



**SPREAD
THE WORD**

RUNAWAYS LONDON

**TEACHING RESOURCE KS3/4
OLIVIA TWIST**



WHAT'S INSIDE

INTRODUCTION

ABOUT RUNAWAYS LONDON

RESEARCHING THE LIVES OF ENSLAVED LONDONERS

Professor Simon P. Newman

ACTIVITIES

RESOURCES

- *Black-Owned Taverns* by Olivia Twist
- Further reading

THANKS

Runaways London is made possible thanks to the generosity of The British Association for American Studies/United States Embassy Small Grants Programme; Economic and Social Research Council, Impact Acceleration Award; University of Glasgow Knowledge Exchange (KE) Small Grants 2020/21; City of London Grants; Ian & Clare Branagan; Dominic Christian; Ross and Caitlin Curtis; Matthew and Fiona Fosh; Tom and Caron Ilube; Kevin and Jennie Lee O'Donnell.



University
of Glasgow



Economic
and Social
Research Council



INTRODUCTION

Between the 1650s and 1780s many hundreds of enslaved people were brought to London. Most were African although a significant minority were South Asian and a smaller number were indigenous American.

While enslaved in the capital some attempted to escape and, on occasions, those who pursued them placed advertisements in London newspapers seeking the capture and return of these freedom-seekers.

The Runaways London project has commissioned five poets and two artists to respond to these historical advertisements and create new poems and artworks which investigate the lives, stories and histories excluded from the advertisements.

This resource by artist Olivia Twist takes your class through their creative process to produce their own artworks responding to this theme.

The Runaways London anthology containing all commissioned poems and artworks, further teaching resources and a short film about the project can be found at: spreadtheword.org.uk/runaways

ABOUT RUNAWAYS LONDON

Runaways London is an arts heritage programme which engages with archival evidence of enslaved Londoners of the 17th and 18th Century, who escaped their enslavement to find new lives in the City.

Working with research by University of Glasgow's Runaway Slaves in Britain project (runaways.glasgow.ac.uk), a team of young poets and artists of African and South Asian heritage developed a series of poems and artworks responding to so called 'runaway slave' advertisements published in London newspapers between the 1650s and 1780s.

Working on the project are poets: Momtaza Mehri, Gboyega Odubanjo, Abena Essah, Memoona Zahid and Oluwaseun Olayiwola and artists: Olivia Twist and Tasia Graham. Runaways London is managed by Spread the Word and the project publisher is Ink Sweat & Tears Press.

RESEARCHING THE LIVES OF ENSLAVED LONDONERS

Who inhabited 17th and 18th century London? Kings, courtiers and a few of the city's more affluent citizens have left us portraits of themselves and their families, and some of the buildings they constructed and the things that they owned survive, allowing us to feel the tenor of their lives. A few people like Samuel Pepys have left diaries and documentary records, while still more can be traced in court or church records. But although a few seventeenth-century Londoners speak to us through the archives most have left little or even no trace and we can imagine their lives in only the broadest and vaguest terms.

Londoners of African and South Asian origin are amongst the most invisible and silent of these historical figures, although there were a significant number in the capital. A number of them were sailors and dock workers, while a few were craftsmen, labourers and washerwomen. Most, however, were domestic servants in the households of elite and mercantile families who had spent time in or had connections with the British Empire's colonies. Some were free, a few were bound and indentured servants, but others were enslaved.

