

# Did enslavement during the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade stop children from playing?

## Part 1

The Importance of Play





# What do these pictures have in common?



Armenia



Lebanon



Uganda



Zambia



Peru



Mongolia



Cambodia



Dominican Republic



UK



What are the benefits of play? Chat to your partner and jot down your ideas on a post-it.

Children learn how to think abstractly, solve problems, and create new ideas.

Play improves the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional well-being of children and young people.

Play!!

Play gives children space. To practise physical movement, balance and to test their own limits.

Through play, children learn about the world and themselves.

Play helps with language, math and social skills, and can help children cope with stress.

On the next slide are 6 discussion questions. The same questions are on Resource Sheet 1. In groups, take turns to take a question and read it out to your group. Talk about it, making sure that everyone has a chance to speak and share.

Good listening looks like:



- paying attention
- smiling
- encouraging nods
- being close together - not wandering off

Good listening sounds like:



- one voice at a time
- no interrupting

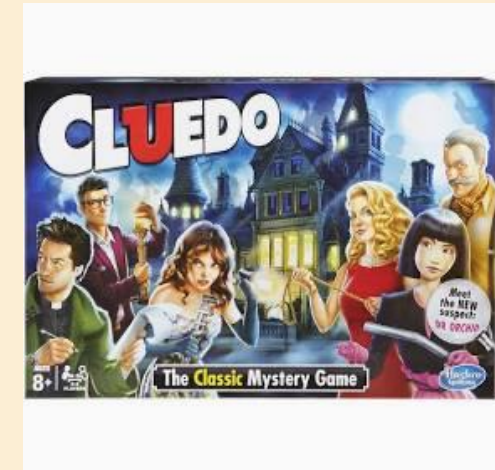
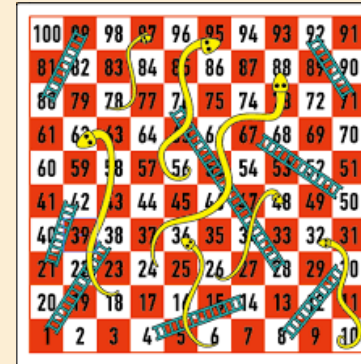
## Resource sheet 1

What was the first toy you remember playing with when you were little?	What was your favourite toy from your young childhood?
When you think about playing games in the playground in P1 or P2, what did you play most?	How does remembering playing when you were little make you feel?
Have you kept any of your pre-school toys? If yes, why?	Do you still play? Has your playing changed since you were younger? In what way?

Feedback to the class.



Play has hopefully been a huge part of your childhood.



Do you remember any of these traditional games? Maybe you still play them! Chat to your shoulder partner about these or any other games



You are going to be detectives.

Work in groups of 4. Each group will research a different topic. Depending on the size of your class, you might have 2 or 3 groups researching the same topic. That's fine!

1. You are going to research the most popular games in the UK today for primary age children. These might be video games, board games, individual games, online games.....

2. You are going to research games that were played in Britain in the 1700s.

3. You are going to research games played in West Africa now.

4. You are going to research games played in West Africa in the 1700s.

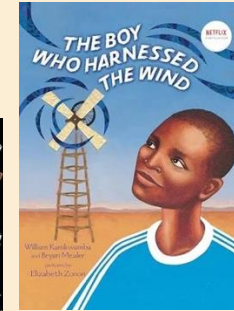
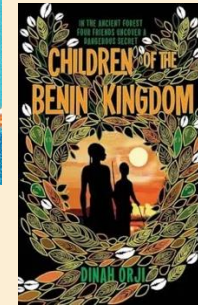
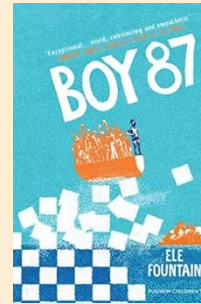
How will you conduct this research?

Questionnaires - ask the other children in your school! (group 1)



Use the internet! ( all groups)  
Some website ideas below and on Resource Sheet 2.

