

Debating Controversial Representations in Public Spaces to Understand Contested Historical Legacies



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The Teaching Strategy is an adaptation of earlier drafts developed by **Steven Stegers** and **Katria Tomko**, with contributions from others. Throughout its development process, this Strategy has been reviewed at different stages. Contributions have been made by Bistra Stojmenova, Lilia Khachatryan, Juraj Varga, Lars Henriksen, Vedran Ristic, Bob Stradling and Richard Kennett.

Image of the Genius of Fascism monument by Owunsch
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Jadé's strategy *Debating Controversial Representations in Public Spaces to Understand Contested Historical Legacies*, challenges students to step into the shoes of decision-makers and debate representations (such as statues, monuments, street names) of contested historical legacies in the public space. Through analysing a case-study and the perspectives of various stakeholders, students are tasked with making a decision on how to respond to the contested representation, choosing from six different possible remedies.

This lesson plan is part of a ten-part teaching strategy series designed and tested by teachers for teachers. The overall aim of Sharing European Histories is to help young people understand the complexity, multiplicity, and transnational character of European history. For more information, go to sharingeuropean-histories.eu.



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Debating Controversial Representations in Public Spaces to Understand Contested Historical Legacies

JADÉ BOTHA

Students research a case of contested history and consider ways to resolve or prevent tension through deciding collectively on a remedy. They reflect on what different parties might think of their proposed solution(s).

OVERVIEW OF THE STRATEGY

In recent years, there has been a move across Europe for societies to both reconsider and reckon with their forms of public commemoration. This strategy aims to place students at the centre of this pan-European debate by designating them as the decision-makers in a case of contested history. They are tasked with resolving the fate of a controversial statue, monument, street name, or other forms of commemorative representations in the public space. They learn about the historical context in which this object was erected, what it commemorates, and why and how it has become controversial in the modern era.

Taking a case study of a particular monument, street name, or other public contestation, students learn about different stakeholders' viewpoints. Students will have to understand both their own viewpoint and that of others, leading them to understand why people disagree with one another and on what grounds. They will have to justify their view and approach towards the monument to their peers in the form of an open debate surrounding the contested object's fate.

Students formulate their advice to remedy the public contestation and give the grounds for their choice. They will then have to decide collectively with their peers on the ultimate remedy and approach to the object. This decision has to be made by all the different stakeholders collectively. Doing this will help them understand how complex finding a solution can be and that not all groups will be happy with the decisions they make.



WHAT IS THE AIM OF THE STRATEGY?


Students will gain knowledge and understanding about a particular public contestation through their research and have a better grasp of concepts such as historical legacies and contested history.

The strategy teaches about the importance of nuance, that issues of public contestation are complex, and that points of view are not simply 'for' and 'against' but may lie somewhere in the grey space between.

The strategy provides applicable and suitable solutions that could be considered for local and/or national decision-makers and civil society organisations, encouraging students to consider different perspectives on the issue and the direct impact of their actions on different stakeholders.

Students will become aware of the complexities surrounding the decision-making process of commemoration and the moral dilemmas associated with it.





What do you need to do to use this strategy in your classroom?

STEP 1: PREPARE THE MATERIALS

A - Decide on a case study of a public contestation

The first step is to decide on an object representing a contested history. Contested Histories refers to controversies over statues, memorials, street names and other representations of disputed historical legacies in public spaces. The object refers to a public representation of a historical figure or event, such as a street name or monument or even a national or international contestation. This can be chosen at the discretion of the teacher. This Teaching Strategy is applicable to all physical and tangible commemorative objects (**Monuments¹, Markers, Memorials, Carceral Sites, and Names**) and works best with objects that have been subject to intense and well-documented protests, as this often provides more context and better engagement on behalf of students. You may (if possible) as a teacher want to visit the site in preparation for the class or provide an image or depiction of **dissent**, destruction, or other forms of protest surrounding a commemoration. This will be used as the warm-up activity, where you will show a video or image of the contested site to the class. If this is not available for the object you have selected, you can also choose to show a more general video on protests over contested sites, or one that is similar in legacy or form to the object you have selected.

You can choose your topic on the basis of role cards and resources that already exist, available on [Historiana](#) and at [ContestedHistories.org](#) or you can use the template provided in the strategy.

B - Creating Role Cards

For this activity you need to create a series of role cards which describe the position and viewpoints of the different stakeholders and allow students to take this into consideration when selecting a remedy. This approach is necessitated as it allows students to interact with and understand various conflicting

viewpoints and work through these different positionalities in order to search for a mutual resolution. This gives the students insights into the process of deliberative democracy as well as how to critically engage with opposing views and use evidence and sound reasoning to advocate for their position. This further demonstrates to them the tensions within the decision-making process and how sometimes compromise is a necessary sacrifice in resolving the fate of a contested monument, even if this remedy was different to the one they initially lobbied for.

I. Choose which perspectives to include

This exercise is most effective when a diverse range of contrasting and multiperspective viewpoints are present. These should be realistic viewpoints reflective of the real-life debates, ideally based on existing groups. However, this can also be a fictionalised and stylised take on a real stakeholder, if you wish to avoid naming individuals or groups directly. Simplified, there are three key areas within the spectrum that should be represented to ensure a good debate:

- Those in favour of removal;
- Those in favour of preservation;
- Those that want a middle ground.

Within these three areas, there can be nuanced perspectives, but having these three represented at a minimum ensures that the discussion and lobbying by the students will begin on opposite sides of the spectrum. Here are some factors to consider when constructing a diverse collection of opinions. You should strive to get perspectives that reflect:

- Opinions of people in varied economic positions;
- A gender balance;
- Nuanced perspectives/personal stakes;
- Clear or distant connection to the object;
- Differences of education and social status; and
- Minority or historically disenfranchised voices.

¹ A Glossary of Terms can be found at the end of this Teaching Strategy.

II. Think what students need to know to understand the position

You should ensure you clearly define on the role card the individual's unique perspective in relation to the contestation. You may choose to base these on real people/groups, however, sometimes it may be appropriate to use fictionalised names based on real events, this prevents the stigmatisation of individuals, especially when dealing with particularly heated or still ongoing contestation. Some factors to consider include:

- What are these stakeholders' motivations, values and beliefs?
- Do they have a strong personal, historical or professional attachment to the contested object?
- Do they have a clear remedy already in mind?
- Are they making the decision themselves or as representatives of a larger group?
- How does this stakeholder viewpoint interact with the other ones you have selected?

Each student should review a small role card that summarises their party's viewpoint in three ways:

1. Who they are;
2. Their relationship to the Contested Object;
3. What they hope the outcome of the debate (final remedy) would be.

C - Prepare a letter brief using the template provided in the Strategy in Action

You should prepare a summarised timeline listing key events crucial to the public contestation. This includes when it was erected and unveiled when the first contestation took place and a zoom-in of recent events or developments. If possible, you should include dates significant to the viewpoints you have selected for the debate (for example, the date of a major protest attended or organised by one of the viewpoint groups or the date of an official announcement by the relevant authority etc).

For the letter from the decision-maker, you can adapt the sample template. In general, the letter from the decision-maker should always include:

- An introduction establishing who the decision-maker is;
- A general overview of 2-3 lines of the state of the contestation, establishing where the contested object currently is (i.e. is it still standing, has it been placed in temporary storage etc.);
- A bullet point list outlining the key focus for the debate;
- A conclusion stressing the urgency of the class' decision and thanking them for their assistance.