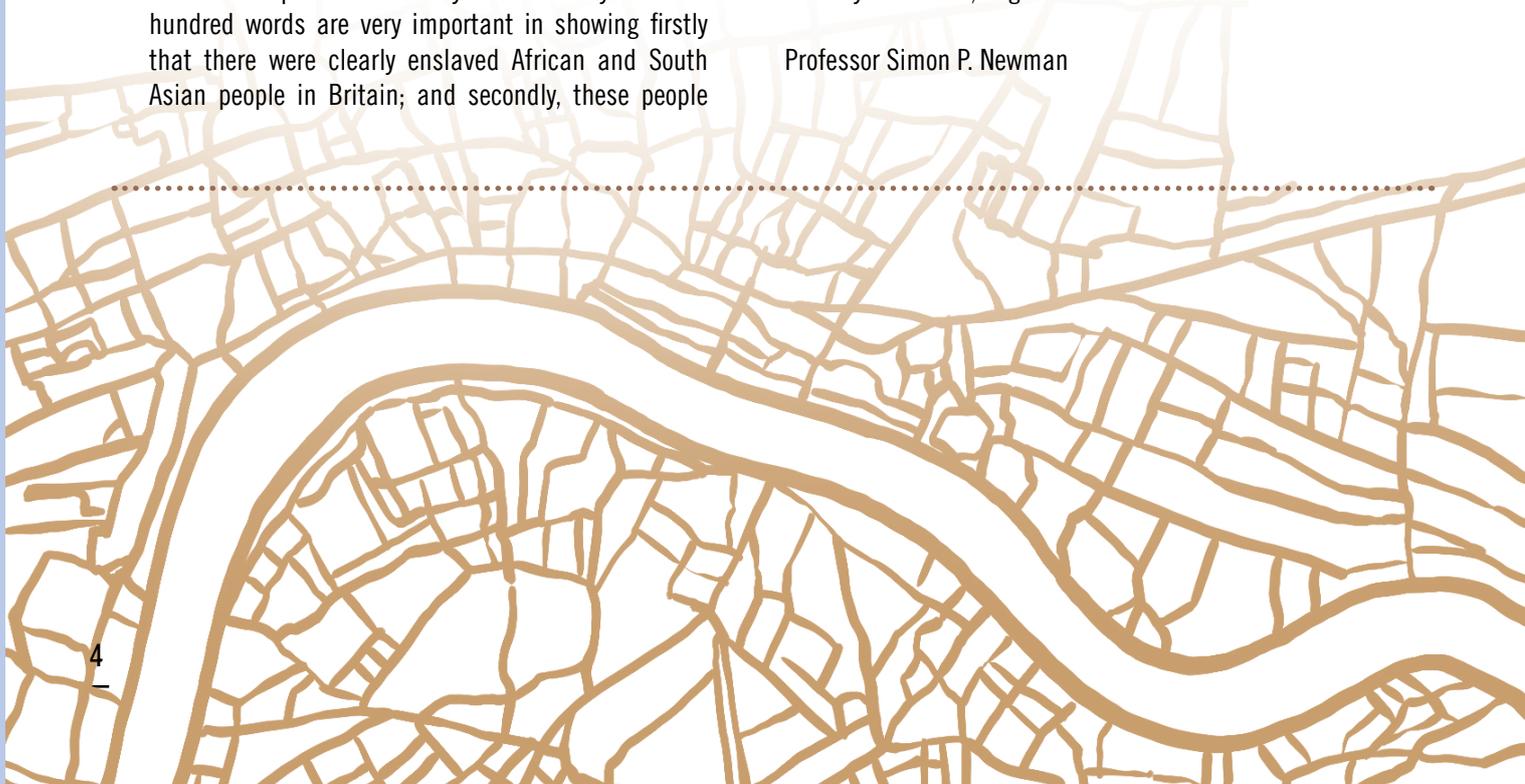
Without portraits or diaries, one of the ways we know about the existence of these enslaved Londoners is through many hundreds of short newspaper advertisements placed in newspapers by masters and enslavers who described and offered rewards for the capture and return of enslaved people who had escaped. Often called 'runaway slave' advertisements, these short pieces of usually between fifty and one hundred words are very important in showing firstly that there were clearly enslaved African and South Asian people in Britain; and secondly, these people

resisted by attempting to escape. The records also reveal that more of these advertisements appeared in London's newspapers than in those of any other city; and that the average age of these freedom-seekers was just 16 years old.

The Runaway Slaves in Britain project has located many hundreds of newspaper advertisements about enslaved escapees in the British Isles and made them accessible in an easily searchable database. In many cases these short advertisements are the only surviving record we have of a particular enslaved person, but even then they may tell us very little. Sometimes we don't even know the name of the freedom-seeker. We might learn whether they were of African or South Asian descent, how well they spoke English, the clothes they had been wearing when they escaped, and in some cases whether they were scarred by slave brands or had been forced to wear metal slave collars around their necks.

