



Inspiration Toolkit

‘A visible difference: skin, race and identity’



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Introduction

The list below includes books, films, artists and creative education projects which may be of interest to teachers and students to support exploration on themes of race, genetics, skin, the body as specimen and slavery.

These inspirational sources might either spark a creative project or act as examples of the way creative responses can be produced.

Books

- 'I Was a Rat' by Philip Pullman: The adventures of a boy-rat who was Cinderella's rat, whose experiences include being exhibited in a travelling circus.
- 'Flawed Angel' by John Fuller: This book tells the story of a child born with legs of his twin attached to his stomach. Despite being the first born son of the ruler of his land, he is cast out to die. He survives and is exhibited as a freak in a circus.
- The 'X-Men': Created by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby the X-men comic stories have often been cited as an exploration of racism and attitudes towards difference, as 'mutants' who are born with 'superhuman' abilities encounter and react to the fear and mistrust of the difference.
- 'The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave Narrative' by Mary Prince: Mary Prince was the first black woman to escape from slavery in the British colonies and publish a record of her experiences. She recalls her life in the West Indies, her rebellion against physical and psychological degradation, and her eventual escape in 1828 to England.

Films

- 'The Elephant Man'
- 'Bend it like Beckham'
- The X-Men movies
- 'Amistad'

Artists

- Jeff Koons' sculpture of 'Michael Jackson with Bubbles' – where Koons explores, in part the debate over Jackson's skin colour. Is it a skin condition, or has he deliberately lightened his skin in an effort to appeal to a wider audience? www.sfmoma.org/msoma/artworks/88.html
- Elio Caccavale's research project on 'Hybrids' challenges the idea that there is a clear distinction between humans and animals. www.eliocaccavale.com/hybrids.html
- For artists interested in genetics, see:
 - the genomic art community online. www.genomicart.org/index.html
 - 'Paradise Now: Picturing the Genomic Revolution' www.genomicart.org/pn-intro.htm
- Nancy Burson's Human Race Machine, 2000, demonstrates that genetically, racial differences are negligible: www.nancyburson.com/human_fr.html
- Ming Wong 'The Angel of Westminster', A hybrid image of 35 children living in Westminster from diverse backgrounds, forming one 'angel': www.mingwong.org/angelofwestminster1.htm
- Jordan Baseman has been working with geneticists to make films about how twins can tell us more about genetics. www.naturesgreatexperiment.com/contents.htm

Educational projects

The exhibiting difference project included working with a number of schools on creative projects.

You can find many examples of student's creative response to the exhibition at:

www.rcseng.ac.uk/museums/exhibitions/exhibiting_difference/schools

Other examples of educational project exploring related issues include:

- **'23 Pieces'**
Teachers at Thomas Hardy School in Dorchester worked with students (aged 13-16) and filmmaker Peter Snelling to create a film about DNA and how it affects identity. The film won a First Light Best Screenplay Award.
www.pva.org.uk
- **'Impact'**
'Impact' brought together clinical scientist Dr Sheila Ochugboju and leading contemporary dance company Angika. The team worked with groups of young dancers (aged 16-18) to create a dance performance responding to discoveries in epigenetics. The performance toured to secondary schools followed by an interactive discussion about the themes raised.
www.impactdanscience.co.uk
- **'Playing God?'**
A project with young people in Islington, working with All Change Arts to explore their thoughts on Stem Cell Research and Genetics. The website includes young people's writing and voices.
<http://www.allchangearts.org/playinggod/playinggod.php>
- **'Beneath the Skin'**
Young people from Handsworth got beneath the skin for a series of short films on pigmentation. Created by an informal filmmaking group, in partnership with a dermatologist and production company Resource Base, the resulting DVD features an experimental mix of drama, dance, poetry and documentary film, exploring science from a young black perspective.
<http://www.resource-base.co.uk/mainindex>

Weblinks

- 'The first black britons'
www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/empire_seapower/black_britons_03.shtml
- Histories of migration to the UK
www.movinghere.org.uk
- Black History for Schools
www.blackhistory4schools.com
- Black Presence: Asian and Black History in Britain, 1500-1850
www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/blackhistory
- Understanding Slavery (National Maritime Museum)
www.understandingslavery.com/
- Origination - Channel 4's Cultural Diversity Website
www.channel4.com/culture/microsites/O/origination
- Institute of Race Relations
www.irr.org.uk/history
- RaceSci: History of Race in Science
www.racesci.org
- The Image of Black - Exploring the representation of black people in art
www.theimageofblack.co.uk