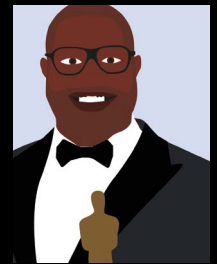
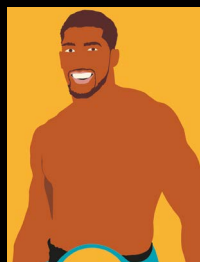


BIM



SCHOOL ASSEMBLY NOTES



CTVC is a registered charity and part of the Rank Foundation, an organisation established by Lord and Lady Rank in 1953 to award grants to worthy causes. As well as CTVC, the Rank Foundation concentrates on projects that work with young people to develop leadership and help the disadvantaged; and with people who are frail or lonely because of old age or disability.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH SCHOOL ASSEMBLY NOTES

The beginnings of Black History Month go back to 1926 when black historian Carter G. Woodson began what he called “Negro History Week” in the USA. In 1969, the week’s celebration was expanded to a month and in 1976, Black History Month was endorsed by the US government. In the United Kingdom, Black History Month has been celebrated every October since 1987.

Carter Woodson’s original goal was to educate everyone about the cultural backgrounds and achievements of people of African descent.

These notes are suitable for students in Keys Stages 3 and 4, but you will need to consider the age and understanding of your students when deciding how far you want to explore the topic.

With younger groups, you may wish to present Black History Month simply as a force for good, to encourage diversity and to celebrate the achievements of black people in Britain and across the world.

Alternatively, with older groups you may also wish to explain that every year Black History Month provokes a discussion about the usefulness or appropriateness of dedicating a single month to the history of one group of people, and many writers have debated the advantages and disadvantages.

Few people suggest that young people do not benefit from having an annual Black History Month, but a number of authors argue that that such distinction provides an excuse to ignore black people’s history for the other 11 months of the year, or indeed that black history is somehow separate from the rest of UK history.

However, Black History Month has long been recognised by the British Government. Many MPs get involved in hosting events and speaking at launches, so there is always value in asking a local politician to support your school’s celebrations.

If you are interested in finding out more about Black History and Black History Month, there are magazines which are available free from libraries, and from these websites:

And take a look at the official Black History Month website here:

<http://www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk/>

PREPARATION

In preparation you will need to find three or four students with good reading voices who are willing to help. Make sure they have time to practise. If you are going to use microphones, then give your volunteers a run-through with them or they could be surprised or unnerved by the sound of their own amplified voices. Change your readers regularly to help maintain the attention of your audience.



INSTRUCTIONS

Begin by asking your students if anyone knows what is usually celebrated during the whole month of October every year in the UK. Opinions may vary (“Hallowe’en?”) but the answer is, of course, Black History Month.

Ask the group what they think the purpose of Black History Month might be, and take a few answers. Depending on the response...

Either: Congratulate the student(s) for their excellent knowledge and understanding which is greater than that of most people in the UK;

Or: Commiserate that sadly many people in the UK, whether they are black or not, are not very aware of Black History Month or even some of the amazing people that Black History Month celebrates.

Now hand over to your volunteers to read the *Assembly Script* (page 7). Make sure you are ready to show the film (or films) at the appropriate point!

You might like to finish the assembly with a vote: hands up who agrees that we should have a Black History Month? And ask for a few students to say *why* they think we should, or should not.

EXTENSIONS

If developing this theme for older learners (either in the assembly or in a follow-up lesson) you may also wish to think about some of the following issues, raised by more of TrueTube’s films...

Many people argue that Black History Month provides us with a focus to celebrate the achievements of black people from this country and overseas. The black community has used this month to share with the rest of the world the contribution that black people have made to human development. It is a time to demonstrate pride in, and respect for, the creativity, intellectual achievements and sporting prowess of black people; and a time to celebrate the various cultural identities of people with African and Caribbean roots.

However, many people have questioned the point of Black History Month. The actor Morgan Freeman once said, “Why would you relegate my history to a single month?”

Show the film *The Importance of Black History Month*

Rageh Omaar – now a special correspondent for ITV News - questions whether Black History Month is still relevant. He feels it has lost its importance in modern Britain because it hasn’t moved with the times. He suggests that the month could be developed to cover a wider range of race issues.

Rageh also questions what we mean by “black” – do we mean “African”? But does this still represent people from Nigeria, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia and Uganda? What about people from Trinidad?



Show the film *Dr Hakeem on Black History Month: Part One*

(Note: The caption at the start of this film mentions the 20th anniversary of Black History Month – in fact 2018 sees its 31th anniversary in the UK.)

Dr Hakeem Adi reminds us that many people, even those who are black, are unaware of Black History Month.

He points out that although we celebrate the work of people such as William Wilberforce in the abolition of slavery, black people were also very instrumental in the emancipation of slaves.

Dr Adi acknowledges that although Black History Month has had an impact, more work still needs to be done. Some people suggest that Black History Month might not be entirely positive if it means that the history of black people is largely ignored throughout the rest of the year. Some people argue that having a Black History Month “ghetto-ises” Black History which should be celebrated throughout the year and integrated throughout British culture.

