

# TEACHERS NOTES



Cotton is King



## **Cotton stamp**

Carved Wooden printing block, used for printing repeat patterns on to textiles.  
This was used by William Reed Gartside, printer at Wood Brow, Denshaw.

From the collection at Touchstones.



# INTRODUCTION

Thank you for booking a 'Cotton is King' discovery box from Touchstones.

Think of this box as a mini museum. It contains groups of objects that together, support learning around a particular topic or idea. These notes contain additional web links and background information to help you run themed sessions using the contents.

## Before you get started

Take a closer look at artefacts from the cotton industry in the Touchstones' collection: <https://sketchfab.com/TouchstonesRochdale/collections/cotton-59f5e9d23480498784838ed8b09165df>

The Industrial Revolution took place in Britain during the 1700s and 1800s. People moved from rural farming communities to work in mills or factories and towns expanded. The impact on society was huge. This box focuses on Rochdale; initially a smaller market town which went on to become a titan of textile production. Objects and activities explore both the cotton manufacturing process and some of the people it affected. Watch this introductory video by English Heritage, introducing the Industrial Revolution: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vizSn5\\_uZNq](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vizSn5_uZNq)

## Top tips for using the discovery box

- Use one group of objects at a time. The objects relate to each another and help re-enforce ideas.
- Look closely by using magnifying glasses. Take measurements or weigh objects. Complete a museum record card (template included), or write an exhibition label.
- Treat objects with respect. Encourage children to handle objects with care over a table and use the gloves supplied.
- Ask the children to act as curators (people who look after collections and organise displays.) Can they arrange objects in date order, by material or by function? Explain that museums arrange and display objects to help us understand the relationships between things and make sense of the world.

## Find out more about cotton production by visiting

A good place to start: [www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zq226g8/articles/zys7xbk#zb36p4j](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zq226g8/articles/zys7xbk#zb36p4j)

An introduction to some major inventions:

<https://www.sciencemuseumgroup.org.uk/learning/resources/textiles-gallery-guide/>

Discover key figures from the period: [www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person-list?sText=industrial+evolution&search=sas&OOnly=true&firstRun=true&submitSearchTerm=Search&page+1](http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person-list?sText=industrial+evolution&search=sas&OOnly=true&firstRun=true&submitSearchTerm=Search&page+1)

An ethical guide to teaching a history of slavery in primary schools:

[www.history.org.uk/primary/resource/2811/teaching-slavery](http://www.history.org.uk/primary/resource/2811/teaching-slavery)



## TRAY ONE: COTTON PRODUCTION

Rochdale's damp climate meant it was ideal for cotton production (as individual fibres are more easily separated). Jobs such as carding, spinning and weaving were traditionally done at home, but the invention of new machines led to mass production and the introduction of mills, powered by water from the town's two rivers, the Roch and the Irwell. By the early 1800s, the town's population had tripled to accommodate new workers for the mills. Around 90% were employed in the production of textiles. Improved transport links by canal, rail and road, made it easier to transport goods to trading posts across the North of England.

Some investors grew wealthy though daily life for workers was tough and impoverished.

### Contents:

- Flying Shuttle
- Hand Carders
- Fine cotton cloth
- Cotton tea towel
- Teasel
- Samples of cotton

### Points to consider:

- Can you identify objects in tray one of the discovery box?
- What part of cotton production do you think the items were used for?
- Name some of the different jobs in a cotton mill.
- What was life like for a child working in a Rochdale mill?
- Why is the cotton trade still important to Rochdale?

### Activity:

Three lessons on spinning and weaving plus activities: <https://www.hamilton-trust.org.uk/topics/lower-key-stage-2-topics/british-clothing-1066-present-day/spinning-and-weaving/>

This lesson includes specific terminology, and a step by step guide to weaving: <https://www.thenational.academy/teachers/lessons/exploring-weaving#video>

### Useful resources:

Demonstration of hand spinning: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-\\_et\\_Lnz7f4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-_et_Lnz7f4)

A list of Rochdale mills: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_mills\\_in\\_Rochdale](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_mills_in_Rochdale)

A brief history 2 local mills: [www.simplestorage.co/history/](http://www.simplestorage.co/history/) and

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arkwright\\_Mill\\_Rochdale](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arkwright_Mill_Rochdale)

A list of jobs within a cotton mill: [https://happyvalley.org.uk/?page\\_id=4040](https://happyvalley.org.uk/?page_id=4040)

Information and activities about how cotton is produced today:

<https://cottonaustralia.com.au/lessons-and-units>

A unit of work about sustainable fashion:

[www.oxfam.org.uk/documents/692/Sustainable\\_Fashion\\_Teachers\\_Guide\\_2023.pdf](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/documents/692/Sustainable_Fashion_Teachers_Guide_2023.pdf)



## TRAY TWO: PEOPLE POWER

Rochdale has a rich history of protest dating back to the 1600s. Workers from Rochdale, Middleton and Heywood were present at Peterloo, where 18 were killed and hundreds more injured following a protest calling for the right to vote. As the mills expanded, workers established collectives such as the Rochdale and District Weavers', Winders', Reelers', Beamers' and Hosiery Workers' Association and the Rochdale Card and Blowing Room Operatives' Association to help improve pay and conditions.

The cotton trade linked Rochdale to suppliers and markets across the world. The American Civil War (1861-1865) limited raw cotton exports to the UK. Mills closed and many lost their jobs, but workers still sided with the Northern states, which opposed slavery. In 1846, 'fugitive slave' Frederick Douglass visited the town several times, recounting his life on a plantation and promoting the abolitionist movement.