It is all that we don't know about London's freedom-seekers that encouraged us to develop this project, Runaways London. Compiling as much historical data as possible about enslaved people in London we gave this information to young poets and artists based in London and of African and South Asian heritage. We asked them to create works speaking to these archival silences; building from short runaway advertisements and developing ideas, impressions and stories about the brave Londoners, some of them little more than children, who dared to challenge their enslavers and run away into the City of London, eager to find better and freer lives.

Professor Simon P. Newman



ACTIVITIES

Ran away, a Young Negro Fellow, named Othello, about nineteen Years of Age, stout and well made, speaks good English, had on when he went away, a light Cloth Coat, turn'd up with blue Cuffs and Collar, lined with Blue, plain white Metal Buttons, blue Cloth Waistcoat, with blue and white Lace, Doeskin Breeches, ribb'd Worsted Stockings, Silver Buckles in his Shoes and Knees, and an old Silver-laced Hat; the said Negro was christened some Time ago at London-Stone Church, by the name of Robert Ward. If he will return home (as those, who, It's imagined, corrupted him, are removed) his past Faults will be forgiven; if not, whoever will give Information to Mr James Concanen, in Bell-Yard, opposite the Monument, so that he may be secured, shall have a reward of Four Guineas. The above Negro had with him a French Horn, on which he was learning to play.

— The Daily Advertiser, 28th January 1761



BLACK-OWNED TAVERN PORTRAITS

BY OLIVIA TWIST

Creating portraits to recognise and celebrate the history of London's Black-owned taverns



- Discuss history and context of Black-owned taverns in 17th and 18th century London
- Draw quick sketch portraits
- Explore power dynamics in portraiture
- Create A3 images of Black-owned taverns

INTRODUCTION

It may seem hard to believe because of the dominant narratives we are told, but in 1764 on London's Fleet Street, there was a Black-owned tavern. Where on many a night people would be up eating and drinking together.

'Among the sundry fashionable routs or clubs, that are held in town, that of the Blacks or Negro servants is not the least. On Wednesday night last, no less than fifty-seven of them, men and women, supped, drank, and entertained themselves with dancing and music, consisting of violins, French horns, and other instruments, at a public-house in Fleet-street, till four in the morning. No Whites were allowed to be present, for all the performers were Blacks.'

London Chronicle, 16-18 February 1764

The tavern was like no other place at the time for the Black enslaved population. It was a third space. Somewhere where you could be yourself, where you could fall in love. Where you could dance to live music. It is said that generally, Black people appear to have been free to go to pubs and late-night parties, and to travel around inner cities and the countryside. This independence was not something that was taken for granted. It would have been truly sacred at the time.

This session will focus on this overlooked narrative utilising critical fabulation skills. **Critical fabulation** is a term coined by the American writer Saidiya Hartman. It is a sort of creative semi-nonfiction combining historical research with fictional narratives. It aims to bring the suppressed voices of the past to our attention, especially around discussion of the trade in enslaved people.

TIMELINE

- 1586** Earliest records of Black people in Tower Hamlets
- 1596** Elizabeth I orders the expulsion of all Black people from England
- 1773** Phillis Wheatley publishes *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*, the first published volume of poetry by an African-American author
- 1786** Sierra Leone Scheme adopted by the British Government to transport Black Britons to Sierra Leone
- 1807** The abolition of the trade in enslaved people
- 1833** The Emancipation Act is passed, giving all enslaved people in the British Empire their freedom after a set period of years
- 1919** Race riots in the East End and other British port communities
- 1948** The Empire Windrush arrives at Tilbury Docks with 492 Jamaican passengers, amongst others
- 1965** Race Relations Act passed banning racial discrimination

DISCUSSION



Introduce the topic of Black-owned taverns to the class, as well as the short timeline of Black history above. Discuss using the prompts below.

Think about the significance of a Black-owned tavern at a time of widespread slavery. Take some time to imagine how a Black person may have felt on their first trip to the tavern? How do you think these momentous occasions were received and celebrated in the few Black saloons and taverns across England? What sort of events do you think might have taken place there?

WARM-UP: PORTRAITS IN PERSPECTIVE

Put the class into pairs, with pencils and paper and ask them to draw quick portraits of themselves and their partner in the same picture. Someone should be close up and the other should be deeper in the frame. Focus on perspective and depth. Think about proportion between the two characters.



Allow about 15-20 minutes. When the class has finished, open up a discussion: does whether someone is close up or far away change how we think about them? Does it suggest a hierarchy or difference in power between them?