For the purpose of this Teaching Strategy, the final remedy refers to the solution used to respond to and resolve the contestation. This can take six forms:

- **Status Quo** (leaving the monument as is),
- **Contextualization** (adding additional information in the form of a placard or explanatory plaque);
- **Resignification** (adding an artistic intervention or counter monument to the original object);
- **Repurposing** (changing the object to serve a new function, n.b. this option generally works better with larger sites as opposed to monuments, for example converting a former prison to a museum etc);
- **Relocation** (moving the object to a new location or placing it in a museum);
- and **Removal** (withdrawing the object completely from the public). These options are available with examples from across Europe and brief explanations in the Remedy Card Pack at the end of this Teaching Strategy.

STEP 2: USE THE MATERIALS IN THE CLASSROOM

Activity 1: Introduction of public contestations and the particular case study

In this step, students will be introduced to a particular case of contested history and the object they will address in the debate. This will be done using a starter activity that hooks students' attention – a depiction (image or video) of dissent, destruction, or other forms of protest related to the selected object. If there is no available video featuring the selected object, you can opt to choose a general video about monuments, ideally of a similar historical legacy and end with an image of the object selected for the class to address. The teacher can stimulate discussion by asking students about their initial impressions and interpretations of the protest. Some guiding questions include: What did you just see? Who is protesting? What has happened? You should also use this starter activity to serve as a brief introduction to the object they will be addressing. Ideally, the videos or images chosen should be of the object itself, giving a brief introduction into its form and principle legacy. The aim of this activity is to give a general overview of the object at stake before the next step, where they will 'zoom' into the object from their distinct stakeholder perspective.

Activity 2: Researching and creating contrasting biographies

In this activity, students will be split into groups and tasked with researching stakeholders and creating contrasting biographies of the object or event based on the stakeholders' perspective (in the case of an event, this can be a depiction). One biography per group is sufficient, with a minimum of three contrasting biographies per class. Teachers can assign a stakeholder to be researched by students for each group, this should be based on the viewpoints chosen for the debate.

What to include in the biography:

Ideally, each biography should be half a page to one-page maximum. Students should cover the following questions in the biographies:

In the case of a Historical Figure:

- **Why might this figure be worthy or unworthy of commemoration?;**
- **Identity of figure:** Who was the historical figure? Factors to consider: class, race, gender, etc.;
- **Actions of figure:** What did this figure do? E.g. profession, achievements, associations/movements, etc.;
- **Background/standing of figure:** Where is this figure from? What is their city/region and/or country known for? (i.e. What is the location's political or historical significance? What is its regional or international standing?);
- **What is the object commemorating?** (i.e. event, figure's career or service to their country, etc.).

In the case of a Historical Event:

- **Why might this event be worthy or unworthy of commemoration?;**
- **Actors in the event:** Who was involved in this event? Factors to consider: class, race, gender, etc.;
- **Summary of the events:** What caused this event and what were the main action points within it?;
- **Scale of the event:** What is the location's political or historical significance? What is its regional or international standing? What were the key outcomes of the event, did it have national/transnational implications? Did it have an impact over time? etc.;
- **What is the object commemorating?** (i.e. a specific moment of the event, its legacy, a misrepresentation or fictionalised version etc.).

Where to find biographies:

- Local museums may have information on their website if the contested figures/ event are local to the area;
- Wikipedia can provide a good basis for getting an overview. Following the links in the footnotes of Wikimedia can direct you to historical sources;
- You can filter on Google by the name of the figure and a time period, to locate sources produced in a specific time frame;
- Social media can be used to find contemporary opinions by protestors, often they will create threads on social media or post links to their manifestos or petitions to remove the statues;
- It is also possible to use a YouTube video of a source collection to provide different perspectives.

Activity 3 - Comparison of biographies to see continuity and change in public perception and assignment of Viewpoint

In the same groups, students share amongst them the biographies of the public contestation in question made by other groups. Each student individually reads one biography and then briefly describes to their fellow students what the public contestation was, based on their reading. As students share their views, each student individually fills in the worksheet below:

What does this biography tell you about...	For what reason is the object/person remembered?	Why is the person/object contested today?
Biography 1		
Biography 2		
Biography 3		

At the end of this activity, students can be invited to reflect on the differences and similarities of the biographies. Students can then be assigned their viewpoints for the debate that will commence the next lesson. This will allow them adequate time to conceptualise and digest their viewpoint and prepare additional research on their viewpoint, should they choose too.

Activity 4 - Finding a Remedy

Students are then told that they have been commissioned by a community leader to help resolve the issue. They will be a part of a special advisory committee that is tasked with advising the decision-maker in charge of the monument with what to do to resolve the dispute, based on additional research and consultations with stakeholders. For this activity, provide students with the letter of the local authorities asking them for their advice on a possible remedy to the public contestation. By putting students in an advisory role, they are in an empowered position and must work collectively to issue the decision of the advisory committee. You may choose to introduce the remedy card pack at the beginning or to introduce it midway through the debate, depending on the class level and level of engagement in the activity.

Opening of the Committee

Students convene in a plenary session where they will debate the future of the monument. Students can either individually represent their assigned viewpoint or stakeholder or they can do this as a team of 3-4 people per Viewpoint, depending on the class size. The teacher takes the role of the Chair of the committee and acts as a moderator of the debate. Depending on class size and the lesson time, each stakeholder should at the beginning of the debate, in a 2 minute speech:

- Introduce who they represent;
- How they are connected to the contested object;
- Explain which final remedy they want to resolve the contestation.

Debating within the Committee

Following the introduction round, the Chair will officially open the debate, and the students must work together to decide on the ultimate remedy that the committee will decide upon. This can take different forms depending on the class dynamic and size of the class but can include a mixture of the following methods:

- **Moderated Caucus:** Each stakeholder must raise their hand to be recognised by the Chair in order to address the class. The Chair chooses to recognise who is speaking and ensures the flow of the debate;
- **Unmoderated Caucus:** Students are free to mix among themselves and strategies, once they have done this, they can then present the results of this to the wider committee;
- **Direct Questions:** The Chair may choose to pose direct questions to the committee or to individual stakeholders.

Decision of the Committee

At the end of the debate, the stakeholders must present their remedy to the chair and their peers. After hearing all the options, the committee must then vote on the ultimate decision. Each stakeholder is allowed only one vote to encourage the students to work together on choosing a collective remedy. The remedy presented that passes with 2/3rds simple majority in an open vote is designated the final decision. In the case of no resolution and winning remedy, this is also an option that reflects the often hard times decision-makers face when trying to come to a collective decision.

When reaching a choice of final remedy, you should encourage students to think creatively and be willing to negotiate and reconsider their position - in line still with their viewpoint. The final decision will ultimately have to be a compromise between the different parties. If students are struggling to come up with their own remedies, you may choose to offer them the **Remedy Cards** which allow students to see an overview of the options they have and help give the committee concrete ideas of how to move forward that include possible pros and cons, benefits, and threats. You can choose to introduce these cards at the beginning, middle or end of the debate, as you see fit.

When making the verdict, students use what they have learned so far to make a decision. The reasons that students give are more important than the solution they choose. The exercise where they decide collectively helps with perspective taking and makes clear that there is no such thing as a one-size-fits-all solution. The option and comparison of different recommendations made by other groups will help students consider alternative solutions and compare their reasoning and decision-making process.

Activity 5: Decision-Maker Dilemmas

Debrief of the Debate

This activity encourages students to share their ideas across the class to reach generalisations about the public contestation.

Following the debate, you should debrief with your students about the outcomes of the debate. To guide this you can ask the following questions:

- Are you satisfied with the final decision? Why or why not?
- How did your position change throughout the debate? What influenced it?
- Did you agree personally with the position of your assigned viewpoint? Why or why not? If not, how did this influence your perspective in the debate?
- Was there another stakeholder you found particularly interesting?
- How does the final remedy line up with your initial position?
- Do you think your stakeholder (in real life) would be happy with this outcome? Why or why not?
- Do you think it is possible to ever reach a conclusion that satisfies all parties?
- If you were the decision maker, would you personally choose this remedy or would you go for something else?

