

emancipation 1838

**MAKING
FREEDOM**

**WINDRUSH FOUNDATION
EDUCATION PACK**

SESSION TITLE

The Time Traveller's Guidebook

SESSION NUMBER: 4

Key Stage 2



Children's Lives in the Caribbean during the 19th Century

BEFORE ABOLITION

Before slavery was abolished in the Caribbean most children were forced to work on sugar plantations and did not receive an education.

The youngest children under the age of five were taught how to pick up leaves, and pull up the weeds in the fields.

Children aged between five and eight were taught how to do basic fieldwork by an experienced enslaved woman called the driveress, mainly gathering grass, weeding and carrying vines to feed the farm animals.

After eight years all children had to cultivate the sugar cane, and this was usually the work they carried out for the rest of their lives. Some children were trained to work as skilled labourers and became carpenters, joiners, blacksmiths, masons and sugar boilers. Others worked as house slaves.

Plantation owners did not want children to go to school because they wanted them to help make profits on the sugar plantations.

In 1834 a law called the **Act for the Abolition of Slavery** was passed which was supposed to end slavery. However, most enslaved Africans were forced to continue working for plantation owners for another four years. This period of time between 1834 and 1838 was known as **apprenticeship** and it meant that people did not have full freedom to choose where to live and work.

The British Imperial Government

claimed that apprenticeship would allow time to prepare the enslaved Africans for freedom, teaching them about Christianity and the law.

CHILDREN'S LIVES AFTER 1834

After the 1834 Abolition Act every child under the age of six years was immediately freed and this made it possible for some schools to be provided for them. The British government gave money to the plantation owners to set up schools for the free poor, but most did not want to give the children of enslaved Africans a good education so the basic skills they provided only taught them how to work as labourers on the sugar estates. The majority of the schools set up on the plantations were known as **field schools**, where lessons would usually take place under a tree in the open air.

The earliest **free and foundation schools** were set up by religious organisations and charities, such as the **Moravian Church** (run by Christian missionaries), the **Quakers** and the **Mico Charity** (a charity that provided funds to build schoolhouses, train local teachers and pay for religious education for enslaved Africans and the free poor between 1835-1842).

The education children received mainly involved instructions about how to live moral lives.

Children's Lives in the Caribbean during the 19th Century

Most children only received two hours of religious instruction per day, focused on Christian prayers, obedience and servitude. After school they returned to the sugar plantations to learn how to work as field labourers and develop technical skills connected to sugar refining.

CHILDREN'S LIVES AFTER EMANCIPATION IN 1838

On 1st August 1838 the apprenticeship system ended in the Caribbean islands controlled by the British Empire.

All the formerly enslaved Africans were emancipated and many experienced freedom for the first time in their lives. The British government provided money to help set up new schools for the free poor. This fund was known as the **Education Grant (1835-1845)**. Many of the new schools built with this funding were established in the free villages and market towns away from the plantations, and the schoolhouses were often built next to local churches. The buildings were usually very small wooden constructions and only had one or two school rooms.

After 1838 the education young people received depended on their family's position in society, their social status and their skin colour. Children from poor families continued to receive religious and moral instructions as their basic training and only a very small number were taught reading, writing and arithmetic (known as 'The Three Rs').

Carpenters, blacksmiths and other skilled labourers were sometimes able to send their children to better schools, and paid fees for them to have regular lessons in reading, writing and arithmetic as well as additional subjects such as foreign languages (mainly French, Spanish or Latin). All schools continued to prioritise religious education as the most important subject in the school curriculum.

Although there are not many illustrations showing what schools looked like in 1838, some **archives** do have early photographs from 1870-1900 that help us to imagine what life might have been like for Caribbean children during the 19th century. We can also compare these pictures with photographs of children in Victorian Britain at this time. For example, the two photographs shown below give an impression of the types of clothes children from poor families wore in the Caribbean and in Britain during the 19th century.

Key Stage 2

Session 4:

Title: **The Time Traveller's Guidebook**

Picture 1: A group of children with their mothers in Havana, Cuba (1899)



Key Stage 2

Session 4:

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Picture 2: A mother and her children in a poor area of Victorian London (c. 1870s)



CASE STUDY: CHILDREN'S EDUCATION IN JAMAICA AFTER 1838

In 1838 the population of Jamaica was c.370,000, of which more than 90% were formerly enslaved Africans. Historical records from this time show that there were 123 plantation schools located on sugar estates and only 46 free schools in the market towns and villages. Between 1838 and 1845, the funds from the Negro Education Grant helped to build 200 new, public day schools on the island.

