

# Planning Enquiries

Joe Smith



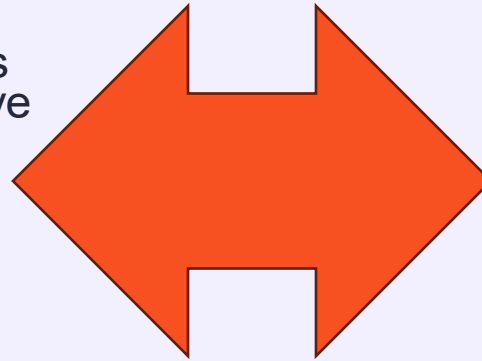
# Designing Learning

## Project Principles

- African societies were complex and diverse
- Enslaved people's resistance to and strategies for surviving enslavement were complex and diverse.
- Primary sources and case studies allow us to challenge stereotypes of the Atlantic slave system.
- Non-written sources, and reading sources against the grain, are crucial in uncovering marginalised perspectives.
- Atlantic slavery strongly influenced economies, societies, cultural and racial formations in Europe, including Scotland.
- Societies dominated by slavery were integrated into the development of the modern world and demonstrate many characteristics we think of as 'modern'.

## Pedagogical Principles

- Since history only comes into being when we ask questions, children must be answering questions in their lessons
- The question, not activities or resources, drives learning.
- Questions must force children to be cognitively active and to make a judgment about the



JUDGMENT, not opinion!



# Pedagogical Principles

# What is an enquiry question?

- It is a question that you as the teacher write.
- It is then used as a basis for planning and as a thread for the lessons.
- It is carefully sculpted and usually goes through 10-15 versions!
- It is not 'something you want the pupils to find out'.
- It is not (usually) a question that the pupils ask. They don't know what they don't know, so they tend to be very bad at this!

# Why are Enquiry Questions non-negotiable when planning history?

- Enquiry questions are essential because of two facts inherent in the study of history as a discipline:
  - It is limitless
  - We can never be *certain* about our knowledge. This does not mean that all accounts are equally valid.
- These two facts mean that historians have to do two things that only enquiry questions can do
  - Divide up history in a way that is not *entirely* arbitrary.
  - Have clarity about what specific claim we are making and how we have reached that conclusion from evidence.