You may choose to have this debrief as a class discussion. You can also opt to select a few of these questions and have students submit a written reflection on their experience in the stakeholder debate.

If you choose a contestation that has already been resolved, such as Colston, you can reflect on the reality versus the class simulation. You can first explain to the students the updates in the case.

WHAT OBSTACLES COULD A TEACHER WITH THIS STRATEGY FACE?

Reading ability

Students need to be reasonably confident readers to do the work, as exemplified here. Alternatively, less confident readers could be paired with more confident peers and/or stories could be translated, reduced in length, read as a class, or turned into sound recordings in order to make them more accessible.

Confidence in public speaking

The second lesson is based on an open debate that requires students to be engaged and vocal. For some students, this may be challenging. As a teacher, you can choose to pair more quiet students with more vocal ones. It is also possible that there may be a lull in the debate. In this case, as Chair, you can interject with some targeted questions to help reinvigorate the debate or use this as a moment to introduce the remedy cards.

Conceptual understanding

Teachers will need to review stories surrounding the selected contested object, bearing in mind the prior knowledge of their students. There may well be terms and concepts that need explaining or simplifying to make stories accessible to all.

Personal or political views relating to the subject matter

Addressing cases of contested histories within the classroom, as the name flags - are by their very essence contested - precisely due to their complex legacies and undertones of identity and belonging. It is thus highly probable that you may be met with polarised and emotive responses within the classroom. It is important as an educator to moderate the debate and keep it to the topic at hand without allowing personal attacks or extremist views to be expressed. This can be a delicate balancing act, so you should remain cognizant of the classroom atmosphere and ensure that students, even if they disagree with each other, do so in a constructive and respectful manner.

Question prompting

Some students will be able to think about the contestations without prompt questions. Others will need more guidance. They are topic specific but will provide teachers with an idea about the level of detail needed and how it can be adapted for other topics.

Changing contexts require flexible Solutions

This Teaching Strategy is not static: it reflects history in the making. When we first wrote this strategy in 2017, the debate about the Colston statue was focused on the wording of the plaque that was being debated at the time. By 2021, the statue of Colston had been toppled into Bristol Harbour, and the debate was no longer about the plaque but what to do with the statue overall, and we needed to rewrite this strategy. This can happen to you too. The dilemma changed from: Should there be a plaque or not? What should the plaque say or not say? Should we keep the statue or not? Should it stay in the harbour or not? Should it be displayed in a museum or not? Circumstances can change, which requires a continuous reassessment of the situation and its solutions.

HOW COULD YOU MAKE THIS STRATEGY MORE INCLUSIVE?

Supporting lower attaining students

You can provide a list of possible remedies to choose from based off the Remedy Card Pack (see Annex 2). You can also reduce the number of viewpoints (keeping at least three). You can simplify the language used in the role cards and be more explicit in what the people or organisations would think. You could provide a deck of cards with arguments used in other cases or as a Pro-Con list based on the contestation you have chosen.

Challenging higher attaining students

You can ask students to find their own remedies (not giving them suggestions). You can play the devil's advocate or point out who might not be happy with certain solutions. You can ask them to design their own counter monument or artistic intervention and justify why it offers a good solution. You can ask students to consider drafting some universal guidelines for responding to contestations. For example, asking them to draft recommendations for the OSCE High Commissioner of National Minorities or the Chair of a European/International Organisation of Mayors. You can also ask them to explain why people might be against their proposed solution. There could be a contest with a jury between the different teams, deciding who has proposed the best solution, or you could merge all groups into one plenary and ask them to make a unanimous decision.

Example of the strategy in action

EDWARD COLSTON STATUE IN BRISTOL

This example uses a collection of role cards and biographies from the contested history event surrounding the Edward Colston Statue in Bristol. These are available on [Historiana](#).

Students watch the [video](#): “Who was slave trader Edward Colston and why was his statue pulled down?”

Prompts for students to reflect on the video:

- What is the video about?
- Do you agree with the views expressed in the video? What were the main opposing views presented?
- Do you think this video offers a balanced viewpoint on Colston and his legacy?
- Have there been similar incidents in your hometown? Did you see any of this/partake during the summer of 2020?
- Why do you think this is happening now in the present when the statues have often been there already for over 50-100 years?
- Why do you think these statues were erected in the first place? Do you notice these statues in your day to day life?
- Why do you think people feel such strong connections and have emotional responses to this process?

Students contextualise the history and contested figure through readings of various biographies.

Students prepare three biographies of the historical figure or event in question – one paints the figure in a positive light, another in a negative light, and the last in a mixed light. Following this, students share with the class what they have read and come to a consensus on several important facts that contextualise the contestation presented. Teachers should prompt the class with questions, for example:

- **Identity of Edward Colston.** Who was he? Factors to consider: class, race, gender, etc.;

- **Actions of Edward Colston.** What did he do? E.g. profession, achievements, associations/movements, etc.;
- **Background/standing of Colston.** Where is he from? What is his city/region and/or country known for? (i.e. What is the location’s political or historical significance? What is its regional or international standing?);
- **What is the commemoration commemorating?** (i.e. events, his career or service to the country, etc.);
- **Why might Edward Colston be worthy or unworthy of commemoration?**

SAMPLE: WORKSHEET COMPLETED BIOGRAPHIES

BIOGRAPHY 1: EXCERPT FROM “EDWARD COLSTON, THE PHILANTHROPIST; HIS LIFE AND TIMES” BY THOMAS GARRARD. 1852, BRISTOL (ENGLAND).

“In laying before our readers the biography of our distinguished Philanthropist, Edward Colston, we cannot promise any incidents of an **engrossing** or exciting nature. It will be found a simple narrative of the life of one whom all humanity must delight to honour; of one whose name should be as widely **disseminated** as was the spirit of his charity. [...]

Edward Colston’s life, truly noble and honourable as it was, had been left without a record, but for the notices of his charitable acts which gladden the pages of our calendars - by these alone can we trace his footsteps - and these alone are the uninterrupted series which form the thread of our biography.

Abounding in wealth, but uninfluenced by the desire for **aggrandizement**; calmly and **steadily** he pursued his course of almost unexampled **benevolence**. Religiously and hopefully as a servant of the Most High he performed the duties of his **probationship**; and seldom raised his voice in **supplication**, but to appeal for the poor and helpless, – or stretched forth his hand but to relieve and save. The ardent votary of science, swelling with the hopes of fame – the warrior, thirsting for **renown** – the pale student, wasting over the page of thought, – do not more **indomitably** persevere for the attainment of their object; than did Colston for the furtherance of his exalted and unselfish purpose: – the giving to youth, instruction and support; to age, an asylum and a refuge; and being to the wretched and weary laden, a benefactor and a friend. He knew and felt that a heavy responsibility was his;

and his highest ambition was to render himself worthy of his **stewardship** – his greatest reward, the consciousness of having **endeavoured** to fulfil his duty. Little did he deem that Bristol’s citizens would by their annual assemblies bear testimony to his worth, – and show their veneration for his character by seeking to emulate his virtues. Little did he deem that those who then stood foremost in the pride of place and power, would have sunk into comparative oblivion, while his **unobtrusive** and familiar acts would claim universal sympathy. Little did he deem that while relieving, comforting, and **assuaging**, he was securing a terrestrial fame; – not decaying, but strengthening with the lapse of Time, – not wasting – but increasing beneath its silent power. The light of his example is not dimmed and darkened by its flight, – but irradiating into a glorious and ever **diffusing** brightness, animating the heart of the young and unprotected, and cheering the path of aged helpless poverty unto the grave.”

