points of view. For example, re-enacting a debate in parliament. Some dramatization is inappropriate, however, when teaching this history (e.g. role-playing an enslaved person interacting with their 'owner'; or separation of a mother and child).



People from the African and Caribbean communities should play a collaborative role in the interpretation of artefacts relating to Africa and the Caribbean, and should be involved in a consultative role if an exhibition is going to be created. Ensure the history is presented from different perspectives, moving away from a Eurocentric interpretation; be creative where there are gaps in the historical narrative – engaging a poet or a visual artist for this purpose.

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- Using active, dynamic drama approaches reinforces learning through developing emotional understanding and empathy. It also encourages active participation.
- Improvisation or working with short scripted pieces of dialogue, or real-life accounts, helps audiences to develop abilities to look at different interpretations of history, and exercises the concept of alternative points of view.
- Engaging audio-visual extracts appeal to some audiences' preferred learning styles and act as an effective, vivid way of illustrating and visualizing aspects of the history.



There needs to be continuing engagement with artists, community organisations, young people – everyone in fact to get their interpretation of the objects which should form part of the gallery on a rotating basis so that perspectives are constantly evolving – the people should provide a 'living' extension to the permanent gallery.

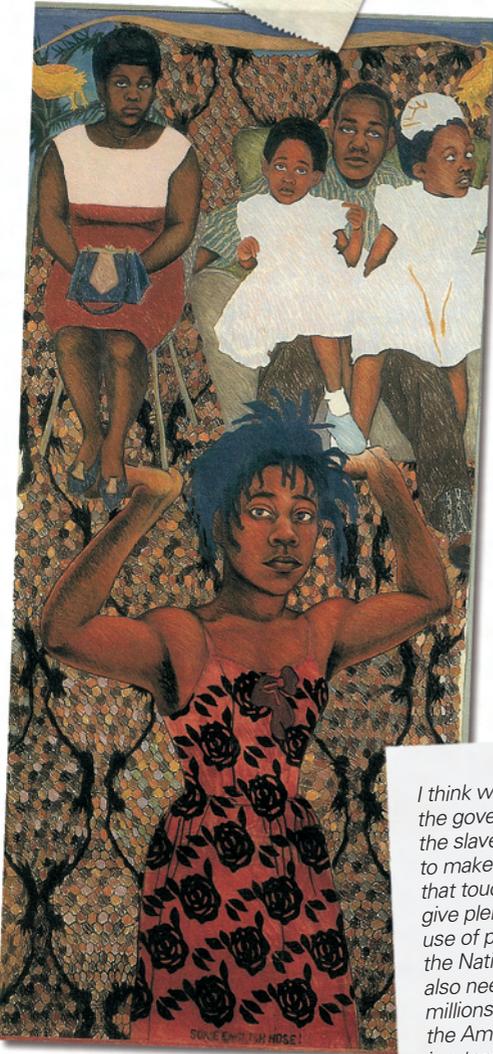
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Don't be afraid of multitudinous narratives. Acknowledge that there will never be 'consensus' but this should not prevent you from moving forward.

Museum Director Display

Artistic interpretation



SHE AIN'T HOLDING THEM UP, SHE'S HOLDING ON (SOME ENGLISH ROSE) 1986



I think we need to have more emphasis on the government's support and sanctioning of the slave trade from the 16th century onwards, to make people aware that it was a 'business' that touched all aspects of British society, and give plenty of examples to illustrate this i.e. the use of primary sources from places such as the National Archives and NMM archives. We also need to get people to acknowledge the millions of people who were transported to the Americas, and the fact that the Atlantic is a tomb. If people can get to grips with governmental, religious and royal complicity, it may go some way in making those 21st-century links as to why there is so much poverty today, why slavery still exists today.

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