# Enquiry questions and the limitless past

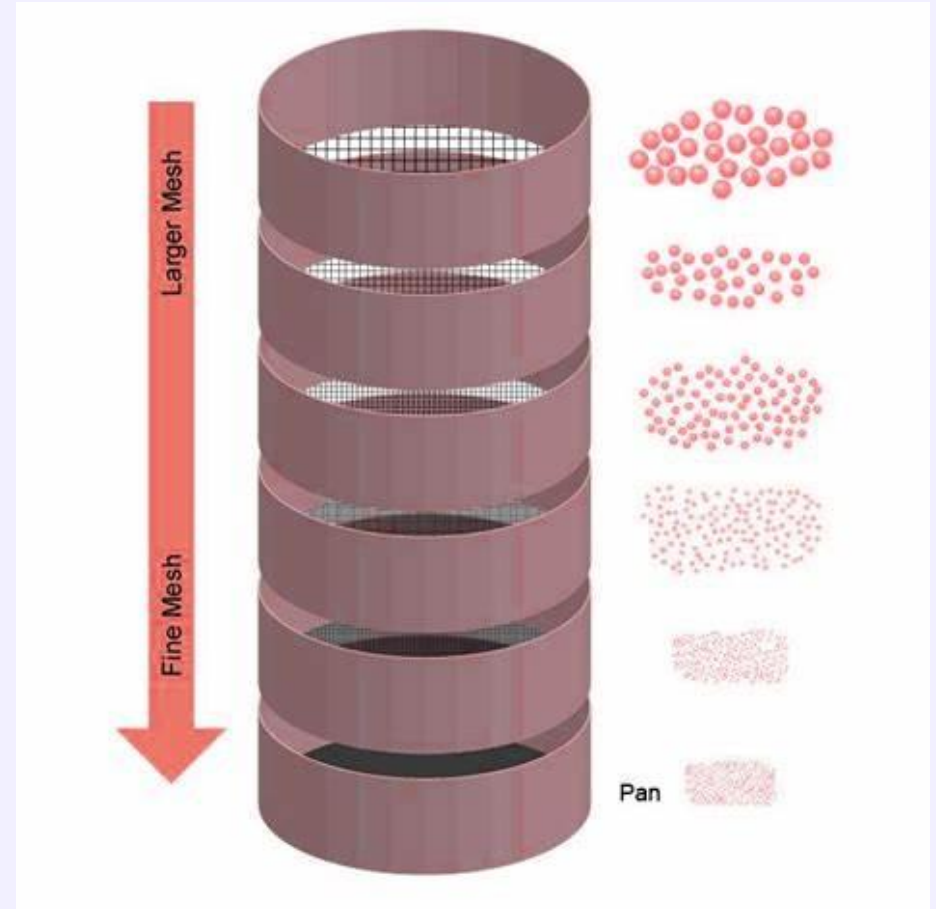
# The problem of the limitless past

- We need to be clear on what knowledge is important or relevant so that we can share this with learners.
- The knowledge that is 'important' or 'relevant' differs depending on what we're studying. What is important or relevant in one context, is not in another.
- Without an enquiry question, how do we know what knowledge is 'important' or 'relevant'. These concepts only make sense in relation to a question.



# What do actually want the pupils to be able to show?

- What happened in the transatlantic slave trade?
- What happened on plantations during the Caribbean enslavement?
- How did enslaved people feel towards their enslavement?
- How did enslaved people resist?
- How did enslaved women resist?
- How did enslaved women in Jamaica resist?
- How conscious were Jamaican women of their resistance?





# Pause for discussion

- To what extent does your school already use enquiry questions in devising curricula?
  - Can you see the benefits?
  - Any pitfalls/ drawbacks
- How might this support/ hinder cross curricular learning/ planning of social subjects?



# Enquiry questions and absence of certainty

# The Absence of Certainty

- Historical knowledge is always contingent, subject to re-evaluation. There can never be a 'full' or 'unbiased' account.
- But this does not mean that 'any old account. So how do we help children to square this circle?
- Two approaches
  - Just pretend the problem doesn't exist. Decide pupils don't need/ can't cope with this complexity. Fall back on 'This is true because I said so' or 'the evidence tells us' (which is the same thing!)
  - Embrace the lack of certainty – build this into your planning! In other words, enquiry questions.

# Will any old story do?

- There is a worry that discussing the contingency of historical knowledge will make children less trustful of history. Better, say these people, to just assert that it is 'better' (somehow) than other accounts.
- **This does not work.**
- If you do not explicitly say WHY a historical account is better than other accounts, then children have no reason to believe it is!
- **History is a more reliable guide to the past precisely because it admits that its accounts are partial and contingent** (Popperian Falsification). Myth/ dogma / ideology doesn't do this.

- *'The ability to recall accounts without any understanding of the problems involved in constructing them or the criteria in evaluating them has nothing historical about it. Without an understanding of what makes an account historical, there is nothing to distinguish it from the ability to recite sagas, legends, myths or poems' (Lee, 1991, pp. 48-49).*
- *"to subscribe to the populist and mythic constructions of the past is to remain trapped in the codes and cultures of the street gang, to invoke persuasive and partial histories that reinforce simple truths' (Shemilt, 2000)*

# What does this mean for planning?

- Centre the question. Here is what we are trying to reach a conclusion about. We are not going beyond this to make broader claims!
- The question as a thread. Revisit it throughout the lesson. Have it in the corner of every slide, if you want.
- Always ask – how does this new information improve our answer to the question?
- Encourage judgement/ evaluation – If the question is well-framed, then some legitimate disagreement is possible.



# Putting it together

- Because the past is limitless, we need to place limits on it. Enquiry Questions do this.
- Because the past is contested, we need to make space for contestation. Enquiry Questions do this.
- Because we know that 'not any account will do', we need children to understand the historical method and how its claims are more robust than some others. Enquiry Questions do this.



**And there's more**

# Three further reasons for Enquiry

## Enquires are rigorous

Enquiries reflect the historical method – the process of asking questions of the past and using sources from the past to produce accounts of the past.

If pupils do this in S1/ S2, they get a taste for it (and get better at it).

## Enquires are fun

Puzzles are inherently motivating!

‘Thinking is problem based... a series of thoughts that originate from some confusion, perplexity or doubt. It is not spontaneous, there is something specific which occasions and evokes it.’ (Dewey 1910)

## Enquires reflect democracy

From the start of the first lesson, you say to pupils –

‘I care what you think.  
You will make a judgement and that judgement will be heard, but expect to be challenged on it!’