BIOGRAPHY 2: “WHO WAS COLSTON?” COUNTERING COLSTON - CAMPAIGN TO DECOLONISE BRISTOL. 2018.

“Edward Colston was born in Bristol in 1636, to a wealthy merchant family who were involved with Bristol’s Society of Merchant Venturers. As a young boy he moved to London, where he may have been educated at Christ’s Hospital. As an adult he followed his family into business, initially trading goods like cloth, oil, wine and fruit in Spain, Portugal, Italy and North Africa.

In his mid-40s, Colston became prominently involved in Britain’s sole official slaving company at the time, the Royal African Company (RAC). Colston served the company for a dozen years (1680-1692) as a major investor, manager and deputy governor. During this time, 84,500 enslaved Africans were transported on RAC ships, with 23% dying before reaching shore (19,300). This included women and children as young as six – each enslaved person was branded with the company’s initials on their chest. To maximise profit, the ship’s hulls were divided into holds with little headroom, so they could transport as many enslaved people as possible. The unhygienic conditions, dehydration, **dysentery and scurvy** killed nearly 20,000 enslaved Africans during the crossings. Their bodies were thrown overboard. 12,209 of the captives were children of 10 years or below. 1 in 4 children died en route. Archival research by Reverend Wilkins in the 1920s showed that Colston served actively on all of the major managing committees of the RAC. He left the company just before its gradual financial decline.

Contrary to popular belief, this was not the end of Colston’s involvement in slavery. As an MP in his 70s, Colston petitioned Parliament for the expansion of the ‘slave-trade’, and in Colston’s final years he became a commissioner and major investor in the slave-trading South Seas Company (SSC). It is estimated that he was involved in the SSC from roughly

1714-1720. During this time the SSC transported 15,931 Africans, with nearly 1 in 5 dying en route (around 2,980.)

Colston gave an exceptionally large amount of money to charity both locally and nationally. Having already given extensively during his life, at his death he **bequeathed** around £71,000 to charity – an immense sum at the time, and nearly as much as the £100,000 that he left to his family. Colston was a devout high Anglican Tory and Royalist, and was particularly concerned by the rise of religious dissent, such as the Quakers. He directed a major part of his wealth towards promoting a specific style of religious education and opposing dissident religions, including giving extensively to Bristol churches, founded **almshouses**, donated money to Queen Elizabeth’s Hospital School, and founding a religious school for 100 boys. After his death, a number of ‘Colston Societies’ sprung up, to continue charitable giving in what they saw as Colston’s tradition.”

BIOGRAPHY 3: EXCERPTS FROM “EDWARD COLSTON” AND “BUST OF COLSTON BY MICHAEL RYSBRACK” BRISTOL’S FREE MUSEUMS AND HISTORIC HOUSES.

“Edward Colston’s name is synonymous with Bristol and the slave trade, despite the fact that he was based in London for all his working life. What did he do to become the revered **philanthropist / reviled** slave trader of the city of his birth?

Edward was born in 1636. Edward was educated in London and apprenticed to a London merchant in 1654. In 1673 he joined the Mercers’ Company, and traded on his own account to Europe in woollen textiles and wine.

In March 1680, he bought a share in the London-based Royal African Company. Only RAC members could trade with Africa, for gold, ivory and enslaved Africans. His father William also owned shares in the RAC, and supplied trade goods to its ships.

Edward Colston never, as far as we know, traded in enslaved Africans on his own account. We do not know how much profit he took from the RAC’s trade in enslaved Africans - he was paid dividends such as 50 guineas in July 1780, and 160 guineas in November 1685. He sold William, Prince of Orange, some of his RAC shares worth £1,000 in 1689, then bought more for himself. We do not know how much of his fortune was built up from his trade in wine and oil, or from investments or loans, or from money and property inherited from his father. What we do know is that he was an active member of the governing body of the RAC, which traded in enslaved Africans, for 11 years.”

“Colston was a **shrewd** merchant and a rich man. He gave most of his fortune away, during his lifetime and at his death. He gave money to many churches in the city. He built almshouses or paid to support people in almshouses,

he paid for boys to be educated at Queen Elizabeth Hospital and built a school to educate and apprentice 100 poor boys. He built another school in the parish where he was born, to educate and clothe 44 poor boys from the parish. These philanthropic gifts were **hedged** with restrictions though: the recipients were to be Anglicans, and he laid down rules and regulations that matched his own High Anglican, High Tory beliefs. He gave away to charity, in Bristol and elsewhere, about £140,000 - which today would be worth something like £19,000,000.”

Sources:

Garrard, Thomas. Edward Colston, The Philanthropist, His Life and Times. J. Chilcott, 1852.

“Who Was Colston?” Countering Colston - Campaign to Decolonise Bristol, February 27, 2018. <https://counteringcolston.wordpress.com/who-was-edward-colston-2>.

“Edward Colston.” Bristol’s Free Museums and Historic Houses. <https://museums.bristol.gov.uk/narratives.php?irn=2374>.

“Bust of Colston by Michael Rysbrack.” Bristol’s Free Museums and Historic Houses. <https://museums.bristol.gov.uk/details.php?irn=117482>.

What does this biography tell you about...	Who was Edward Colston, and why is he remembered?	Why is he considered controversial today?
Biography 1	<p>Colston was a virtuous and exemplary man of his era who was worthy of society’s highest praise and gratitude.</p> <p>It was for this reason his name was widely celebrated and became prominent within Bristol. Despite being extremely wealthy, he was both humble and charitable. Rather than cause a scene or flaunt his wealth, he was a quiet and righteous man who dedicated his time not to frivolity but rather to his life’s duty of uplifting the youth and the poor.</p> <p>This selfless dedication to this duty allowed him to gain great renown and universal admiration, which fuelled his name to become famous as a distinguished philanthropist and exemplary man of his time.</p>	<p>Colston may, by the uninformed, be considered controversial today, but when he lived, there were no incidents of an exciting nature; instead, he lived a simple life worthy of the praise of “all humanity.”</p> <p>His reputation and fame were a natural consequence of his tireless dedication to uplifting the downtrodden. As well as his extensive acts of charity that continue to the present day.</p> <p>He was, for his era, one of the most distinguished and upstanding members of society that remains rightly honoured today for his noble values and charitable disposition.</p>

What does this biography tell you about...	Who was Edward Colston, and why is he remembered?	Why is he considered controversial today?
Biography 2	<p>Colston was born into a wealthy family in Bristol and became prominent for his large role in Britain's main slaving company. In this company, he was both a major investor in the trade of enslaved people and a high-level manager.</p> <p>In this role, 84,500 enslaved peoples were transported by the company in terrible conditions, resulting in the death of 23% or 19,300 people before the boats arrived in Britain.</p> <p>Aside from benefiting financially from the trade of enslaved people, Colston also lobbied the British Parliament during his time as an MP for the expansion of British involvement in the trade of enslaved people.</p>	<p>Colston is controversial due to his immense role in the trade of enslaved people. He benefited financially from the trade of enslaved people and had a high-level managerial position within the company facilitating the trade. This direct involvement in the trade of enslaved people led to the death of close to 20,000 people and the trafficking of close to 90,000 enslaved people, including over 12,000 children under the age of 10. This involvement allowed Colston to procure great wealth.</p> <p>While Colston was also a philanthropist giving away large amounts of money during his life, this was contingent on the recipients being Anglican, given that he had fears of religious dissent and used this money as a means to promote his own Anglican ideas to fund a specific style of education that opposed any religious dissent.</p>

