



HEROES

EDWARD COLSTON

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120 years ago, a statue of Edward Colston was erected in Bristol. Underneath there was an inscription: “Erected by citizens of Bristol as a memorial of one of the most virtuous and wise sons of their city.” Colston was a wealthy man and he gave a lot of money away to build schools, hospitals and houses for the poor. Some people in Bristol want the statue to be removed.

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Starter Question: Why do you think they want the statue removed?

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However, between 1672 and 1689, Colston's company kidnapped around 100,000 people from west Africa and took them to the West Indies and America where they were sold as slaves. This included women and children as young as six – each slave was branded with company's initials, RAC, on their chest. To make the most money they could, Colston's ships divided were packed, so they could transport as many slaves as possible. Unhygienic conditions, dehydration and disease killed more than 20,000 slaves during the crossings, their bodies were thrown overboard.

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Task Question: Should the statue of Colston be removed?

Nested Questions

- ✓ Can we judge people from the past?
- ✓ Can good people do bad things and still be good people?
- ✓ Should we forgive Colston?
- ✓ Should we try and forget the ugly past?
- ✓ How can we make a coherent story out of Colston?

EXTENSION

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The Newspaper, The Bristol Post, asked 1,100 local people if they thought the statue should be pulled down. 56 per cent said it should stay; 44 per cent wanted it taken down.

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Task Question: Does this mean the statue of Colston should be removed?

CARAVAGGIO

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Caravaggio is regarded as one of the most talented and influential painters of all time. His work hangs in London's National Gallery. One of his less famous paintings, Judith Beheading Holofernes, was recently valued at around £100m.

When he was 35 he got into a fight and killed a young man named Ranuccio Tomassoni. Caravaggio spent the next four years on the run until he died. Nobody is sure if he died from lead poisoning or was killed by one of his enemies.

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Task Question: Should we remove Caravaggio's paintings from the National Gallery?

Nested Questions

- ✓ Does Caravaggio's painting become less good because of this?
- ✓ Are artists allowed to behave badly?
- ✓ Does it matter that this was a long time ago?
- ✓ Does it matter that his work is worth a lot of money?

MARTIN LUTHER KING

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Martin Luther King was one of the leaders, and most inspiring non-violent voices, of the civil rights movement who went on to win the Nobel Peace Prize. He was assassinated by those who opposed him. Today, in Washington DC there stands a statue of Dr King. He cheated on his wife several times with other women.

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Task Question: Should the statue of Martin Luther King be taken down?

Nested Questions

- ✓ What is a hero?
- ✓ Can you do bad things and still be a hero?
- ✓ Can we ever cancel out the bad we do in our lives?
- ✓ Should MLK's personal life affect how we see his political life?

Synoptic Question: Are the cases of Colston, Dr King and Caravaggio the same?

Nested Questions

- ✓ Should artists be treated the same as everyone else?
- ✓ Are some sins nothing to do with who we really are?
- ✓ Who are we really?
- ✓ If the statue of Colston is taken down, then should Caravaggio's paintings and the Martin Luther King memorial also be removed?

✓ When does a hero no longer become a hero?

✓ What is a hero?