In addition, the Moravian Church ran 43 schools for the poor, teaching 1,728 boys and 1,280 girls during the day and hundreds more in the evenings. The Roman Catholic and Wesleyan Methodist churches also set up more than 30 schools throughout the 19th century.

Infant schools were for children aged 18 months to six years, and elementary school were for children aged between six and 12 years of age. Many **Sunday Schools** were also established, which enabled older children who still worked on the sugar and coffee plantations during the week to receive a basic education after church.

A total of 43,000 Jamaican children were registered as attending day, evening and Sunday schools in 1838. However, even after the construction of many new schools the majority of children from poor families still did not have an opportunity to receive even the most basic education.

A TYPICAL DAY IN THE LIFE OF A 19TH CENTURY SCHOOL CHILD

This table below shows a typical school day for a 10-year-old child living in a rural area two miles from Spanish Town (St Catherine's Parish, Jamaica) in 1845.

This child attended a day school for 100 students run by the Moravian Church. The schoolhouse had two small classrooms, each seating 50 children.

All the students sat on wooden benches, with the youngest at the front and the oldest at the back. Girls and boys sat on separate sides of the room.

Most day schools had one teacher (known as the school master or school mistress) and one assistant teacher (sometimes called an attendant or monitor).

Often the best 12-year-old readers in the school were trained to work as monitors and helped the younger students with their lessons. Parents usually had to pay 1 penny per week for their child's education, and also had to provide lunch (typically bread and cheese, dumplings or slices of breadfruit).

A TYPICAL DAY IN THE LIFE OF A 19TH CENTURY SCHOOL CHILD

TIME	ACTIVITIES
6.00am 6.00 – 6.30 6.30 – 7.00 7.00 – 8.00	Wake up. Collect water from the well. Get washed and dressed. Eat breakfast. Walk two miles to school.
8.00 – 12 noon	Instruction hours:
8.00 – 8.20 8.20 – 8.50 8.50 – 9.00 9.00 – 9.30 9.30 – 10.00 10.00 – 10.30 10.30 – 10.40 10.40 – 11.30 11.30 – 12 noon	Singing, praying, cleanliness inspection Writing Recess or play Tables and arithmetic Religious instruction (Reciting the Catechism) Reading and pronunciation Recess Reading Scripture lesson
12 noon – 1pm 1.00 – 4.00pm	Second breakfast (Lunch) Instruction hours:
1.00 – 1.30 1.30 – 2.00 2.00 – 2.15 2.15 – 2.30 2.30 – 3.00 3.00 – 3.30 3.30 – 3.45 3.45 – 4.00	Grace after meal and singing Scripture lesson Spelling Recess Writing on slates Grammar and the history of England Prayers Singing and marching home
4.00 – 5.00pm 5.00 – 6.00pm	Walk two miles home. Do the household chores. Wash hands. Eat the evening meal.
6.00 – 8.00pm 8.00 – 8.30pm 8.30 – 8.45pm – 8.45pm	Work on the provision grounds (helping my family tend the vegetable plot, sweep the yard, and clean the chicken pen/coop, etc.) Get washed. Prayers. Sleep.

SCHOOL EQUIPMENT AND TEACHING MATERIALS

The early schools built after Emancipation Day did not have very good teaching and learning resources. The main reading materials available were religious books – typically the Bible, some prayer books, a book of sermons, and religious tracts (small booklets) provided by the Religious Tract Society for Jamaica.

Children often had to memorise verses from the Bible and recite their daily prayers because there were not enough books available. During morning prayers every child usually had to recite The Lord's Prayer, the Apostle's Creed and the Decalogue. **Rote learning** (memorizing and reciting facts) was the most common educational method.

Morning sessions of religious instruction were usually free, but parents often had to pay for their children to attend additional subjects during the afternoon. After 1845 **Trade Schools** were introduced to help children from poor families learn a skilled trade or craft. In these schools the boys and girls had separate lessons.

Often the boys were trained as carpenters and mechanics, and also completed subjects known as **Agricultural Sciences** so that they could work as managers and skilled craftsmen on sugar and coffee plantations, or on livestock farms.

When they reached the age of 12 most boys were apprenticed to skilled craftsmen, or started full-time work in agriculture. Girls were taught needlework, housecraft and **Domestic Economy**, mainly to get jobs as domestic servants in rich households.

This picture below shows a rural church building in St Catherine's parish, Jamaica. The size, shape and style of this building is typical of the early wooden schoolhouses built by religious organisations in the 19th century.