What does this biography tell you about...	Who was Edward Colston, and why is he remembered?	Why is he considered controversial today?
Biography 3	<p>Colston, while synonymous with the city of Bristol, spent most of his time in London. He was a wise and successful businessman who gained great wealth, which was largely generated by his trade in woollen textiles and wine in Europe.</p> <p>He has a minor share in the Royal African Company (RAC), required to trade Gold and Ivory from Africa. The RAC also traded in enslaved people. It is unclear how much of Colston's wealth derived from the trade of wine and textiles and how much was generated by his involvement as a shareholder in the RAC.</p> <p>With his immense wealth, Colston gave this away generously and funded a series of schools and hospitals, given that the recipients were Anglican. This was as Colston himself was an Anglican and frequently also donated to churches.</p>	<p>Colston is most famous for his philanthropy. However, today some consider him controversial due to his links to the slave trade. However, this is an unfair characterisation as he never directly or personally engaged in the trade of enslaved people. Rather a company he - and many others of the era - were part of had links with the trade of enslaved people.</p> <p>It is also unclear just how much of Colston's fortune was earned through involvement as a shareholder for 11 years with the RAC, and how much was earned from his earlier and more extensive business ventures.</p> <p>It is clear, however, that Colston was a philanthropist that donated the vast majority of his wealth to Anglican ventures.</p>

SAMPLE: WORKSHEET - LETTER FROM THE MAYOR OF BRISTOL (TEMPLATE)

You have been asked by the Mayor of Bristol to be part of an advisory committee that will recommend what to do with the contested legacy of Edward Colston based on your expertise. In the message, the mayor gives some additional guidance on what the committee is supposed to do. Your task is to decide what should be done with the statue now that it has been thrown by protestors into the Bristol Harbour.

Instructions

- Read the message below.
- Make sure you understand what is expected from you as a committee member

Letter from the Mayor Template

Dearest esteemed expert,

Thank you for accepting to be part of the 'We are Bristol History Committee' [**insert name of your local committee**] to advise on how to respond to the contested legacy of Edward Colston in Bristol [**insert your selected case study**]. I am delighted that you are willing to help us critically respond to this sensitive issue in a responsible manner. Following up on our conversation, I want to provide some more guidance on the role of the committee. I am looking for a response that provides a historically just solution and is representative of what the citizens of Bristol [**insert the name of your city/town/village**] want. Above all else, I want to unite all of the people of Bristol [**insert the name of your city/town/village**] and I do not under any circumstance want things to turn violent nor for property to be damaged. Now the statue is in the river [**adjust to your selected case**], we need to figure out what to do next.

To help me in the decision making, I would like the committee to focus on the following:

- Consult with the different pressure groups and canvas the general public. It is important for me that the opinions of the silent majority are also taken into account.
- Map how Edward Colston [**insert your selected case study**] is currently presented in Bristol [**insert the name of your city/ town/ village**]. Apart from the statue, there are many other examples of his name and image being used. What are these? What should we do with them? [**adjust to your selected case study**]
- Do background research on Edward Colston and the period of his life? Who was Edward Colston? What did he do? What did he do for Bristol? How was his legacy viewed in his lifetime? [**adjust to your selected case**]
- See what other cities/ towns/ villages have done in similar cases. We can learn from their experience. Are there lessons that can be applied in Bristol? [**insert the name of your city/ town/ village**]

On the basis of all of the above, I expect the committee to advise me on how to move forward on this issue and decide on a suitable response. Please also take into account that there are limits to what I can do as a mayor and indicate to what extent you think your solution will be received by the people of Bristol [**insert the name of your city/ town/ village**].

Today I will issue a statement to the public that I have established the committee, to indicate to the different pressure groups that their concerns are taken seriously and that we are looking into the issue. Time is of the essence.

In case you have any further questions, please let me know. I am counting on you.

Yours Sincerely,

The Mayor of Bristol [**insert the name of your city/ town/ village**]
Concerned Decision Maker of Bristol [**insert the name of your city/ town/ village**]

SAMPLE WORKSHEET: TIMELINE OF THE COLSTON STATUE (PRE-COMMITTEE) AND VIEWPOINTS OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

1636

Edward Colston is born into a wealthy and prominent merchant family in Bristol. Colston's donations to hospitals, hospital schools and other Anglican-based charities during his lifetime totalled an estimated £71,000 pounds (approximately £11m pounds today).¹ Aside from his generational wealth, as a merchant Colston amassed his fortune through trading wine, spices, and sugar. Throughout his life, his financial interests in the British-controlled St. Kitts and the trade of sugar linked him directly to the slave trade and slave labour that produced the goods he traded in.²

1680

Colston becomes a major shareholder in the Royal African Company (RAC) in 1680. The RAC held a monopoly on the British trade of enslaved persons, at the time that Colston became an investor and leading officer, the RAC was reaching the height of its trade and power. He was involved with the RAC for 12 years, in which the company forcibly transported at least 84,500 enslaved West African people.³

1682

Colston becomes a member of the Society of Merchant Venturers (SMV).

1 Kenneth Morgan, *Edward Colston and Bristol* (Bristol Branch of the Historical Association, The University, Bristol 1999) 7-16.

2 Roger Ball, "Edward Colston Research Paper 2: The Royal African Company and Edward Colston (1680-92)," *Bristol Radical History Group*, 10 June 2020.

3 Ibid.

1691

Colston leaves the RAC after 12 years, to focus on other ventures.⁴ Despite this, he continued to benefit from the trade of enslaved peoples and supported petitions for the expansion of British slavery during his year as a member of Parliament at the age of 74.⁵

1721

Colston passes away and vests the SMV with the power to administer his trust for local schools and the societies in his honour.⁶

1895

175 years after his death, wealthy Bristol citizen and publisher James Williams Arrowsmith, finances a statue of Edward Colston, with the support and lobby of the Society of Merchant Venturers (SMV). The inscribed plaque accompanying the statue reads: 'Erected by the citizens of Bristol as a memorial to one of the most virtuous and wise sons of their city.'⁷

1921

Historian H J Wilkins publishes a book to bring attention to Colston's complete legacy as the deputy governor to the RAC and his direct responsibility for opening up the slave trade to English merchants. Wilkins becomes the first in the modern era to question the image built around Colston as a philanthropist, and whether this is appropriate given his involvement and profit gained from the trade of enslaved peoples.⁸

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Kenneth Morgan, *Edward Colston and Bristol* (Bristol Branch of the Historical Association, The University, Bristol 1999) 1.

7 Damien Gayle, "Path of resistance: a timeline of protest against Edward Colston," *The Guardian*, January 5, 2022.

8 Spencer Jordan, *The development and implementation of authority in a regional capital: a study of Bristol's elites, 1835-1939* (PhD, University of West England, 1999), 326.

1973

Bristol celebrates its 600th anniversary. Derek Robinson publishes *A Shocking History of Bristol*, which exposes Colston as a leading financier of the trade of enslaved people and draws attention to his continued celebration in annual festivities.⁹

MAY 1996

Bristol's annual Festival of the Sea draws complaints for its failure to recognise the role of the slave trade in the city's history, with multicultural arts groups launching a counter Anti-Festival of the Sea. The Bristol band Massive Attack also announces they are boycotting Colston Hall due to its association with the trade of enslaved people.¹⁰

JANUARY 1998

The first recorded vandalism of the Colston statue takes place, with 'f*** off slave trader' painted on the statue overnight in red paint. A few days later, Bristol councillor Ray Sefia, publicly supported the actions, stating: 'It's like having a monument to Hitler,' he told the Bristol Post. 'We have to be very clear about Colston's role in the slave trade.'¹¹

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2007

Protests outside Colston Hall are carried out by activists who are angered over the venue being used to hold events celebrating the bicentenary of the end of the slave trade, while being named in honour of Colston. Civil rights campaigners continue to advocate for the hall to be renamed and a number of public debates are held re-examining Colston's legacy.¹²

NOVEMBER 10, 2016

Posters reading 'Human trafficker', 'murderer', 'kidnapper' appear around Colston statue.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

