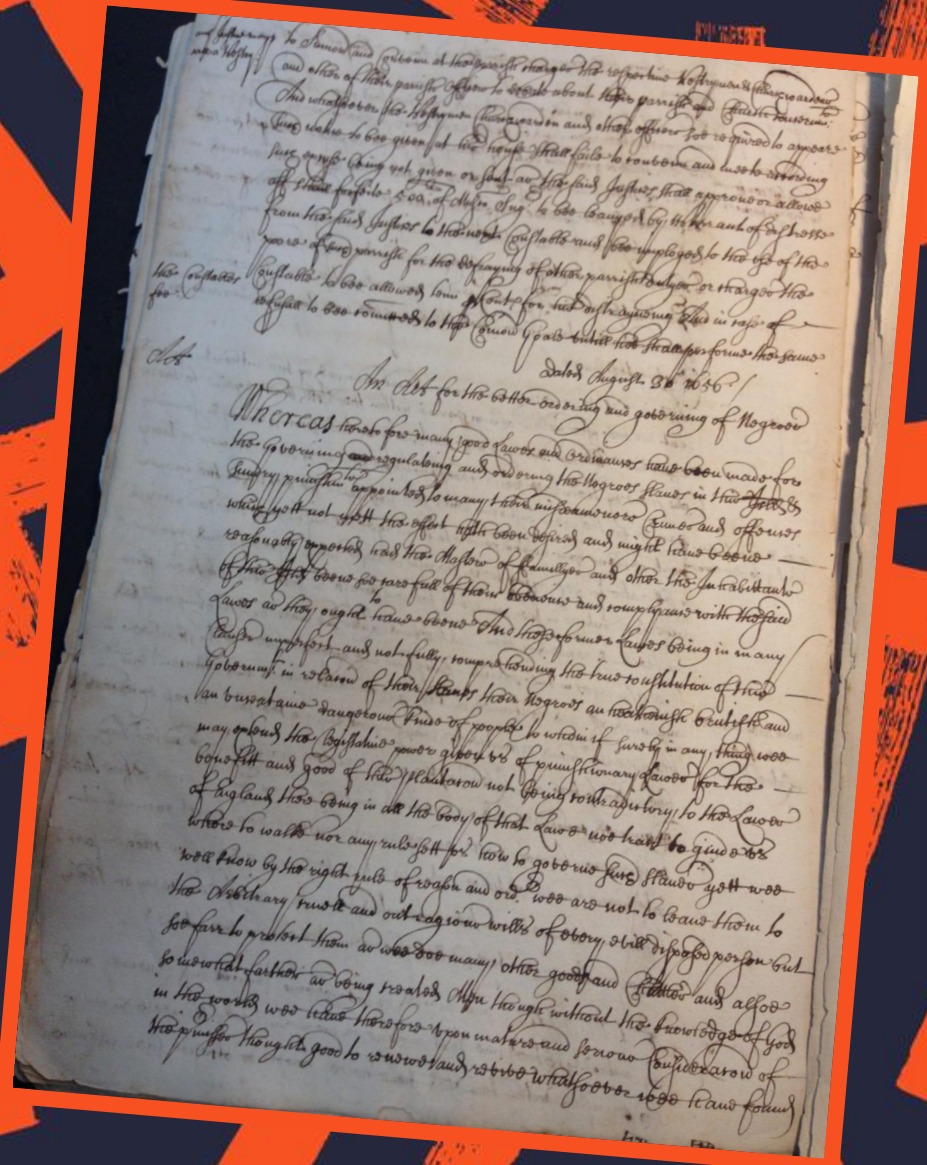
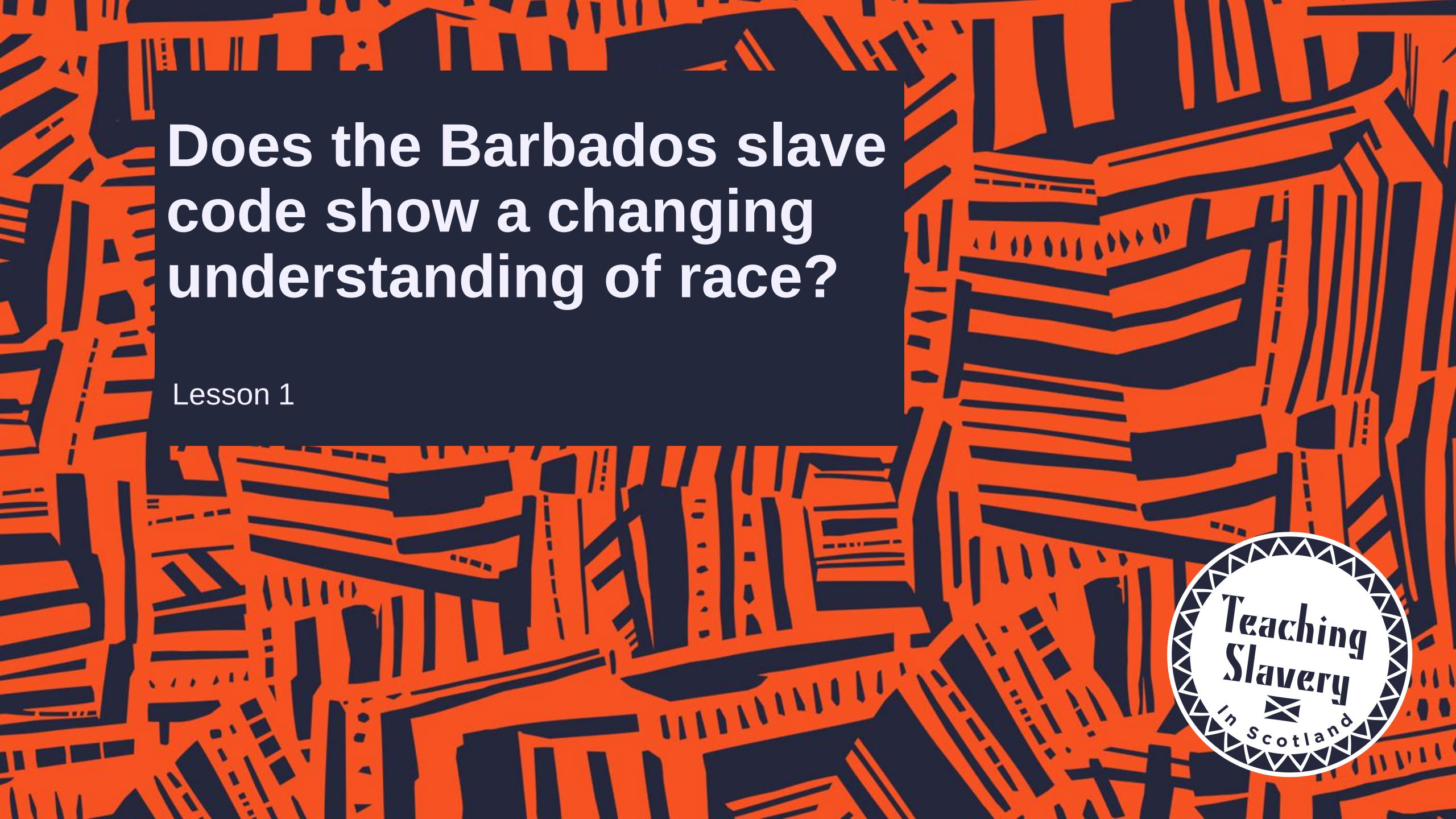
How did British understandings of race change between 1600 and 1807?