### Contents:

- Frederick Douglass coin
- Replica of a half -timer statue
- Miniature replicas of cotton bales
- Cotton plant
- Manilla
- Auction poster
- Advert for Mill jobs for children

### Points to consider:

- Can you identify objects in tray two of the discovery box?
- What kind of rights were workers fighting for?
- Who opposed them and why?
- Why did Frederick Douglass visit Rochdale?
- What were the people of Rochdale doing to support the abolition of slavery?

### Activities:

Ask students what they think it means to be free. What five 'freedoms' do they consider important?

Discuss the origins of their names: <https://understandingslavery.com/lesson/my-name/>

Ask students to imagine they are an abolitionist. Write a letter to Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel explaining their thoughts and feelings about the enslaved cotton workers. Share with Touchstones: [schools@yourtrustrochdale.co.uk](mailto:schools@yourtrustrochdale.co.uk)

Use the Peterloo banner as inspiration. Create a placard or banner on an issue affecting Rochdale today.

### Useful resources:

Further information about Frederick Douglass: [www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk/article/section/history-of-slavery/when-frederick-douglass-came-to-rochdale-a-slave-and-left-a-free-man/](http://www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk/article/section/history-of-slavery/when-frederick-douglass-came-to-rochdale-a-slave-and-left-a-free-man/)

A 5 minute introduction to trade unions: [https://kids.kiddle.co/Trades\\_union](https://kids.kiddle.co/Trades_union)

Explore the rights of children: [www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/](http://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/)



## ADDITIONAL BOX CONTENTS

- Blank museum-object cards (digital copy sent to staff member who booked box)
- Gloves for object-handling
- Magnifying glasses

### Further resources:

A short film about the history of British trade unions: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=gPPeDO4dMRA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gPPeDO4dMRA)

A short film about children at work in Victorian Britain: [www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p011mkc3](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p011mkc3)

Further information about Rochdale's cotton trade legacy:

[www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/business/property/leaders-of-industry-who-used-home-1037358](https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/business/property/leaders-of-industry-who-used-home-1037358)  
and [www.rmnf.org.uk/area/cotton-famine-road/](https://www.rmnf.org.uk/area/cotton-famine-road/)

BBC Bitesize activity ideas and resources on abolition:

[www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/z2qj6sg/articles/zn7rbqt](https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/z2qj6sg/articles/zn7rbqt)

Museum objects relating to the history of enslaved people: <https://understandingslavery.com/artefacts/>

American children discussing the legacy of historical slavery today:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=CWMIFX2b3NQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CWMIFX2b3NQ)

Virtual tour of Liverpool International Slavery Museum, Liverpool:

[www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/international-slavery-museum/virtual-tour](https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/international-slavery-museum/virtual-tour)

### Lesson plans and resources:

Free example lesson plan on cotton: <https://www.edenfieldprimary.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Knowledge-Organiser-Year-4-Lancashire-Cotton-Industry.pdf>

Free resources: <https://understandingslavery.com>

Peterloo information and resources: <https://peterloo1819.co.uk>

Transatlantic slave trade teaching resources:

[https://images.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/2020-01/International-Slavery-Museum-teachers-pack\\_0.pdf](https://images.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/2020-01/International-Slavery-Museum-teachers-pack_0.pdf)

Active Citizenship resources: <https://www.visithadrianswall.co.uk/learning/teaching-resources/campaign-make-an-impact/>

### Recommended reading:

**Blackbeard's Treasure** by Iszi Lawrence

ISBN-10 1801990964 published by Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, a story of adventure

**A Picture of Freedom** by Patricia C McKissack

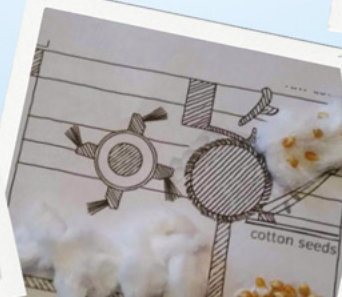
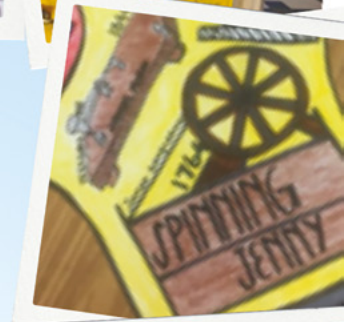
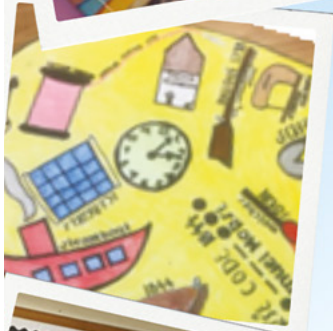
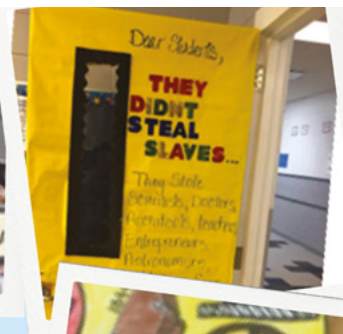
ISBN-10 070230381X published by DK Children, an illustrated information book

**Black & British** by David Olusoga

ISBN-10 1529052955 published by Macmillan Children's Books, an illustrated history

**My Story: Mill Girl** by Sue Reid

ISBN 13: 9781407152530, the Diary of Eliza Helsted, Manchester 1842-1843



# COTTON

## Inspiration Board