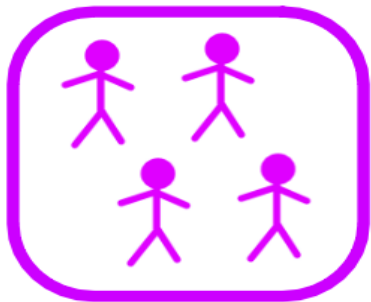
Have you read any books set in Africa? (group 3 & 4)



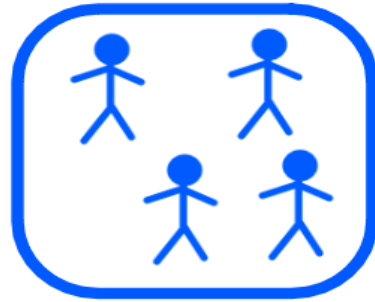


Your group should now be experts in your chosen topic. It is time to share your expertise.

One person from each group will join with a person from every other group, so you have new groups with 4 different experts in each. Then you will teach each other about your play research topic.



Modern British  
game experts



1700 British  
game experts



Modern West  
African game  
experts



1700 West  
African game  
experts



One expert in each group!

Now that you have heard from an expert from each area of play, what are your thoughts?

Think about these questions....

- Has play changed over the years?
- How many of the games from the 1700s are still played today?
- Would you be keen to play these games? Why?
- Do you feel that play has changed more in the UK or in Africa - from what you have heard today. (Obviously, you have just learned about a small snapshot of play and games.) Why is this?

We can see what an integral part of life play is and has been for hundreds of years.



Play is accepted as such an important part of development now that it is one of your Rights in the UN Rights of the Child!



## Optional Extension

One of the games you may have come across is Mancala, sometimes called Gebeta in Eastern Africa.

A Mancala board is easy to make if you don't have one.

Why not have a class tournament?





# Did enslavement stop children from playing? Part 2

West Africa - A Child's Perspective




One of the most well-known names when talking about enslaved people is Ottobah Cugoano.

He was born in 1757 in a village called Ajumako on The Gold Coast, now Ghana.

When Cugoano was 13, he was out playing with his friends. Read the extract below, written by Cugoano some years later. What was he doing that day with his friends?

but by this time I had got well acquainted with some of the children of my uncle's hundreds of relations, and we were some days too venturesome in going into the woods to gather fruit and catch birds, and such amusements as pleased us. One day I refused to go with the rest, being rather apprehensive that something might happen to us; till one of my play-fellows said to me, because you belong to the great men, you are afraid to venture your carcase, or else of the *bounsam*, which is the devil. This enraged me so much, that I set a resolution to join the rest, and we went into the woods as usual; but we had not been above two hours before our troubles began, when



In this old script, the  is an s.

You are going to create a fact-file/mini-poster about the life of Cuguano so you need to start taking some notes.

On resource sheet 2, you will find this extract from Thoughts and Sentiments of the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species by Ottobah Cuguano: CUP, 2013. Highlight/annoate any information that gives you any clues about Cuguano's character.

Did you highlight these bits.....?

He felt nervous and felt anxious that something bad was going to happen. Perhaps he was sensitive or more aware of current goings-on - more than his friends.

but by this time I had got well acquainted with some of the children of my uncle's hundreds of relations, and we were some days too venturfsome in going into the woods to gather fruit and catch birds, and such amusements as pleased us. One day I refused to go with the rest, being rather apprehensive that something might happen to us; till one of my play-fellows said to me, because you belong to the great men, you are afraid to venture your carcase, or else of the bounsam, which is the devil. This enraged me so much, that I set a resolution to join the rest, and we went into the woods as usual; but we had not been above two hours before our troubles began, when

We can see that he enjoyed catching birds, picking fruit and hanging about with his friends.

He was annoyed when his friends teased him about being scared of the 'bounsam', the devil. He cared about what his friends thought of him.



## The Bounsam

Cuguano was persuaded to play with his friends that day by them teasing him about being scared of the 'bounsam' if he didn't go.

