



Britain, Slavery and Gothic Fiction

Aims

- Understand what Britain's Empire has to do with Slavery
- Think about how fiction represents our past
- Analyse how "gothic" writing brings neglected history to life





What is Empire?

- Imperialism a policy of extending your rule over foreign countries
- Colonialism practice of gaining control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically.
- "Red on the map"





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Historical Investigation

- What does Empire have to do with slavery?
- What did the slave trade bring to Britain?
- Why did slavery still exist in the colonies after it had been abolished in Britain?

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Historical Sources

In pairs look at the source you have been given

- What does it tell you about Britain's role in the slave trade?
- What does it tell you about 'imperial' attitudes towards slavery and enslaved peoples?
- Does it tell you anything about what Britain gained from the slave trade?
- Do you learn anything about opposition to the slave trade?

Be prepared to share your findings with the class





What is Gothic?

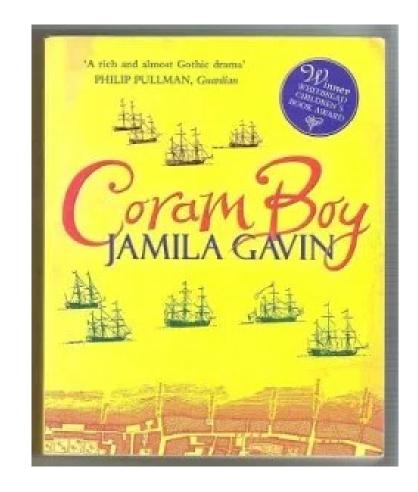
- Some Gothic tropes:
 - ghosts and hauntings
 - Body horror and violence
 - villainy
- The "Gothic effect" (Chris Baldick):
 - "a fearful sense of inheritance in time"
 - "a claustrophobic sense of enclosure in space"
 - "descent into disintegration"
- Gothic as a process (Robert Mighall):
 - Eras, institutions, places, and people are "Gothicized"
 - "That which is Gothicized depends on history and the stories it needs to tell itself"





Coram Boy - Summary

- Set in eighteenth-century Britain
- The novel's main villain is a wealthy slave trader who profits from selling orphan children overseas from his London dock
- One of the protagonists (Toby) is the child of a slave and ward of a charity orphanage
- The novel reminds readers that the wealth of the United Kingdom is in imperial trade and slavery.



Close Reading – Group Activity

- How has Jamila Gavin represented the links between Empire, London, trade and slavery?
- Can you identify Gothic elements or Gothic language/imagery?
- What is the role of "gothic" in this passage how does it bring the past to life?

Discuss the extract as a group and prepare some key findings to share with the rest of the class.





What do you think?

- What does Empire have to do with Slavery?
- Why is it important to tell these stories about Britain's past?
- How does Gothic help us understand this part of Britain's history?



