

# Key dates of the Slave Trade



1562

1863

# 1562

**1562** The slave trade unofficially begins.

**1619** Slave trade officially begins. First ship full of Africans bought as slaves arrives in Virginia.

**1699** Eight in every 10 people living in the Caribbean are African slaves.

**1730** Britain is the biggest slave trading country. From 1690 to 1807, 2.8 million slaves were moved.

**1737** Bristol is the biggest slave port in England. There are 37 journeys made every year.

Elizabeth I



James VI



Charles II



William III



George I



George II

# 1863

# 1562

**1760** First and biggest protest against the slave trade. A slave called Tacky led a protest against the treatment of slaves on sugar plantations. Hundreds of slaves attacked the plantations setting crops and sugar alight. In the end Tacky was captured and beheaded.

**1787** Group called **Abolition of the Slave trade** formed. This group did all it could to try and put an end to the slave trade.

**1788** A law comes into place restricting the number of slaves on a ship.

**1792** The British Government agrees in principle that slave trade should end.

**1807** The end of the slave trade. Anyone found transporting slaves was fined £100 - a lot of money at the time - for every slave. However the slave trade continued until **1833**

**1863** Emancipation Proclamation – Abraham Lincoln said that all slaves should be freed forever

## George III



## American Revolution 1783



## Battle of Waterloo 1815

## William IV



# 1863



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Eventually, despite the incredible profits of the Slave Trade, many people started to protest. Britain is to be rightly proud as the first country to make slavery illegal.

Is this enough? Should there be compensation?



# Key abolitionists:

You're about to meet 4 key abolitionists who fought for the abolition of Slavery in the UK.

Your job will be to summarise the information about them and pick out their key action.

It is important to be concise in your summaries, these should include dates.

You'll have to answer some questions about each man too...

**Key abolitionists:** As chairman of the Committee to Abolish the Slave Trade, Sharp was the oldest and most experienced of the members. He had spoken out against slavery long before it was a popular cause. He worked closely with Wilberforce and Clarkson and personally lobbied the Prime Minister, William Pitt and the Leader of the Opposition, Charles Fox. He came from a wealthy and deeply religious Yorkshire family. He was an extraordinarily active pamphleteer on slavery as well as a whole range of other topics. He also developed a reputation for taking up in court the cases of fugitive slaves who had been brought to London from the West Indies and wanted their freedom. He won a historic ruling in the James Somerset case of 1771, which forbade owners with black servants in Britain from deporting them back to slavery in the West Indies.

**Key abolitionists:** Equiano was one of the most prominent black campaigners in the anti-slavery campaign. He was an ex-slave who, by the 1780s, lived as a free man in London. He is mostly remembered for his 1789 autobiography. It tells of his kidnapping in Nigeria, his being sold into slavery, his journey to the West Indies, his life as a slave and his struggle to buy his freedom. Between 1789 and 1794, there were nine editions of the book and it was translated into many languages. Although not the first account of slavery from an African point of view, his book became the most popular and widely read.

**Key abolitionists:** Thomas Clarkson was one of the most prominent eighteenth century anti-slavery campaigners. Described by one contemporary as a 'natural seaman-enthusiast', he was an Anglican seaman who had had a passionate interest in the abolition of the slave trade since his time at Cambridge University. As a student he wrote a prize-winning essay on slavery, which was later published and brought him into contact with other anti-slavery campaigners like Granville Sharp. In 1781, he helped form the first Abolitionist Committee. He was a crucial person in the anti-slavery campaign because of his tireless energy, his hatred of injustice and his persuasiveness in getting addresses on board. However, more concerned than campaigners like William Wilberforce thought Clarkson was a hot head. He travelled hundreds of miles to interview people involved in the slave trade. He talked to ship's captains and crew, doctors, sea men, merchants and traders for evidence. This was sometimes at great personal risk but he was able to persuade some of them to be witnesses. He also collected equipment and funds on his travels. He wrote 'The History, Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament in 1807 chronicling what he saw as his role in the campaign.

**Key abolitionists:** William Wilberforce was the main figurehead in Parliament for the abolitionist campaign. He was born in Wotton-under-wood into a wealthy family of most merchants and represented the town as MP. He was recruited by Thomas Clarkson, who recognised that, in order to get Parliament to change the law, the anti-slavery cause needed a brilliant advocate inside Parliament itself. Wilberforce was well suited to this role. He was a great orator, morally well connected, known for his integrity and was particularly keen to improve society, especially from 1789 after his conversion to evangelical Christianity. He made his first speech in Parliament against slavery in 1789 and made a great impression. However, a mixture of external events (including the slave rebellion in Haiti in 1791, which heightened public attention) and poor tactics prevented his abolition bill being passed in the House of Commons in 1791. A similar bill proposed in April 1792 was opposed by 185 only after it was amended and conceded to a 'gradual' abolition of the slave trade. During the period of 1792-1807 when William Wilberforce was at sea with France, support for the abolitionist campaign collapsed. Wilberforce, therefore, pursued other routes of reform but retained the belief that one day slavery would be abolished. In 1807, after a long, emotional debate, the abolition Act was finally passed.