NOVEMBER 12-14, 2016

In response to the renewed vandalism, Bishop of Bristol Michael Hill, assures an audience of Merchant Venturers and schoolchildren that the slavery allegations were speculation and were likely untrue.¹³ The Master of the SMV Chris Curling states in a radio interview that Colston's main source of income was wine and fruit and that any evidence that his legacy intersected with the slave trade was purely coincidental, not fact-based and thus unsupported.¹⁴

FEBRUARY 7, 2017

Countering Colston holds demonstrations on behalf of name changes, handing out leaflets outside Colston's Halls advocating for renaming.¹⁵

APRIL 2018

Countering Colston's Christine Townsend submitted a formal objection to the Office of the School Adjudicator about admissions arrangements at Colston's Girls School (run by the SMV). In response to this, Senior Merchant Venturer Anthony Brown of the SRV accuses a *Countering Colston* Activist Christine Townsend, of harassing children and named her in association to a bomb threat sent to the school.¹⁶ Townsend, proceeds to file a lawsuit against Brown for libel.¹⁷

13 Chris Brown, "Bristol Bishop Defends Views on Slave Trader", Bristol 24/7, 12 November 2014.

14 The Contested Histories Initiative, "Colston Statue in Bristol, United Kingdom," *Contested Histories Case Study #173*

15 Patrick Sawyer, "Colston Hall row: Campaigners want Bristol's famous concert venue named after slave trader to be renamed" *Daily Telegraph*, 18 February, 2017.

16 Bristolian, "City's Slave Cult Settled Libel After Smearing Anti-Racists", *Bristolian*, 22 June 2020

17 Ibid.

JULY 2018

Civil Society groups, opposing Colston, Journey to Justice and Countering Colston succeeded in pressuring the city to reword the plaque beneath Colston's statue. Until then it was as appropriately vague as his legacy, describing him only as the 'virtuous and wise son of their city', and that it was 'erected by the people of Bristol,' despite the funding being solely attributed to the Merchant Venturers. The first proposed rewrite included the active role played by Colston in trafficking 84,000 enslaved Africans, including 12,000 children, and that under his authority, 20,000 died en route.¹⁸

OCTOBER 2018

The Bristol MP Thangam Debbonaire calls for the removal of the statue of Edward Colston. A few days later, a Guerilla art exhibit appeared in front of the Edward Colston Statue.

The human figures lying in front of the statue are placed in a similar formation as the people from West Africa were forced to lie on board slave ships sent from Bristol and other English ports to be transported to Bristol business-owned slave plantations in the Caribbean and North America.¹⁹

MAY 25, 2020

In the United States, Minneapolis police officer, Derek Chauvin, kneels on the neck of an African-American man, George Floyd, for eight minutes and 40 seconds until Floyd is killed. The murder was recorded and posted online, sparking worldwide anti-racist protests under the banner of Black Lives Matter of #BLM.

18 The Contested Histories Initiative, "Colston Statue in Bristol, United Kingdom," Contested Histories Case Study #173

19 Tristan Cork, 100 human figures placed in front of Colston statue in city centre It's happening 'here and now', Bristol Live, 18 October 2018,

MAY 26, 2020

The first BLM protest takes place. In the UK, the popular show *A House Through Time* was aired to 4.16 million viewers and focused on the role of Bristol in the Transatlantic Slave Trade and the trading of enslaved people.²⁰

JUNE 1, 2020

As the BLM movement spreads globally, a group in Bristol plans their own protest scheduled for the 7th of June and begins to circulate an online petition once more for the statue's removal.²¹

JUNE 7, 2020

The statue of Colston is pulled down by a large group of protestors and thrown into the Bristol Harbour while thousands of protestors rejoice. Around 10-15 thousand people were present. While the statue lay on the ground, one "protester knelt on its neck for eight minutes and 46 seconds, while others gathered silently around it. A total of 83 minutes after it was toppled" it was thrown into Bristol Harbour, which was widely photographed and filmed and soon went viral online.²² In the following days, "Colston girls' school removes a half-size replica of the statue, his name is removed from buildings in Bristol and his likeness taken from church stained glass windows. In London the mayor, Sadiq Khan, orders a review of statues connected with slavery in the capital."²³

20 Geoffrey Bennett, "Edward Colston statue toppling and Colston 4 trial timeline of events," *Bristol Live*, January 5, 2022.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Damien Gayle, "Path of resistance: a timeline of protest against Edward Colston," *The Guardian*, January 5, 2022.

JUNE 10, 2020

The Mayor of Bristol, Marvin Rees, formally announced that an expert and independent History Commission will be set up to evaluate Bristol's history and decide the fate of the toppled Colston Statue. The **We are Bristol History** Committee begins deliberation and research into what to do with the Colston Statue.

25 JANUARY 2021

Four protestors, Jake Skuse, Rhian Graham, Milo Ponsford and Sage Willoughby are charged with criminal damage for toppling the statue and ordered to stand trial in early 2022. They became known as the 'Bristol 4', despite the number of protestors present during the toppling of the statue, these four were the ones identified by the police and will face trial and possible jail time if convicted.

This is where the activity timeline ends. As the students must decide what to do now that the statue is in the Harbour.

EXAMPLE: ROLE CARDS

These viewpoints are based on real stakeholders **but are exaggerated** to provide a fruitful debate for students and the committees. They should **not** be seen as factual or representative of the real-life individuals and groups themselves but rather as a fictionalised version intended for educational purposes.

These Key Stakeholders are:

1. MORE CONSERVATIVE ACTORS REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE SOCIETY OF MERCHANT VENTURERS

Who they are: *The Society of Merchant Ventures* (SMV), are a traditional local society composed of a number of predominantly white, wealthy and influential Bristolians that traditionally celebrated Colston for his philanthropy.¹ Historically, during the time of Colston and the 20th century, rather than merely being a local influence, the SMV often in reality, held more power than perhaps even the government of Bristol itself, their members made up the majority of the city council positions and were the greatest funders of the infrastructure of the harbour and city for centuries.² In the present era, members still hold powerful positions in a range of bodies, both public and private, that dictate the presentation of Bristol's cultural heritage and the contents and appearance of its public spaces. Given their large control over commemoration in Bristol, when critiques have emerged against Colston's prominence in Bristol's landscape, they have often made discussions more complex, given that this powerful organisation is largely devoted to maintaining his image as a

1 Henry John Wilkins, *Edward Colston A Chronological Account of his Life and Work together with an account of the Colston Societies and Memorials in Bristol* (Bristol, 1920); D. Olusoga, "The toppling of Edward Colston's statue is not an attack on history. It is history", *Guardian*, 8 June, 2020.

2 Graham Bush, *Bristol and its Municipal Government 1820-1851* (Bristol Record Society, 1976) 6-8.

philanthropist.³

Relation to the Colston Statue and Position in the Debate: Colston and his son were both members of the SMV.⁴ In 1895, 174 years after Colston's death, the SMV dedicated the Colston statue in honour of him in the city centre of Bristol.⁵ During the Plaque negotiations of 2015-2019, the SMV made many of their decisions based on wanting to protect their own future and gained attention for often defending Colston. They hope that in this consultation, Colston can be seen within his historical context as well as recognised for his immense financial contributions to the city, which continue to make it prosperous today. They believe that "woke culture" is ruining Bristol and that if the statue is removed, this would be "Erasing History."

You would then include two different viewpoints with the same general views but slightly contrasting perspectives. Such as a Representative for Bristol's Conservative council group and a member of the grassroots 'Save our Statue' group. This is replicated across the three Major Viewpoints to ensure a diverse and widespread depiction of different nuanced viewpoints.

2. NEUTRAL ACTORS

3 Spencer Jordan, *The development and implementation of authority in a regional capital : a study of Bristol's elites, 1835-1939* (PhD, University of West England, 1999), 326-333.

