

KS3 History

Lesson 4 of an enquiry of 4 lessons

How successful were efforts to abolish slavery in the nineteenth century?

Enquiry: How successful were efforts to abolish slavery in the nineteenth century?

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British involvement in slavery after 1833?

The Slavery Abolition Act in 1833 effectively ended Britain's legal use of enslaved labour. This followed the 1807 Abolition of the Slave Trade Act, which made it illegal for British merchants to transport, buy or sell enslaved people. However, that does not mean that after 1833 British involvement in enslavement completely stopped. It was still possible for British merchants to invest in other countries that used enslaved labour such as America. As well as this, India was run by the British-owned **East India Company**. Slavery in India continued until the company made it illegal in 1843. On top of this, British controlled Australia, sometimes used **blackbirding** or withholding pay from **indigenous** peoples and saying it was 'in trust'.



Who benefited from the 1833 Slavery Abolition Act?

The people who benefited most from the 1833 Slavery Abolition Act were the plantation owners. In total, the British taxpayer spent £20 million, (around £20 billion in modern day figures), on buying the freedom of the enslaved people in the British Empire. This accounted for 40 percent of the total amount the British government spent in 1833. The effect was that in 2015 the British government finally finished paying off the loan it took out for it. This money went to the plantation owners as compensation. With it, some built fine country mansions, such as Harewood House.



How did the former enslaved people react after 1833?

The 1833 Act transformed the enslaved people under British control to 'apprentices'. These 'apprenticeships' were intended to last between six to twelve years. There would be little or no wages for these apprentices. This effectively meant that, although the workers were officially 'free', they were in fact still doing the same work as before. For those working on plantations in places like Jamaica, there was, in reality, no change after 1833. The system of 'apprenticeships' was finally ended in 1838, but this highlighted the fact that people continued to be practically enslaved despite it being illegal.

A book by an 'apprentice' named James Williams told the story about the problems and horrors experienced during these apprenticeships. There were also peaceful protests around the Caribbean against apprenticeships.



How did Britain try to end slavery?

Britain's use of the Royal Navy was the main weapon in the fight against the enslavement of people. The West Africa Squadron grew in strength and power. By 1866, it can be claimed that the Squadron had played a big role in helping end the Transatlantic Slave Trade. The Royal Navy was also used to tackle the East African Slave Trade and this role went into the twentieth century.

Britain used **diplomacy** and **treaties** with other European countries to encourage them to end their use of enslaved people. However getting other countries to agree to these treaties took time.



Why else did slavery continue after 1833?

Unfortunately, slavery still continues in the modern world. The Transatlantic Slave Trade was finally abolished around 1866 but only after America had fought a vicious civil war. The use of enslaved people was one of the main reasons for the **American Civil War**. With the defeat of the South, slavery in America finally ended. However, slavery continued in other areas of the world. In East Africa, the practice of enslaving people continued into the twentieth century.

The large-scale and legal use of enslaved people had virtually ended by the beginning of the twentieth century. However, it must be remembered that conditions for the formerly enslaved people in many places did not immediately improve. Formerly enslaved people faced **segregation**, poor education, lack of jobs and unemployment.



Glossary

East India Company- A company that traded goods but then built an empire in India

Indigenous - people who are native or originally from that country

Blackbirding - Tricking or kidnaping people and forcing them to work for little or no pay

Diplomacy - When two countries discuss things and reach agreements

Treaty - Agreements signed between countries

American Civil War - A war between the North (United States of America) and the South (Confederacy) mainly over the continued use of enslaved people

Segregation - When people are kept apart due to the race



Comprehension Questions

1. How did plantation owners benefit from the 1833 Slavery Abolition Act?
2. How did apprenticeships help continue certain aspects of enslavement?
3. Which war helped end the Transatlantic Slave Trade?
4. Did life for formerly enslaved people improve after 1833?

Extension Question

How successful were efforts to abolish slavery in the nineteenth century?