**So any old story won't do?  
Will any old question do?**



# Pedagogical Principles

# Devising an enquiry question

- Choosing and shaping an enquiry question is hard intellectual work.
- There is a limitless amount of things you could ask about the past from: 'what was the name of Napolon's pets' to 'why did World War One break out.'
- Some questions are better than others? But how can we tell which is which? Two reasons...
  - They link to a dimension of historical thinking
  - They are sufficiently open to allow legitimate evaluation/ debate?



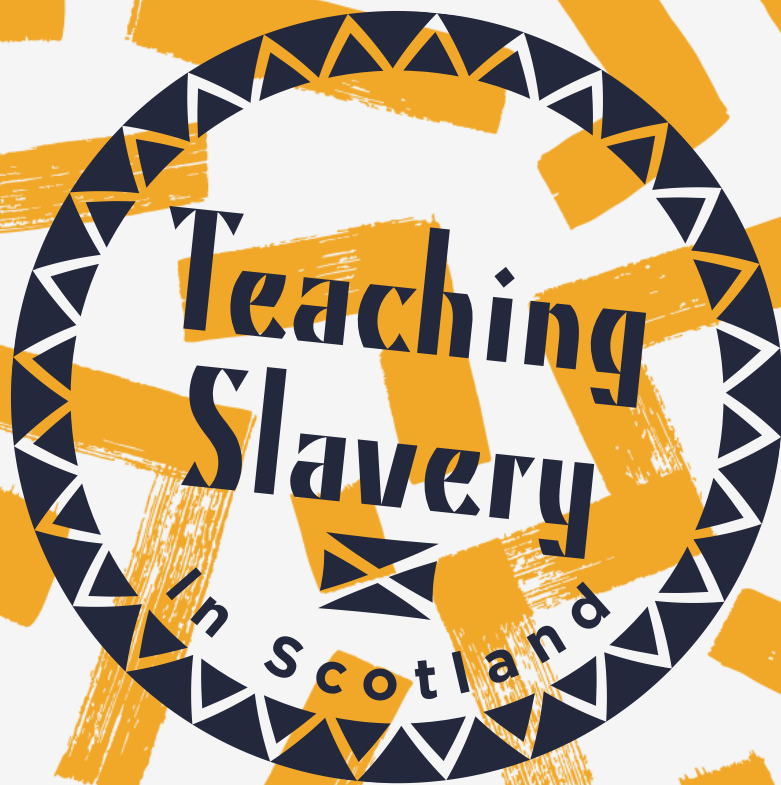
# Activity - Thinking Concepts

- Historical thinking involves a range of interlinked thinking processes. When we think about a period in generality, we flip between these without noticing.
- When we are planning an enquiry, we need to be much more focused on what it is we are asking pupils to do.
- There are many taxonomies for identifying these processes, the following activity uses those favoured by the UK Historical Association.
- Match the concept, with its definition, with an example of an EQ.

<b>Causation</b>	That single events have multiple interrelated causes.	Why was British involvement in the TAST abolished in 1807?
<b>Diversity</b>	That difference WITHIN SOCIETIES is historically normal. E.g. society has always contained a mix of class, gender, sexuality, religion, ethnicities.	Did enslaved people from different African heritages experience enslavement differently?
<b>Evidence</b>	That accounts of the past are constructed from relics and records	What can we learn about enslavement in the UK from advertisements for 'runaway slaves'?
<b>Change and Continuity</b>	That societies undergo change over time. The pace and type of change varies	Was the transatlantic trade in enslaved people the same thing in 1800 that it had been in 1650?
<b>Significance</b>	'Importance' does not inhere in an event. People decide what they think is important and why	Why should we remember the Haitian revolution?
<b>Interpretations / Accounts</b>	That the past is presented in ways which may not be accurate, but which reflect the intentions and attitudes of the people who produced them.	What can 'Roots' tell us about Black consciousness in the USA of the 1960s?

# Using the concepts

- In your small groups, discuss the sessions you attended today. Which Historical Thinking Concepts were they speaking to?
- Which historical thinking concepts might you focus on in your planning?





The background is a solid red color with a collage of various swastika symbols in different sizes and orientations. Overlaid on this are four distinct explosion images: a bright yellow and orange starburst in the top left, a large fireball in the center, a white and grey mushroom cloud in the bottom left, and a large fireball in the bottom right.