4 *Ibid.*, 1.

5 Yoannes Lowe, "Bristol MP calls for slave trader's statue to be removed from city because it offends local residents," *Daily Telegraph*, 12 October, 2018.

REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE BRISTOL MAYOR'S OFFICE

Who They Are: This group is the liaison of the Mayor's Office. Currently, it is headed by Labour Party's Marvin Rees, elected in 2016, who is 'Europe's first mayor of African heritage who is himself the descendant of enslaved Africans' from Bristol.⁶ The office decided to halt the installation of the new plaque, as they believed that those most historically affected by Colston's actions needed a stronger voice in the solution.⁷ They are the ultimate deciding factor of the fate of the statue. However, they could lose legitimacy and support if they don't reach a solution that everyone accepts.

Relation to the Colston Statue and Position in the Debate: The Mayor's office is in a precarious situation, they need to make sure that all citizens are happy with the result. Speaking to the press the Mayor stated, "I cannot condone criminal damage. I'm a political leader. We need order in the city. But I can't pretend the statue is anything but an affront to me. Not just as a Jamaican heritage man but as a human being."⁸ The Office is desperate to find a historically just solution that will prevent further violence. They see this as an "opportunity for the people of Bristol in a meaningful way to determine what is in that space (where Colston statue used to be)." They also hope that this consultation will provide a guide for what can be done, not just for the statue but also for the large legacy of Colston throughout the city.

Other Representatives could be: Historical Heritage England (who need to protect the statue and their reputation as the highest heritage authority of England), a history professor at Bristol University researching the legacy

6 Dave Betts, "Edward Colston: Plaque to Bristol slave trader axed over wording," *BBC News*, 25 March, 2019.

7 *Ibid.*

8 Steven Morris, "Interview: Bristol mayor: Colston statue removal was act of 'historical poetry,'" *Guardian*, June 13, 2020.

of Colston in Bristol, Police Commissioner for Bristol etc.

3. PROGRESSIVE ACTORS REPRESENTATIVE OF THE COUNTERING

COLSTON: CAMPAIGN TO DECOLONISE BRISTOL

Who they are: Founded in 2015, they are a network of individuals that believe that public celebration of 'slave trader Edward Colston' should come to an end.⁹ They were present at the toppling of the statue and organised the initial petition. The founder of their group, Miss X, has been placed on Trial alongside the 'Bristol 4' and charged with criminal damage to property, for organising the protest and participating in the protest. They think that it should not be Ms X and the Bristol 4 on trial, but Edward Colston for his far more egregious crimes.

Relation to Colston Statue and Position in the Debate: They loudly call for the complete and total removal of Colston from all public spaces in Bristol. Their demands and manifesto are as follows, Bristol must:

- Remember the full, true history of transatlantic slavery, colonialism and exploitation;
- Commemorate and mourn the people who suffered and died as a result of the slave trade, and recognise the coerced economic contribution that they made;
- Celebrate the people who courageously resisted slavery and fought for abolition and emancipation;
- Acknowledge and repair, as far as possible, the negative effects in the present day of historical slavery;
- Promote ideas of human dignity, equality and freedom.¹⁰

They hope that in this consultation, they can completely decolonise the public space and recognise Colston not as an individual to be celebrated but rather as a slave trader that has no place in Bristol's streets, given his many crimes.

⁹ Countering Colston - Campaign to Decolonise Bristol <<https://counteringcolston.wordpress.com/what-do-we-want/>>

¹⁰ Ibid.

Other Representatives could be: Legal Representative for the Colston 4, Protestors from June 7th, Anti-Colston Activist Groups, Journey to Justice etc

Seeing that, there are a lot of differing opinions. The City Council and National Government established the "We are Bristol History Committee" made up of different stakeholders. Over the course of the next year, each group consults with the public and their respective Organisations to decide what the final fate of the Colston Statue should be.

It is now January 5 2021, the We Are Bristol History Commission Convenes for its final meeting after all its members have completed their research. **They must now decide the ultimate fate of the statue, now that it has been successfully fished out of the Bristol Harbour.**

EXAMPLE: TIMELINE OF THE COLSTON STATUE (POST-

COMMITTEE)

As this is a resolved case, the following Timeline is what actually happened. This can be given to students at the end of the Activity to compare their solution with what happened in real life, and see how their decision may or may not have deviated.

JUNE - AUGUST 2021

The **We are Bristol History committee**, surveyed 14,000 citizens of Bristol and asked them:

1. **Do you agree or disagree that the Colston statue should be put on display in a museum in Bristol?** If you don't agree that the statue should be in a museum, please tell us what you think should happen to it instead? If you agree that the statue should be in a museum permanently, please tell us how you would like to see it displayed.
2. **What should be in the plinth space?**
 - Update the plaque on the plinth to reflect the events of 7 June 2020;
 - Use the plinth for temporary artworks / sculptures;
 - Use the plinth for a permanent artwork / sculpture;
 - Keep the plinth but leave it empty;
 - If 'other', please specify.
3. **How do you feel about the statue being pulled down?** Please tell us why you feel this way¹¹

JUNE 2021

The Statue of Colston is placed in the Local Museum the M-Shed as part of a temporary exhibition.¹²

13 DECEMBER 2021

¹¹ Burch-Brown, J & Cole, T et al. 2022. The Colston Statue: What next? We Are Bristol History Commission Short Report. Bridging Histories: Bristol

¹² JJ Donaghue, "Where is the Edward Colston statue now after being removed by protestors?", *Bristol Live*, January 5, 2022.

The so-called Colston 4 begin their trial at the Bristol Crown Court accused of illegal criminal damage, if found guilty they will face up to 10 years in prison.

29 DECEMBER 2021

The temporary exhibition is ended, and the Colston Statue is placed in storage in the L-Shed of the History Museum. This area 'contains collections which the museum does not have space to display, but you can book a 'behind the scenes' tour of the L Shed for free.'¹³

5 JANUARY 2022

All four defendants of the Court case are cleared of criminal damage after jurors are urged by the defence to 'be on the right side of history.'¹⁴

4 FEBRUARY 2022

The We are Bristol History Commission released their report. They Summarise their findings as¹⁵:

The Final Fate Is Still to Be Decided, for Now Colston Remains in Storage as of March 2022.

ANNEX 1

Overview of Optional Videos for a Starter

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Damien Gayle, "Path of resistance: a timeline of protest against Edward Colston," *The Guardian*, January 5, 2022.

¹⁵ Burch-Brown, J & Cole, T et al. 2022. The Colston Statue: What next? We Are Bristol History Commission Short Report. Bridging Histories: Bristol

Activity to Worksheet: Introduce Students to the Topic

GENERAL WORLDWIDE CONTEXT

BBC 4: [Timeline: Statues felled and vandalised following Black Lives Matter protests](#)
Run Time: 03:02

It shows both perspectives for keeping or removing statues. Collage of protest footage and different stakeholders with varied perspectives speaking on the toppling. (Politicians, General Public, Activists etc.) Collection of primary source material with no additional narrative. Could source to allow students to get an introduction to the topic and form their own opinions. No other narrative or narration, just primary sources.

BBC: [Statues are falling but what should replace them?](#)
Run Time: 06:20

A timeline of statue topplings in the UK from pre to post Summer 2020 BLM protests. Gives an overview of different pro/against perspectives on statue removals and the role of history in statues. Includes decision-makers, activists and the general public on the street about the debate. It also speaks about the relation of the statues to the history curriculum in the UK and a future outlook. Uses interviews, social media extracts, archival material, and footage of the scale of the protests, with no other narrative or narration, just primary source material.

