

Statues and our changing view of the past. Worksheet

Below is a BBC Local News article from June 2020 about the decisions made in Plymouth following the tearing down of a sculpture of a slave trader in Bristol. It shows how complicated and difficult issues around historic statues and monuments can be.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-devon-52983430>

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Plymouth square named after slave trader to be renamed

A public square in Plymouth named after a 16th Century slave trader is to be renamed, the city council has said. Sir John Hawkins Square is named after the Elizabethan sailor who is described in the Encyclopaedia Britannica as "the first English slave trader".

It comes after anti-racism protesters tore down a statue of slave trader Edward Colston in Bristol on Sunday.

Plymouth City Council leader Tudor Evans said the city needed to acknowledge "some aspects of its past".

In a statement made in the council chambers, he said the city had an "incredible maritime history".

Mr Evans said Plymouth "cannot change its history, nor does it seek to", but could use it as "a reminder of the atrocities".

He also said the Labour-led council's thoughts were with the family and friends of George Floyd, who died last month after a white police officer in Minneapolis knelt on his neck for nearly nine minutes. Mr Floyd's death has sparked worldwide protests.

"As a council, we have already signalled that we stand in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement," Mr Evans said "This terrible event in the US illustrates how deeply discrimination and oppression both past and present are felt, and it has highlighted once again that Plymouth needs to continue to acknowledge some aspects of its own past."

Hawkins and his cousin, Sir Francis Drake, made voyages in the 1560s to kidnap people from Africa, carrying slaves from Guinea in West Africa to the Spanish West Indies.

A petition to change the name of the square has been signed by nearly 3,000 people since Sunday. Another petition has called for a seafront statue of Drake in Plymouth to be taken down.

Mr Evans said the statue of Drake - a former Plymouth mayor - on the Hoe was listed, but the council would "aim to ensure existing monuments" were "accompanied by a narrative referring to their role in the slave trade".

Ends.

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These are **facts** taken from news stories about controversial sculptures in Plymouth, Bristol, London and Liverpool during 2020:

Liverpool. January 2020

Liverpool City Council agreed in January 2020 to place plaques and other notices on statues, buildings, monuments and street names to explain the city's involvement with the slave trade.

Bristol. June 2020

On 7 June 2020, a statue of Edward Colston was toppled, defaced, and pushed into Bristol Harbour during the George Floyd protests related to the Black Lives Matter movement. The plinth was also covered in graffiti, but remains in place. The statue was recovered from the harbour and put into safe storage by Bristol City Council on 11 June.

Plymouth. June 2020

The city council decided on 8th June to rename Sir John Hawkins Square because it was named after the Elizabethan sailor who is described as "*the first English slave trader*".

Sir John Hawkins and his cousin, Sir Francis Drake, made voyages in the 1560s to kidnap people from Africa, carrying slaves from Guinea in West Africa to the Spanish West Indies. The council decided not to take down the seafront statue of Sir Francis Drake.

London. June 202

The statue of 18th - century slave owner Robert Milligan was removed from West India Dock, London on 9 June 2020 by the local authority to "recognise the wishes of the community"

These are **opinions** reported in the press about events in the UK in 2020:

Bristol. June 2020

Mayor Marvin Rees said "*I can't and won't pretend the statue of a slave trader in a city I was born and grew up in wasn't an affront to me and people like me.*"

Liverpool. August 2020

Mayor of Liverpool Joe Anderson said: "*I do not believe that changing street names is the answer – it would be wrong to try and airbrush out our past.*"

Plymouth. June 2020

Councillor Nick Kelly said about Sir Francis Drake: "*All of the good that an individual did should not be overlooked or erased because he had links with the slave trade hundreds of years ago.*"

London. June 202

Mayor of London Sadiq Khan said: "*It is an uncomfortable truth that our nation and city owes a large part of its wealth to it's role in the slave trade and while this is reflected in our public realm, the contribution of many of our communities to life in our capital has been wilfully ignored. This cannot continue ...*"

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Now write an opinion piece, maximum 500 words, which expresses your views about the events of 2020.

You can pick one of the towns highlighted or you can talk generally about statues in the UK.

This should be in three paragraphs. In paragraph one introduce your subject with a brief description of what you are going to talk about. In paragraph two lay out both sides of the argument. That is what you think should be done and what the opposite argument is. Finally in paragraph three conclude by outlining why your argument is best.