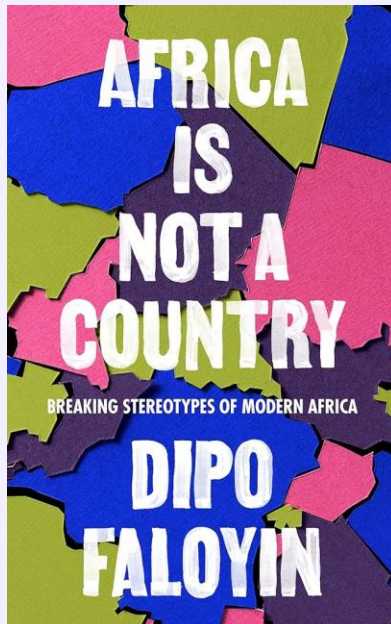
# EXPLODING MYTHS enquiry

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# Focus on Mali

Whilst pushing the point  
*'Africa is not a country'*

The infographic features a portrait of Mansa Musa on the left, wearing a gold crown and a white turban. To the right of the portrait is a green box with the title 'Exploding myths that feed the single story'. Below this, a red circular stamp with the word 'DEBUNKED!' is shown. The text 'Provide evidence to bust each myth:' is followed by a definition of strong evidence. Two myths are listed and debunked: 'Myth 1: Africans had no History prior to contact with Europeans - exploded!' and 'Myth 2: - : 'Africa lacked wealth' - exploded! by study of Mansa Musa'. A large blue number '1' and a smaller blue number '2' are shown in a stylized font at the bottom right.

Exploding myths that feed  
'the single story'

• MYTH •  
**DEBUNKED!**  
• MYTH •

Provide evidence to bust each myth:

Strong evidence would include facts such as a date, a name or a number (statistic)

Myth 1: Africans had no History prior to contact with Europeans - exploded!

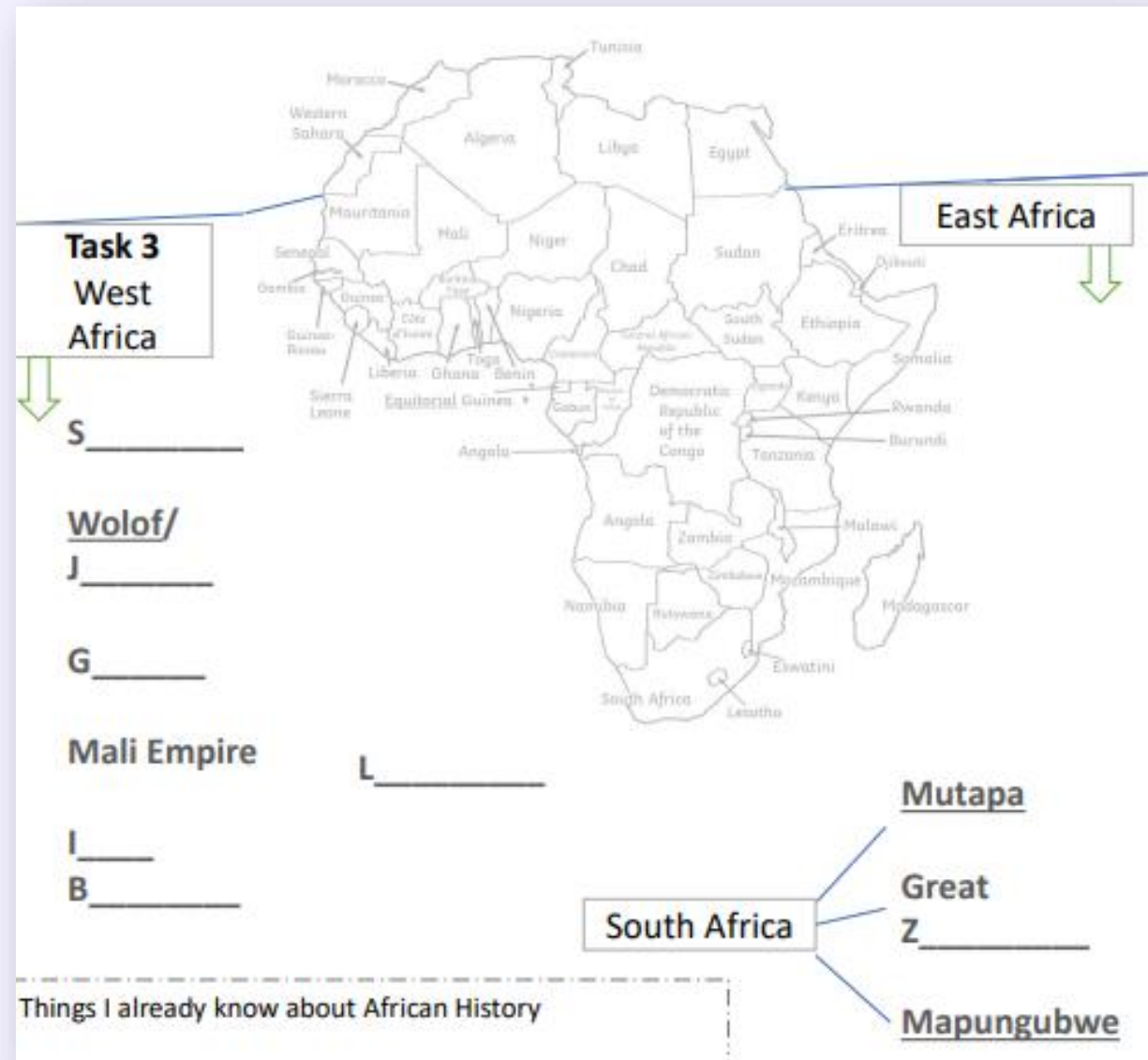
Myth 2: - : 'Africa lacked wealth' - exploded! by study of Mansa Musa