Does the Barbados slave code show a changing understanding of race?

Lesson 1



Learning Intentions

To investigate the shift in understanding of race because of the Barbados Slave Code.

Success Criteria

- I can describe the existing views about black people prior to the Transatlantic Slave Trade.
- I can analyse the Barbados Slave Code of 1661.
- I can explain shift in views about black people shown in the Barbados Slave Code.

Starter Task

What does the term **‘race’** mean to you?

What **images** or **events** does it make you think of?

Does the theme of race **link** to any other **learning** you’ve been a part of in school?

Giving context to our studies

Before you begin to study the Transatlantic Slave Trade, it is important to first understand the full significance of racial beliefs during this time period.

Race is, and has always been, a changing concept which is shaped by the political issues and context of the time.

Task

Carousel

You will be given different fact files about attitudes and beliefs surround race that had existed by the 1600s. You will have **3 minutes** at each station.

You should arrange relevant knowledge under the following headings:

- Evidence that supports that black people had **positive experiences** before the establishment of the Barbados Slave Code

- Evidence that supports that black people had **negative experiences** before the establishment of the Barbados Slave Code

Summary - What does our evidence show?

Prior to around the 1650s, there were varied interpretations of race as well as varied beliefs and understandings of African people.

However, **between the 1650s-1800s** there is a **massive shift** in **understandings** and **beliefs** around race and different ‘groups’ of people.

The Enlightenment Era

This was a movement in the 17th and 18th Century which shifted philosophical and intellectual understandings of the world.

Many scientific discoveries which helped us better understand the universe around us were found in this time, such as the first sighting of the planet Uranus (William Herschel), or that water was made of hydrogen and oxygen (Antoine Lavoisier).

In the pursuit of ‘science’, many individuals attempted to categorise the human species too.

Francois Bernier

In 1684, the French doctor published a paper which split humans into four groups based on skin colour. From this, qualities and characteristics were then linked to these by other scientists. His ‘research’ was the basis of scientific racism.

There was no scientific basis for these claims. In fact, our understanding of race is this - it’s not a scientific thing that exists.

The National Human Genome Research Institute has found that –

“All human beings are **99.9 percent identical** in their genetic makeup.”

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Analysing the Barbados Slave Code

Before we start this activity, it is important to acknowledge the language that is used.

1. It uses old terminology for people of African descent, that comes from the Spanish word for ‘black’.

- It is not a word that should be used by us now, due to it being used as a derogatory name for black people.
  Instead, if you see this word, you can change it in your head to ‘black people’, ‘people of African descent’, etc.

2. It uses the term ‘slave’ which means property.

- Scholars now use ‘**enslaved people**’ - as it reminds us that, most importantly, these were human beings who were enslaved against their will and despite their resistance.

Analysing the Barbados Slave Code

Task

1. Read the Barbados Slave Code of 1661 as a class

You all will now answer the questions around the source on your worksheet as part of a team effort:

1. In groups of four, decide what question each of you will answer. You will have a set time to then complete this part of the source analysis.
2. Be prepared to then feedback what you've learned to the rest of your team.

Plenary

Based on today's learning and activities, attempt to answer our enquiry question:

Does the Barbados slave code show a changing understanding of race?

Writing frame:
The Barbados Slave Code does/does not show a changing understanding of race.

This is because…

This is also because…

Teaching
Slavery
in Scotland