The Bounsam was a folk-devil, used to bribe children into behaving well.



### Optional Extension

Are there any other cultures where 'fictitious' characters are used to encourage children to be obedient?

Cugoano was tricked by 'several great ruffians', telling him that he had committed a crime against their leader and had to follow them. They were threatened with pistols and cutlasses if they didn't follow them. Cugoano was forced to walk for several days until he met up with other captured men who were chained in pairs. His captors traded him for 'a gun, a piece of cloth and some lead'. He was then kept imprisoned for 3 days until a boat came and he was put onto the boat and taken to Grenada..

Listen to your teacher reading you pages 7-9 of Thoughts and Sentiments of the Evil and Wicked Traffic of The Slavery and Commerce of the Humans Species by Ottobah Cugoana. (Play Resource sheet 2)

Now look at the Resource Sheet and highlight any information that might be useful for your mini-poster/fact-file.

Remember - this mini-poster/factfile is focusing on Cuguano's life so think about highlighting the information relevant to telling his story - his feelings as they are written in the text and things relevant to his age at the time - missing his family, feeling that he had to do as he was told, being obedient, trusting adults, etc.

## Task

Spend some time creating your Mini-poster/fact-file about the early life of Cugoano.

As well as focusing on the facts that you have learned through the extracts from his book, think about the knowledge you have gained about African life in the 1700s and his feelings when he was captured.

What will your Success Criteria be for this piece of work?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.





## Enslavement

Cuguano was taken from the woods where he was playing with his friends by African men.

Mungo Park, Travels in the Exterior Districts, 1799, wrote that:

*Africans sold other Africans by choice because they stood to gain from it. Coercion and seduction took place. For centuries they practiced a trade between themselves similar to serfdom. Perhaps, when the Europeans arrived, they imagined that Atlantic slavery was just an extension of that system. But, they couldn't have been more mistaken.*

*The advent of white people introduced the ideology of race to slavery. Europe justified its brutality on the basis of its 'natural' superiority to black people.*

Many cultures have a history of poorer people being taken advantage of by wealthier members of society. Can you think of any examples?

The Caste  
System - India

Servitude -  
Many parts of  
Europe

Nucai -  
China



While we know from reading Cuguano's memoirs that play was an important part of his pre-enslavement life, life changed beyond measure once he arrived in the West Indies.

In the next lesson you will learn about what some aspects of life were like on a plantation.



# Did enslavement during the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade stop children from playing?

## Part 3

Across the Atlantic





# Life as an enslaved child

While some of the children who were enslaved in America and the Caribbean were taken from their homes, the majority of enslaved children were born into enslavement.

Thomas Jefferson was the third president of the United States of America, from 1801 to 1809. Throughout his life, he had very conflicting views about enslavement. He was born in Virginia in 1743 and was brought up in a family that owned over 600 enslaved workers.

When he lived in Monticello (pictured) as an adult, he wanted outlined his plans for enslaved children, saying

*"children till 10. years old to serve as nurses. from 10. to 16. the boys make nails, the girls spin. at 16. go into the ground or learn trades." (Farm Book)*

We can see that he supported enslaved children spending the majority of their lives working.



However, one thing that children naturally do is play. There is evidence in Wilma King's *Stolen Childhoods: Slave Youth in Nineteenth Century America* 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed, that both black and white children below the age of 10 often played together, while it was much less common for children over that age to play mixed games.

Why do you think this could be?



Enslaved children under the age of 10 generally had fewer work responsibilities so had more free time. After they reached the age of 10, they were forced to work much more. White children over the age of 10 were sent to school so again had less time to mix with enslaved children.

From Stolen Childhoods, some statements made by enslaved workers about play.

'...they got to playing and stayed in dem woods 'til almost dark...'

'Did yo' eber take time ter think jist whyat a hickory-nut tree is to chillum? I had my fun under de ole hickory-nut tree.'

'We was too tired when we come in to play any games.'