1  
2



# Meanwhile Elsewhere

## Home Study





## "The danger of the Single Story"



This single story of Africa ultimately comes, I think, from Western literature.

Now, here is a quote from the writing of a London merchant called John Lok, who sailed to west Africa in 1561 and kept a fascinating account of his voyage.

After referring to the black Africans as "beasts who have no houses," he writes, "They are also people without heads, having their mouth and eyes in their breasts."

[https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_ngozi\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story)





Now, I've laughed every time I've read this. And one must admire the imagination of John Lok. His writing represents the beginning of a tradition of telling African stories in the West: A tradition of Sub-Saharan Africa as a place of negatives, of difference, of darkness, of people who, in the words of the wonderful poet Rudyard Kipling, are "half devil, half child."



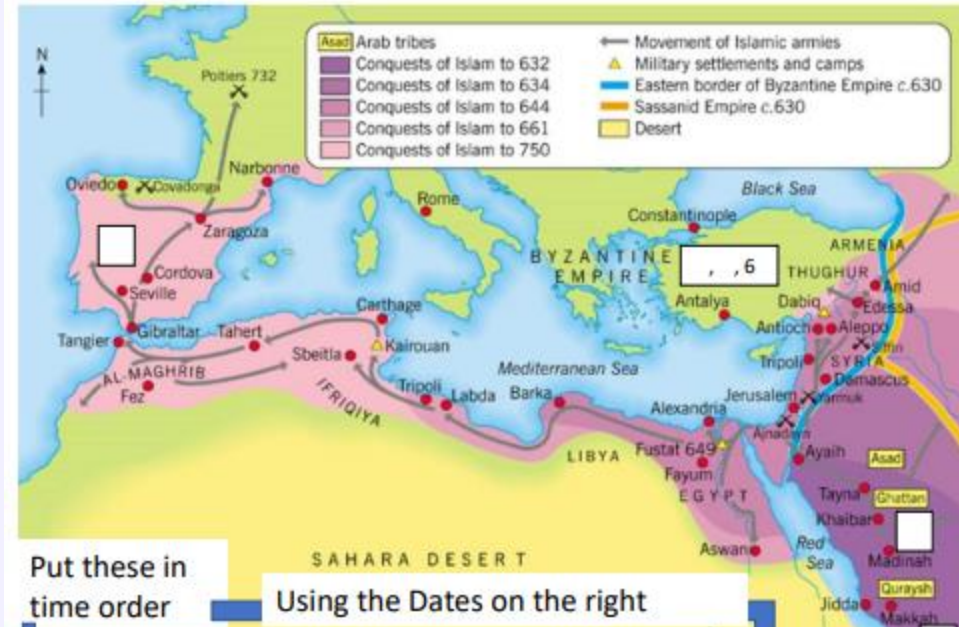


## Lesson 5

## Islam in Africa

Fill in the gaps in the following sentences:

Islam is one of the world's most important \_\_\_\_\_. Followers of Islam are called \_\_\_\_\_. Islam was started in Arabia by the Prophet \_\_\_\_\_. The first Muslims were \_\_\_\_\_. They conquered other countries so that large parts of the \_\_\_\_\_ came under Arab and Muslim control.



