

THE WALK

Ideas for using this resource for 6th Form RE, Citizenship, PSE and General Studies

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Teachers' overview

The Walk tells the story of William Wilberforce and his personal journey towards the abolition of slavery. As this year commemorates the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade, it is an appropriate time to reflect on the past and learn from the committed efforts of individuals such as Wilberforce.

Despite the fact that the Abolition of Slave Trade Act was passed in 1807, slavery is still a major issue today. At least 12.3 million people are victims of forced labour worldwide. Of these, 2.4 million are as a result of human trafficking. Wilberforce and his contemporaries were willing to stand up against the growth industry of slavery and were committed to seeing this trade in human beings end. The story of William Wilberforce and his fight against injustice is as relevant today as it ever has been.

Of course, the abolition of slavery was not down to the work of one individual. John Newton, Hannah Moore and Granville Sharp are mentioned in the DVD, and there were many others who campaigned for the abolition of the slave trade. One such influential figure was Olaudah Equiano. Equiano, a former slave himself, bought his freedom and then moved to England where he joined the campaign for the abolition of slavery. Through his autobiography and public speaking tours, Equiano helped to change public opinion on slavery. It is significant that the campaign to abolish slavery was the first campaign in Britain that crossed boundaries of class, race and gender. Many ordinary citizens who did not have the vote got behind the campaign.

This DVD acts as an introduction to the abolition of the slave trade and wider issues of slavery, with a specific focus on an individual who was willing to make a stand because he was prompted by conscience and faith.

This DVD can be used in a number of ways. The target audience includes:

- GCSE RE – issues of injustice and individuals who are motivated by their faith to make a stand against injustice.
- 6th Form General Studies/Citizenship classes – Issues in global citizenship.

It would also be a good resource for 6th Form PSE classes.

***The Walk* 6th Form Citizenship and General Studies**

There are many very good History textbooks and websites which outline the development of the transatlantic slave trade and they could be well used by teachers alongside this DVD.

Recommended reading:

Abolition! The Struggle to Abolish Slavery in the British Empire, Richard Reddie, Lion Hudson, 2007

William Wilberforce, Stephen Hopkins, Lion Hudson, 2007

William Wilberforce: The Life of the Great Anti-slave Trade Campaigner, William Hague, HarperPress, 2007

Discussion points for 6th Formers:

- **Morality** – start by discussing morality of slavery and exploitation of humans. Should human beings ever be viewed as a commodity?
- **Risk** – Would you be able to risk your reputation for a greater cause? Wilberforce committed his first 'crime against fashion' by visiting John Newton.
- **Inspiration** – What were the key factors that drove Wilberforce in his mission to abolish slavery?
- **Direction** – What are we walking towards/away from? Do we consider ourselves on a journey at all? If so, what is the destination?

These points could be included in a teacher led discussion in 6th Form RE, citizenship, general studies or PSE classes.

Pupils could use the DVD as a resource for project work on the slave trade – past and present. They could use the discussion questions as sub-headings for the project.

The big debate

It took Wilberforce 20 years of campaigning to realise his ambition to abolish the slave trade. Britain relied on its overseas wealth, and this was built up by the slave trade. It was nearly impossible for many to imagine life without the slave trade and the riches and resources that came with it.

Divide the class into two groups. Imagine that the year is 1807. Wilberforce and other abolitionists have already persuaded many of the need to put an end to the transatlantic slave trade. Many others, however, are still opposed. One group must research and argue for the continuation of the slave trade and one must convincingly campaign for its abolition. This task could take between 2 and 3 lessons, including viewing *The Walk* – 1 or 2 for watching the DVD, research and planning, and 1 for the debate. These resources will provide a useful starting point:

<http://www.biblesociety.org.uk/unchaining> – This resource gives snapshots into the struggles in Parliament and in Britain's colonies to end slavery and highlights the spiritual and moral arguments surrounding the trade. It was originally produced for churches but has information and discussion questions that can be adapted for schools. It is included

on *The Walk* DVD and can also be downloaded from this site.

<http://www.setallfree.net/> – An extensive information and networking website produced by Churches Together in England.

<http://www.stophetraffik.org/> – A contemporary campaign fighting for an end to people trafficking and forced labour. Although not directly relevant to the historical debate, this site contains useful information.

<http://www.understandingslavery.com> – An extensive website to support teachers and students at Key Stages 3 and 4 in exploring the history and legacies of the transatlantic slave trade. Produced by leading museums in Liverpool, London, Bristol and Hull.

<http://www.antislavery.org/> – The website of Anti-Slavery International, founded in 1839 to eliminate slavery and related abuses worldwide. Contains valuable information about the transatlantic slave trade and about campaigns against modern forms of slavery.

As *The Walk* makes very clear, William Wilberforce was greatly influenced by his religious convictions and his reading of the Bible. The following Bible passages were especially powerful in shaping his thoughts:

- Matthew 7.12
- Genesis 1.26–27
- Acts 10.34
- Luke 10.27

Look up these verses and think about how Wilberforce may have been influenced by them.