'I don't remember much about slavery days, cep'n us chillum had a right good time playin'. We ain' never had no jobs cause ole Massa wanted all his young slaves to grown up strong an' natchel like an' none of us never done no hard work 'till we ... matured.'



There was no money for enslaved children to buy games or toys, yet we know from a variety of sources that they played.

What do you think they played with? How did they get their toys?

There is evidence of children playing with hoops and a rod, similar to games played in Ancient Greece and Africa. Hoops were made from twisted or woven straw or thin branches.

There is also evidence of enslaved children playing with marbles, dolls, skipping ropes and hopscotch.



In *Gizzard Stones*, *Wari in the New World*, and *Slave Ships: Some Research Questions* By Jerome S. Handler, he writes about evidence that Mancala, then called Wari, was played in America. How do you think it travelled from Africa?

# Task

Your task is to use whatever you can find inside or outside the classroom to invent a game that can be played and taught to others. You may NOT use anything that is already part of a game.

You may use paper or card, glue, pencils, stones, sticks, wool. Anything else - ask me.

Work in a group of 3.

Think about the Success criteria and Social Skills needed.

How did this compare to other games you have played?

Could you last for more than a day playing this type of homemade game?

What differences are there between how you played this game to how you play your usual games?

Less competitive or more?

More imaginative or less?

More entertaining or less?





# Imagination! It is a wonderful thing.

These statements are all taken from Wilma King's *Stolen Childhoods*. Read them and discuss with your partner.

Freedwoman Candis Goodwin explained that she and her friends used to gather brown pine needles to build an imaginary house; they use the green needles to depict the grass surrounding their imaginary abode.

Children also crafted horses from branches and small tree limbs - former slave George Briggs recalled playing 'hoss' with his friend Chancey whose brother was the wagoner while George was the mule. The smallest of the children, Henry, sometimes 'rid our backs' he said.

Children moulded marbles from clay and baked them in the Sun while rags and string were basic materials for making balls and dolls. Acorns became tiny cups and saucers.

Anderson Bates remembered children playing with cane whistles that they or someone else had made

Much of the play of enslaved children was not organised or supervised. Anderson Bates recalled that the children had a good time running around in the plum thicket and blackberry bushes and hunting wild strawberries the frolic in the meadows, climbed trees, rambled about their environs, and swam in inviting waters .

## Other Games and Skills

Many African children were taught to swim in rivers and the sea at a young age, in Africa. This skill was passed down through generations and many enslaved children, both girls and boys, spent time swimming.

At this time, it wasn't common for white girls to swim and often only boys were taught.

There is evidence of cricket being played in the Caribbean after members of the British military introduced the game in the early 1800s.

# What have you learned about play?

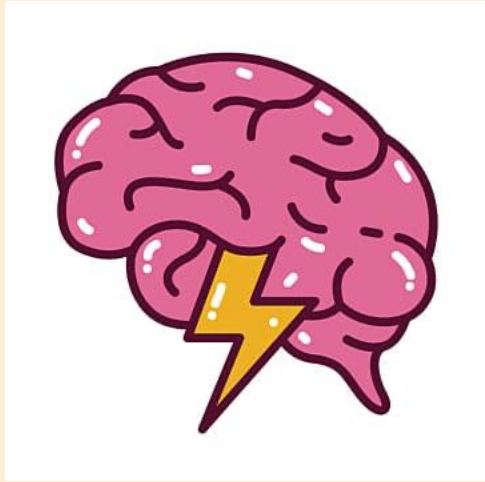
It is important to physical and mental health.

It can be imaginative or organized.

All children do it.

Although this unit has been about the importance of play and the unifying nature of playing, we should always remember the horrors that enslaved men, women and children endured, both those who were captured and traded into enslavement and those who were born into it. We learn about it so that we can all do whatever we kind to ensure we are kind, fair and equitable in everything we do.





What have you  
learned about  
that will make you  
think?



What have you  
learned that you  
will take away with  
you and share?



What have you  
learned that  
made you feel  
some emotion?