Put these in time order

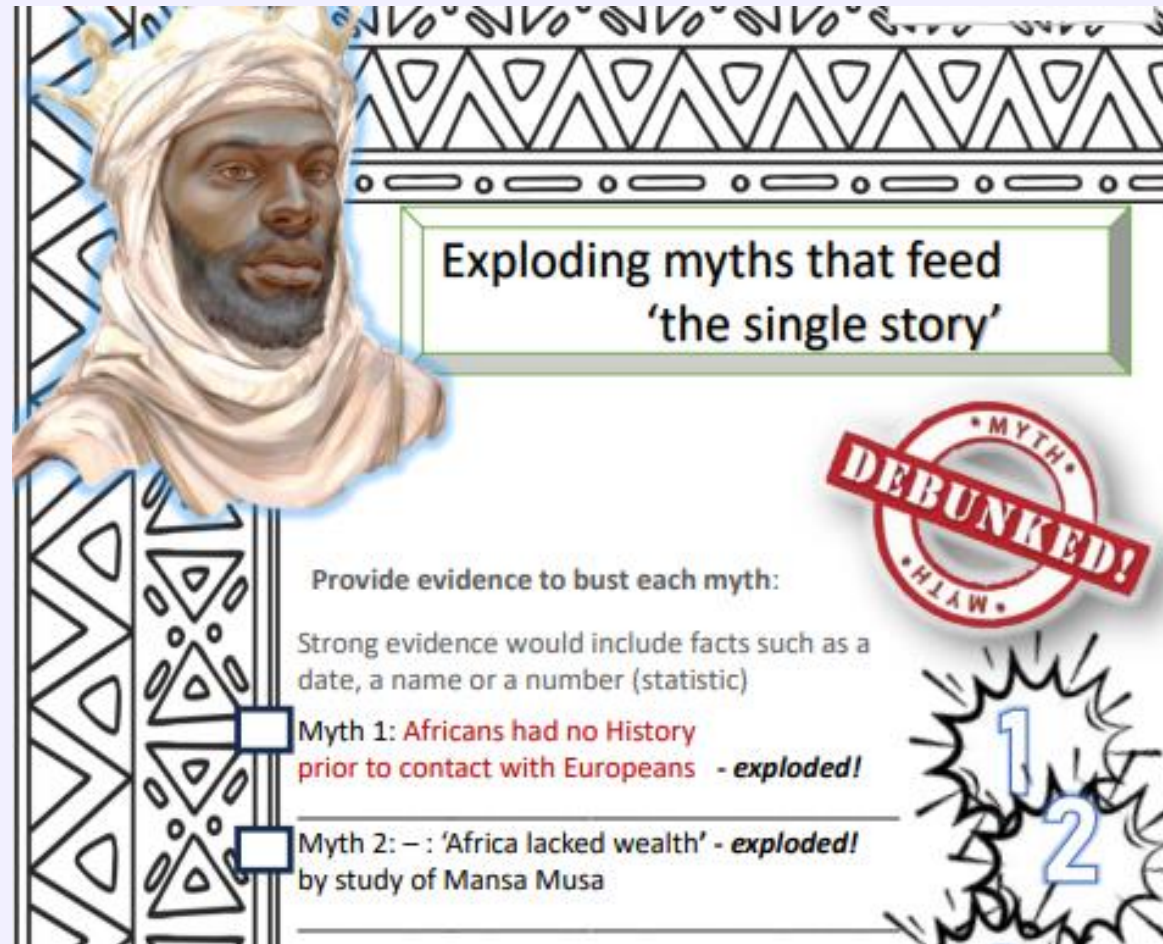
Using the Dates on the right

Number	Event	Date
	The Turkish Empire completely split up	1918
1	The Prophet Muhammad was born	570
	Today there are over 100 million Muslims	present
	The Turkish Empire started to break up	around 1700
	The Prophet Muhammad died	632



# Over-arching Enquiry

Sense of Purpose



Exploding myths that feed  
'the single story'

Provide evidence to bust each myth:

Strong evidence would include facts such as a date, a name or a number (statistic)

Myth 1: Africans had no History prior to contact with Europeans - *exploded!*

Myth 2: – : 'Africa lacked wealth' - *exploded!* by study of Mansa Musa

DEBUNKED!

1 2

The background of the slide is a collage. It features several images of explosions: a bright yellow and orange starburst in the top left, a large orange and yellow fireball in the center, a white and grey mushroom cloud in the bottom left, and a large orange and yellow fireball in the bottom right. Overlaid on this collage are numerous swastika symbols in various shades of red and orange, some appearing as if they are falling or floating. On the left side, there is a vertical white line. To the right of this line, there are three small white symbols: a plus sign (+) at the top, a circle (o) in the middle, and a dot (•) at the bottom.

# Any Questions

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