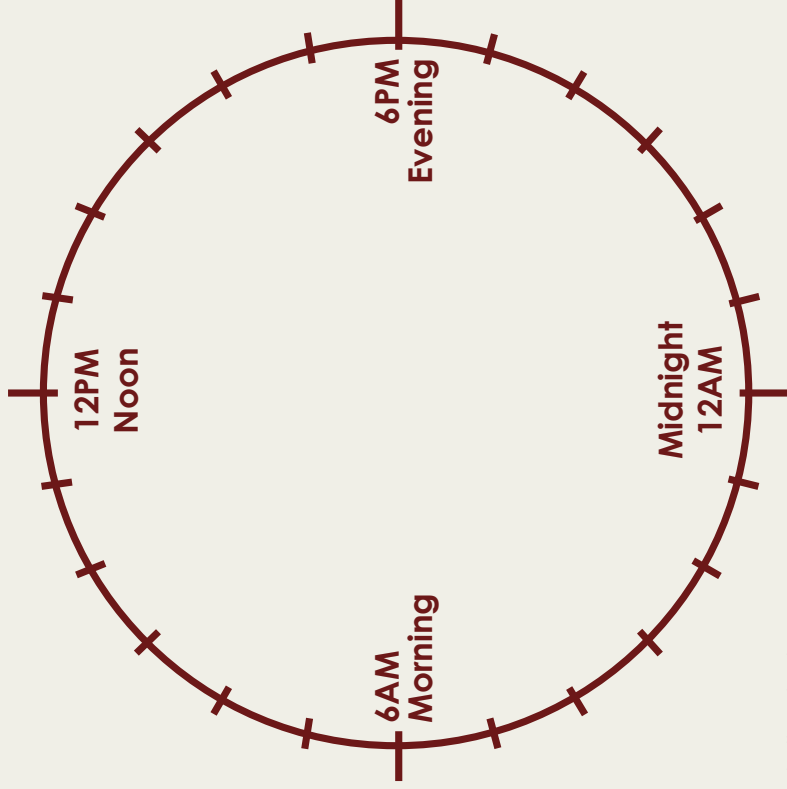


During this history session we have been finding out about children's lives more than 175 years ago. Today, in the 21st century, modern education for girls and boys in the Caribbean is very similar to the schooling we experience in the UK.

Session 4: Title: The Time Traveller's Guidebook

Key Stage 2

My school day in the 21st century



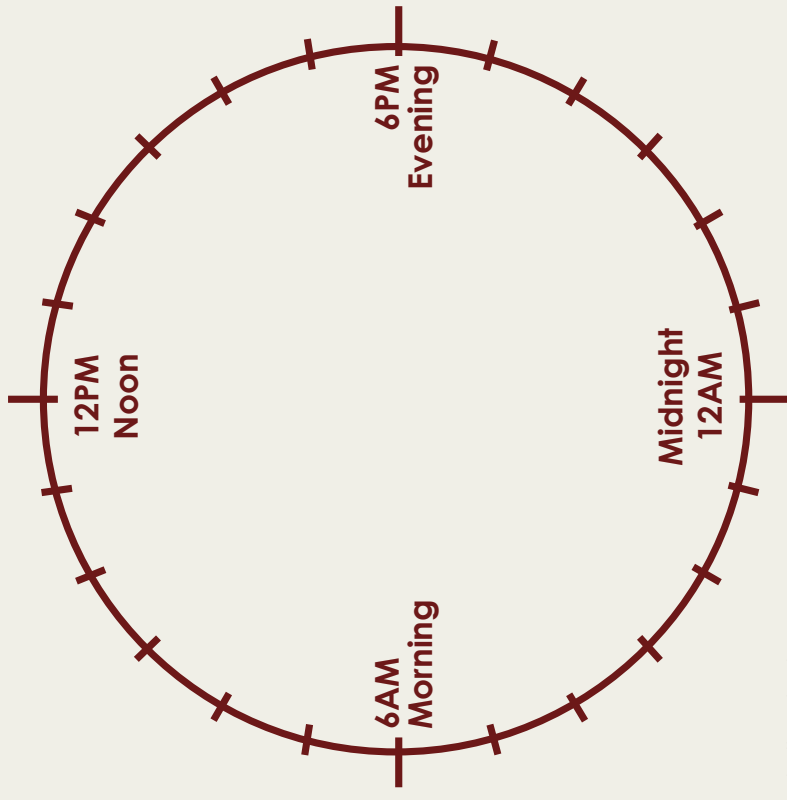
Key to the chart:

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<input type="text"/>	Eating
<input type="text"/>	Travelling

<input type="text"/>	Washing & Dressing
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<input type="text"/>	Time at School
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A typical day for a child in the 19th century



Key to the chart:

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