**Key abolitionists:** Olaudah Equiano was one of the most prominent black campaigners in the anti-slavery campaign. He was an ex-slave who, by the 1780s, lived as a free man in London. He is mostly remembered for his 1789 autobiography. It tells of his kidnapping in Nigeria, his being sold into slavery, his journey to the West Indies, his life as a slave and his struggle to buy his freedom. Between 1789 and 1794, there were nine editions of the book and it was translated into many languages. Although not the first account of slavery from an African point of view, his book became the most popular and widely read.

**Key abolitionists:** Granville Sharp was the oldest and most experienced of the members of the Committee to Abolish the Slave Trade. He had spoken out against slavery long before it was a popular cause. He worked closely with Wilberforce and Clarkson and personally lobbied the Prime Minister, William Pitt and the Leader of the Opposition, Charles Fox. He came from a wealthy and deeply religious Yorkshire family. He was an extraordinarily active pamphleteer on slavery as well as a whole range of other topics. He also developed a reputation for taking up in court the cases of fugitive slaves who had been brought to London from the West Indies and wanted their freedom. He won a historic ruling in the James Somerset case of 1771, which forbade owners with black servants in Britain from deporting them back to slavery in the West Indies.

**Questions:**

- How did Sharp try to help these people?
- What was the famous case going to court and what significant achievement did Sharp have in 1771?
- How did Clarkson get involved in the Anti Slavery movement?
- How did Clarkson help the Abolition movement?
- What was Equiano's story?
- What was Equiano's significance in our knowledge of the Slave Trade?
- What was Wilberforce's job and how did this and his 'compassionate' help?
- What reasons were there for the Abolition Act NOT being passed?

## Key abolitionists:



**Granville Sharp**  
**(1735 - 1813)**

As chairman of the Committee to Abolish the Slave Trade, Sharp was the oldest and most experienced of the members. He had spoken out against slavery long before it was a popular cause. He worked closely with Wilberforce and Clarkson and personally put pressure on the Prime Minister

He came from a wealthy and deeply religious Yorkshire family. He wrote lots of leaflets against slavery. He fought in court for the safety of fugitive slaves in Britain.

He won a historic court case 1771, which forbade owners with black servants in Britain from deporting them back to slavery in the West Indies.

How did Sharp try to influence key people?

What was he famous for doing in court and what significant achievement did Sharp have in 1771?

## Key abolitionists:



**Olaudah Equiano**  
(1745 - 1797)

Olaudah Equiano was one of the most famous black campaigners in the anti-slavery campaign. He was an ex-slave who, by the 1780s, lived as a free man in London.

He is mostly remembered for his 1789 autobiography. It tells of his kidnap in Nigeria, his being sold into slavery, his journey to the West Indies, his life as a slave and his struggle to buy his freedom. Although not the first account of slavery from an African point of view, his book became the most popular and widely read.

What did Equiano do in 1789 that made him famous?

Describe Equiano's story

What was Equiano's importance in our knowledge of the Slave Trade?





GUSTAVUS VASSA.

*Published by Isaac Knapp, 25 Cornhill.*

THE LIFE  
OF  
OLAUDAH EQUIANO,  
OR  
GUSTAVUS VASSA,  
THE AFRICAN.

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

*"Behold, God is my salvation: I will trust, and not be afraid, for the Lord  
Jehovah is my strength and my God: he also is become my salvation."  
"And in that day shall ye say, Praise the Lord, call upon his name, declare  
his doings among the people."—Isaiah xiv. 2, 4.*

TWO VOLUMES IN ONE.

BOSTON:  
PUBLISHED BY ISAAC KNAPP,  
25 CORNHILL.  
1837.

## Key abolitionists:



**Thomas Clarkson  
(1760 - 1846)**

Thomas Clarkson was one of the most famous eighteenth-century anti-slavery campaigners. He was a churchman who had had a passionate interest in the abolition of the slave trade since his time at Cambridge University.

In 1787, he helped form the first Abolitionist Committee. He was a crucial person to the anti-slavery campaign because of his hardwork, his hatred of injustice and skills of persuasion for witnesses. He was also a bit of a 'hot head'.

He travelled hundreds of miles to interview people involved in the slave trade. He talked to ships' captains and crew, doctors, ex-seamen, merchants and traders for evidence. This was sometimes at great personal risk but he was able to persuade some of them to be witnesses. He also collected equipment found on slave ships.

A school in Wisbech is named after him in his memory.

Why did Clarkson get involved in the Anti Slavery movement?

How did Clarkson help the Abolition movement?



## Key abolitionists:



**William Wilberforce  
(1759 - 1833)**



William Wilberforce was an MP in Parliament and was wealthy. He was recruited by Thomas Clarkson, because he had connections with other powerful MPs and the Prime Minister.

He made his first speech in Parliament against slavery in 1789 and made a great impression. However, a mixture of external events (including the slave rebellion in Haiti in 1791 and war with France) and poor tactics prevented his abolition law being passed in the House of Commons in 1791.

A similar law put forward in April 1792 was passed by MPs only after it was amended and allowed a 'gradual' abolition of the slave trade.

During the period of 1792-1805 when England was at war with France, support for the abolitionist campaign collapsed. In 1807, after a long, emotional debate, the Abolition Act was finally passed.

What was Wilberforce's job and how did this and his "connections" help?

What reasons were there for the Abolition Act NOT being passed until 1807?

What was the main condition for the Abolition Act being passed