Although many people feel that Black History Month provides us with a focus to celebrate the achievements of black people, others have argued that the focus on one month perpetuates the problem of separating “Black History” from “British History”. They suggest that although Black History Month was a good idea, it now needs to modernise and be more relevant to young people in Britain.

Show the film *Dr Hakeem on Black History Month: Part Two*

Dr Hakeem Adi outlines the problems of Black History Month. It’s not a sign of success, but a sign of the problems that need to be addressed. BHM lends itself to tokenism, as Dr Adi points out: “Okay, you can talk about Black History in October, but not the rest of the year.” He continues, “As long as there is BHM I will not be satisfied. It’s a recognition that our rich history is being ghetto-ised”.

Dr Hakeem Adi teaches African History and the African Diaspora at Chichester University; is a founder member of the Black and Asian Studies Association; and has written history books for children. He suggests that Black History month is important because there is so little emphasis on the history of black people, and that many people - even those who are black - are unaware of Black History Month.

Show the film *Darcus Howe on Black History*

This might be more suitable for Key Stage 4 students. Mr Howe is a civil liberties campaigner who argues that, “Black people have never had a history; Black History has been about what the colonial and slave masters did that is history”. He continues to explain that young black people must know where they have come from or else they cannot know where they are going. History should be a critical, not a sentimental understanding of your past. Black History is an attitude, not a month.





Akala on Black History Month (1:39)

Topic: Society

Sub-Topic: Race and Diversity

Akala - rapper, poet and journalist - shares his views on Black History Month and the general attitude towards Black History.

You might also want to include some (or all) of these...



The Importance of Black History Month (2:07)

Topic: Society

Sub-Topic: Race and Diversity

Rageh Omar discusses Black History Month and how he feels it has lost its importance in modern Britain as it hasn't moved with the times. He shares his views and opinions, and discusses how the month could be developed to cover a wider range of race issues.



Dr Hakim on Black History Month: Part One (2:47)

Topic: Society

Sub-Topic: Race and Diversity

Dr Hakim discusses the significance of Black History, and explains how the need to dedicate a month to this subject serves to demonstrate how forgotten it is during the rest of the year.



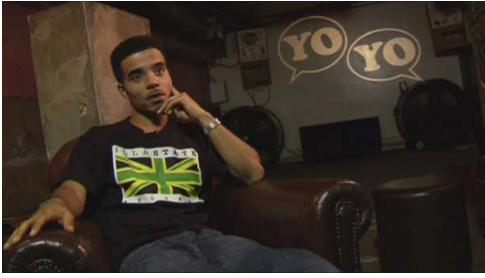
Dr Hakim on Black History Month: Part Two (1:55)

Topic: Society

Sub-Topic: Race and Diversity

Dr Hakim discusses the significance of Black History, and explains how the need to dedicate a month to this subject serves to demonstrate how forgotten it is during the rest of the year.





Darcus Howe on Black History (2:02)

Topic: *Society*

Sub-Topic: *Race and Diversity*

Writer and broadcaster Darcus talks about who defines black history.

- Digital projector (connected to the internet or you will need to download the films beforehand).
- Microphones (if needed, or available).
- Two or three volunteers to read the *Assembly Script*.
- Enough copies of the *Assembly Script* for you and for each of your volunteers.



ASSEMBLY SCRIPT

In 1926, Carter Woodson - who was the son of two black slaves - realised that the history of black people in America, and in the history of other countries, was being ignored or misrepresented, so he began what he called “Negro History Week”. At the time, the word “negro” wasn’t thought to be an offensive word - it just means “black” in Spanish - but since the 1960s, it has fallen out of common use. Many people objected to the word because of its associations with the slave trade, and with terms of abuse.

But Carter Woodson’s original idea lives on in “Black History Month” which has been celebrated across the USA since 1976.

The original goal was to educate everyone about the cultures and achievements of people of African and Caribbean descent.

Carter Woodson always hoped that eventually it wouldn’t be necessary to have a special week or month dedicated to Black History because we would be celebrating black people’s history all the time, just as we celebrate the history of white people.

However, in 1987, two men who worked for Greater London Council, called Akyaaaba Addai Sebbo and Ken Livingstone, became angry that the diversity in London and across Britain wasn’t fully recognised. They pointed out that the history of black people was all too frequently ignored or forgotten. Sixty years after Carter Woodson’s “Negro History Week” began, there was still a need to raise awareness of black people’s contribution to society, even in a city as multicultural as London.

Ken Livingstone - who later became London Mayor - said at the time:

“In order to enrich the cultural diversity of the Greater London area, it is imperative that Londoners know more about African influences on medieval and renaissance European music so that accepted ideas about European music is changed. Despite the significant role that Africa and its Diaspora have played in the world civilization since the beginning of time, Africa’s contribution has been omitted or distorted in most history books.”

So Black History Month has been celebrated in the United Kingdom every October since 1987. Across the country thousands of excellent events are organised to educate people about black culture and the achievements of black people in art, science, business, sport... in fact all spheres of human life.

