

Object Handling Guidelines

All the items in the handling collection are unique, and although they may not be highly valuable in monetary terms, we want as many people as possible to enjoy and interact with the objects both now and in the future.

Please make sure the guidelines below are followed, to minimise wear and tear and ensure that learners understand why there are rules given the age, fragility, and difficulty in replacing the items. Alternatively, classes may find it helpful to come up with their own rules for handling.

- All participants should thoroughly wash and dry their hands before handling any of the objects. Any cuts and grazes on hands should be dressed and covered.
- One person should handle one object at any given time (unless passing the object to someone else).
- Always pick up objects with two (dry) hands.
- Always pass an object carefully, using both hands, while both parties are seated (or standing over a table).
- Paper-based objects should be handled with care. Please ensure they are not snatched, crumpled, or folded.
- For safety reasons, please do not leave the objects with unsupervised children.
- All items should be stored securely; they should not be separated for use elsewhere or used as part of a display.

Item Information

Each item contained in this loan box is a replica of an item from the 'Slavery & the Bank' exhibition that was on display in the Bank of England Museum in London between 2022 and 2024. We have selected five items that have links to either the slave trade, the Bank of England, or both. We have provided information about each item to provide context and support learning activities.

Some topics, actions and words used to describe and explain the context of the items may be upsetting and should be considered when planning and delivering activities.

Sugar Caster



Sugar was one of main crops farmed on plantations and became known as a 'cash crop' due to its profitability. As demand for sugar increased, demand for enslaved people to work on the plantations that produced it in the Caribbean and North America also increased.

The City of London was, and is, a centre for finance and commerce. As well as being of financial importance to the City, bringing great wealth to those who traded it, sugar itself was enjoyed by those working in the City and the number of coffee houses grew. In the late 1700s people protested the unfair treatment of enslaved people by refusing to use sugar.

Amelia Newsham Token, 1795



The coin features an image of an enslaved person, Amelia Newsham. Newsham was an enslaved albino woman who travelled from Jamaica to London and was sold to John Burnett. Burnett was the owner of a bird and beast shop and along with his animals, Newsham was paraded in front of the public for the cost of 1 shilling. In the 1700s, it was common for people with unusual physical characteristics to be treated, and even exhibited, as a curiosity, which sounds shocking to us today.

Later in her life, believing herself freed after being baptised, she left Burnett. She continued to tour the country as a 'curiosity' but did so under her own terms. Souvenir coins were struck with the likeness of Newsham and sold at fairs like Bartholomew Fair, in Smithfield, London, where she exhibited herself.

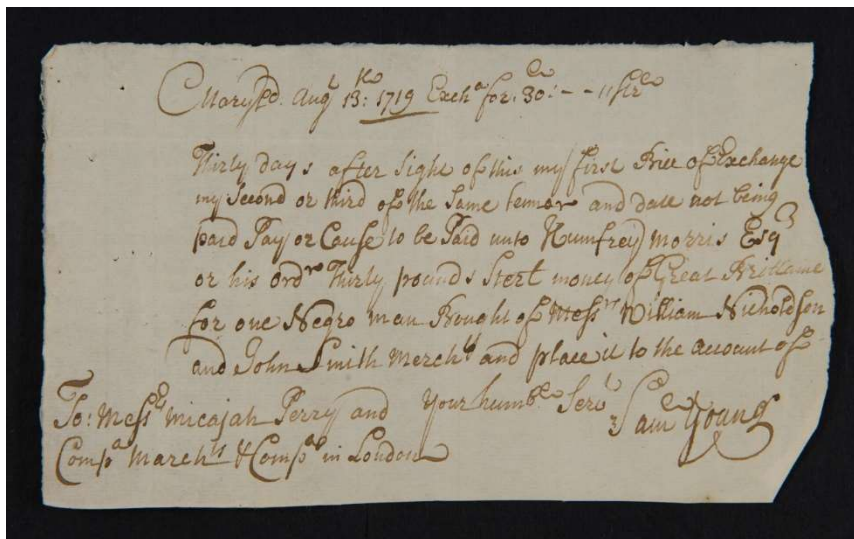
Bank of England Museum

Guinea Coin, 1694



The golden Guinea coin is named after the West African Guinea coast, which was the centre of the English slave trade. It is made from African gold, which was transported to London by the Royal African Company. The coin has an elephant and castle symbol under the monarch's portrait. This is the mark of the Royal African Company who, as well as trading in gold, were heavily involved in the transatlantic slave trade. They transported human lives in exchange for goods. Along with the name and material of this coin, the elephant and castle symbol show how traces of the slave trade circulated into British daily life.

Bill of Exchange, 1719



This bill of exchange (a kind of receipt) owned by the Bank shows that a slave trader paid £30 for an enslaved black man in 1719. The enslaved man's name is not known, but the trader's name is. On 13 August 1719, the Maryland slave-owner Samuel Young drew a bill of exchange worth £30 to pay for 'one Negro man' purchased from the slave trader Humphry Morrice, who was also a Director at the Bank of England. This bill of exchange was discovered at the Bank of England and still survives in the Bank's archive. This highlights the human commodification (the process of humans becoming a product, or a commodity, in a financial transaction) that was central to the transatlantic slave trade.

The View of the Port of Liverpool by Richard Reeve, c.1836



The print shows rough waters and several large ships coming into the port. While London and Bristol were initially Britain's key slave-trading ports, Liverpool began to dominate the trade by 1740 and continued to do so until it was abolished in 1807. There were 5300 voyages from Liverpool to Africa between 1695 and 1807, compared to 3100 from London and 2200 from Bristol. Involvement in slavery and the slave trade made people very rich. This income was often invested by these individuals into their local areas. In Liverpool, some of the wealth went into the Liverpool and Manchester Railway and the Bluecoat Chambers, a charity school built in 1717.

Portrait of George Harnage, 1803



George Harnage was a slave owner and Director of the Bank of England from 1810–21. Harnage's father, John Lucie Blackman, was a West India merchant and signed the petition of West India planters and merchants to George III in 1783. He owned Boarded Hall sugar plantation in St George, Barbados.

George Harnage inherited Boarded Hall plantation from his father, becoming owner from 1803–32. Records from the plantation show the cost of a cage to imprison an enslaved man, as well as the cost of executing another enslaved man accused of robbery. The documents trace the violence that underpinned plantation slavery, which is often distanced from the history of slave-owners themselves. Harnage faced bankruptcy in 1823 and part of the compensation for the 177 people enslaved at Boarded Hall after abolition was awarded to his youngest son, Edward. When owning enslaved people was made illegal, his son was given money to compensate for the 177 enslaved people the Harnage business lost.