Share the three paintings below with the class and briefly discuss what they show us about 17th and 18th century ideas about Black portrait subjects:

- *The Children of Edward Holden Cruttenden* by Sir Joshua Reynolds, c.1763 - bit.ly/3liZWMV
- *Elizabeth Murray, Lady Tollemache, later Countess of Dysart and Duchess of Lauderdale (1626-1698) and an Attendant* by Sir Peter Lely, c.1651 - bit.ly/2YIIIIf
- *An Unknown Man, perhaps Charles Goring of Wiston (1744-1829), out Shooting with his Servant* by unknown artist (previously attributed to Johann Zoffany), c.1765 - bit.ly/3A77tSY

DRAW YOUR OWN BLACK-OWNED TAVERN

Show the class the image Black-owned Taverns below (bit.ly/3vmSXps). How does this differ from the images above?



Now give the class large A3 pieces of paper and invite them to draw their own image of a Black-owned tavern. They should pay close attention to the age range of the punters, dress, class, relationships between attendees. Use the following prompts to guide their thinking:

- What was the occasion? Regular Friday night? Wedding? Emancipation Act just passed?
- How many people were there? Is it crowded?
- Where have people come from? Was it just raining?
- What did the decor look like?
- What does it smell like?
- What can you hear?
- What does it feel like? Does it feel jubilant, does it feel tense?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Create your own tavern signage that would hang proudly outside of a Black-owned tavern. Think about symbolism, the fashion of the time and how typography will work with the imagery.

SHARING AND DEBRIEF

Ask the class to each present their work back to their peers. They should discuss the occasion they have decided to depict and any cultural signifiers they have included.

If there's time, invite the class to provide written feedback on five of their peers' work. They should cover:

- What is working well?
- What is intriguing?
- What could be developed further?



RESOURCES

Went away from his Master the 20th Instant, a Negro Boy named James, aged 15, in a light colour'd Livery, turn'd up with Yellow. Whoever brings him to the Jamaica-Coffee house in Cornhill, shall have 10 s. Reward. 'Tis suppos'd he is gone the Bath Road.

- Daily Courant, 24 January 1718

BLACK-OWNED TAVERNS

BY OLIVIA TWIST



FURTHER READING

- *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain*, Peter Fryer (Pluto Press, 1984)
- *Power Writers and the Struggle against Slavery*, Eleonora Gilbert (Hansib Publications, 2005)
- *Black Edwardians: Black People in Britain 1901-1914*, Jeffrey Green (Routledge, 1998)
- *Black Victorians/Black Victoriana*, ed. Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina (Rutgers University Press, 2003)
- *London 1900: The Imperial Metropolis*, Jonathon Schneer (Yale University Press, 2001)

ABOUT THE ARTIST: OLIVIA TWIST

Olivia Twist is an illustrator, arts facilitator and lecturer from east London with an MA in Visual Communication from the Royal College of Art.

The key threads which can be found in her work are place, the mundane and overlooked narratives. She is determined to make the arts, heritage institutions and arts education more accessible and representative of their local communities. Olivia has a strong interest in participatory design, relational aesthetics and documenting social history as it unfolds. As a practitioner her aims are to provide her audience with 'the shock of the familiar' and to trigger greater intergenerational discussion.



Runaways London is an arts heritage programme which engages with archival evidence of enslaved Londoners of the 17th and 18th Century, who escaped their enslavement to find new lives in the City.

A team of young poets and artists of African and South Asian heritage developed a series of poems and artworks responding to so called 'runaway slave' advertisements published in London newspapers between the 1650s and 1780s.

These resources, created by the participating artists, lead your class through their creative processes to produce poems and artworks responding to the project.

Resources in this series are:

Black Balls and Shaped Poems by Abena Essah

Collage Illustrations by Tasia Graham

Reimagining 17th and 18th Century Runaways by Momtaza Mehri

Found Poems by Gboyega Odubanjo

Ekphrastic Poems by Oluwaseun Olayiwola

Black-Owned Tavern Portraits by Olivia Twist

Fragmentary Narratives by Memoona Zahid

The Runaways London anthology containing all commissioned poems and artworks, further teaching resources, and a short film about the project can be found at: spreadtheword.org.uk/runaways