Some of these people include:

Archbishop Desmond Tutu became Archbishop of Cape Town in 1986. In 1995, Nelson Mandela, who was then the President of South Africa, asked him to lead the “Truth and Reconciliation Commission”, which became a model of national forgiveness and co-existence. Archbishop Tutu was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984 for his lifelong struggle to bring equality, justice and peace to South Africa.



Dame Shirley Bassey left school at the age of 14 and worked in a factory. She was singing in pubs and clubs in the evenings when she was “discovered” by a promoter. There was no X-Factor in those days and most people didn’t even have a TV, but she quickly became a star in the UK and across the world. She is probably most famous for singing the theme song of three James Bond films. She has been a superstar for more than 50 years, and has raised millions of pounds for charity. And she is still performing. In June 2012 she sang at the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Concert - one of only a few international stars who were chosen to perform because their work is known and loved throughout the world.

Barack Obama was born on the American island of Hawaii. His mother was American and his father was from Kenya but they divorced when Barack was just 3 years old, and from then on he saw very little of his father. His mother remarried and they went to live in Indonesia but Barack soon returned to Hawaii to live with his grandparents. Barack went to university, became a lawyer and eventually went into politics. He became an American senator in 2004 and was elected the first black President of the United States of America in 2008. In 2009 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize and in 2012 he was re-elected as President of the USA for a second term.

Oprah Winfrey was born in a very poor home in America. She had a very tough childhood but she was determined to succeed. While she was still at High School, she managed to get a job at her local radio station. Her hard work and talent were recognised and she quickly progressed in her media career. By the time she was just 19, she was reading the news on TV. Later she became a day-time TV presenter and eventually launched her own show, *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, which was shown in almost every country in the world. Eventually she was able to form her own production company. In the 1990s, it was estimated that Oprah was the richest African American of the 20th century, and for a time she was the world’s only black billionaire. Some people have said that because of her TV shows, she is still one of the most influential women in the world. That is hard to prove, but it’s a fact that she has given more money to charity than any other black person in the history of America.

There are also black people who did extraordinary things in the history of Britain, but they have been almost completely forgotten. Most people have never even heard of them. So let’s put that right:

Septimius Severus was the first Roman Emperor to be born in Africa. He ruled the whole of the Roman Empire from Mesopotamia to Britain from the year 193 CE to 211 CE. He was a brilliant general who defeated enemies of the Roman Empire in battle, and was victorious in the many civil wars that broke out within the Empire itself. He died in York (or Eboracum as it was known in those days) in 211 CE.

Mary Jane Seacole was a nurse, born in Jamaica in 1805. She travelled widely and eventually served during the Crimean War, which was fought against Russia by Britain and her allies from 1853 to 1856. When she heard of the poor medical provisions for soldiers who had been wounded, she travelled to England to volunteer as a nurse and asked to be sent as an army assistant to the Crimea (which is now part of the Ukraine). Florence Nightingale chose 38 nurses to go with her but Mary wasn’t one of them. Not to be put off, Mary borrowed some money and travelled 4,000 miles to the battlefields where she nursed wounded soldiers from both sides, sometimes under fire. When the war ended in 1856, Mary had no money and couldn’t get home, but the soldiers organised a concert to raise enough cash for her return to London.



William Hall was born in Canada in 1827. His parents were slaves in America until they escaped and were rescued by the British Navy. William worked in the ship-yards before becoming a merchant seaman when he was 17. He signed up to the Royal Navy in 1852 and was serving on HMS Shannon and sailing to China when the Indian Mutiny broke out. The ship was diverted to the port of Calcutta and the sailors marched to the city of Lucknow in Northern India to help defend it against attack. Able Seaman William Hall joined a gun crew and he and his Commander were the last men standing in a bloody battle against the rebels. The rest of the crew were killed or wounded in the fighting. Because of his bravery, William Hall was awarded the Victoria Cross, the highest honour which can be given to British troops. He survived the war and eventually retired to become a farmer - a job he continued to do until his death in 1804.

Baroness Valerie Amos was born in British Guiana (now called just "Guyana") in 1954, but was educated in the UK where she became the first black Deputy Head Girl of her school. She went on to University and then worked in Equal Opportunities, Training and Management Services in London. Valerie became Chief Executive of the Equal Opportunities Commission 1989, and in 2003 she became the first black woman to sit in the Cabinet of the British Government. Soon afterwards she became the Leader of the House of Lords. She was appointed British High Commissioner to Australia and in 2010 she joined the United Nations in charge of Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief.

Have a look at this film featuring Akala, who is a rapper, poet and journalist.

Show the film *Akala on Black History Month*

It's interesting to see that although most people think that there should be a Black History Month, some people remain concerned that there is still what Akala calls "a massive ignorance" among black people about their own history; and so other cultures and races question why they should take black history seriously when so few black people seem to care about the importance of their own heritage.

Carter Woodson began his work in 1926 - nearly a century ago - and yet it seems that there is still more work to be done, even among black people themselves, many of whom - according to Akala - have disconnected from their African roots. Hopefully we will eventually live in a world where people celebrate black history all the time, and not just in October.