BRISTOL/COLSTON SPECIFIC CONTEXT

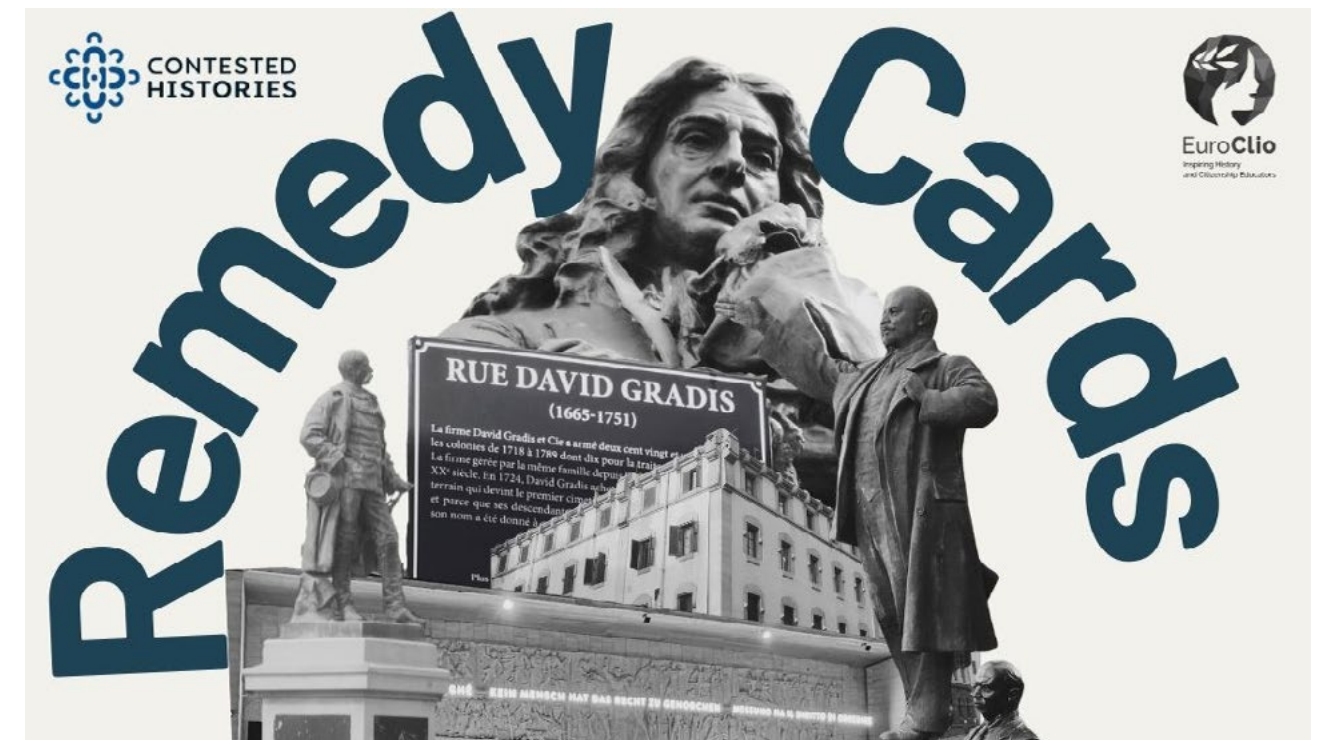
The Independent: [Who was slave trader Edward Colston and why was his statue pulled down?](#)
Run Time: 03:02

Gives a wide overview of the history and legacy of Colston using archival material. Shows the legacy of Colston across Bristol and his prominence in the city. Shows different perspectives of stakeholders, including members of government and the Bristol mayor. Ends the video with the “conversation now turns to what will fill the empty space that remains.” Providing a good segway for discussion.

ITV News: [Why was the statue of Edward Colston so controversial?](#)
Run Time: 03:07

Given an overview of the protests and the symbolism. Includes stakeholder clips such as protestors, the Mayor, #Rhodesmustfall in Oxford and gives a historical overview. Lacks views on those against the removal and focuses more on the progressive stakeholders.

ANNEX 2: REMEDY CARD PACK



CONTESTED HISTORIES **EuroClio**
Inspiring History and Citizenship Education

Across Europe, diverse societies are contending with contestations over statues, monuments, street names, and other markers that project a collective historical memory on public spaces.

Inclusive societies need commemorative landscapes that reflect the collective nature and values of the communities they serve.

The following remedy cards, illustrate the creative ways across the continent that European Decision-Makers have been responding to contested objects in their public spaces. They present an overview of the six main responses: Status Quo, Contextualisation, Resignification, Repurposing, Relocation and Removal.

More Examples and Case Studies can be found at:
<https://contestedhistories.org/>

Status Quo

Keeping the Monument as is



1

Contextualisation

Additive Measure



2

Dont Change Anything



In certain situations, there may be reasons for retaining the status quo regardless of protests or public opinion.

Example: The statue of French General, Louis Faïdherbe statue in Saint-Louis, Senegal remained in place to retain the cities status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site

You can choose this if you need more time to make a decision.

Image Credits: HaguardDuNord CC BY-SA 3.0

1

Add New Information



In certain situations, there may be reasons for retaining the status quo regardless of protests or public opinion. The most immediate and least complex remedy that can be the least intrusive.

Example: In Bordeaux, France street names of traders in enslaved people, were contextualised with information on the history of their namesakes.

You can choose this if you want to add additional information to an object without altering the original

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2

Resignification

Redefine

3

Repurpose

Transform

4

Redefining the Object



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Through transforming its signalling, Includes:
Renaming
Altering the Monument
Adding a Counter Monument or Having artists work on an existing monument to create a new interpretation

Example: In Bolzano, Italy, a large bas-relief that depicts Benito Mussolini was retained with artistic intervention. Following a public contest, s-relief. In 2017, the quote 'Nobody Had the Right to Obey' from political theorist Hannah Arendt, written in the three local languages, was added in neon-LED lights.

You can choose this if you want a creative solution that keeps some parts of the old object while adding a modern reinterpretation to it

Image Credits: Bartleby08 CC BY-SA 4.0

3

Transform the Object



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Transforming the object/site to have a new purpose.

Example: The Former Political Prison, La Modelo in Barcelona, Spain used to house political prisoners during the Francoist regime. In the modern era, it has been repurposed to house a Kindergarten and offer tours of the former Prison space.

You can choose this if you think of a way the object can be transformed to provide a new function

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4

CONTESTED HISTORIES

Relocation

Move

5

CONTESTED HISTORIES

Removal

Erase

6

CONTESTED HISTORIES

Move the Object

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Moving the contested object to another site within the commemorative landscape
Example: Statue Parks in **Lithuania** and **Hungary**, where statues related to the USSR are stored together and open to the public.

You can choose this if you think a new location would be less controversial or if a museum is willing to accept the object

5

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CONTESTED HISTORIES

Erasure

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Withdrawing the contested object from the commemorative landscape and public view, either temporarily or permanently
Example: Following widespread protest that led to the toppling of the statue of Edward Colston, into **Bristol Harbour, United Kingdom**. The city has permanently withdrawn the statue from public space.

You can choose this if it is the most appropriate response and additive measures cannot be done and relocation not possible.

6

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ANNEX 3: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Aggrandize-ment	The act of making something larger/making it seem more important
Almshouses	A type of local charitable organisation which houses people.
Assuaging	Acting in a way that minimises discomfort
Benevolence	Expressing goodwill
Bequeathed	Donated
Carceral Sites	Gulag, internment camp, torture site etc
Diffusing	Spread something out
Disseminated	Published and spread widely
Dissent	Opposition
Dysentery and scurvy	Infection which causes diarrhoea and a disease of lack of vitamin C, common for sailors
Endeavoured	Trying hard to achieve something
Engrossing	Large and attention grabbing
Hedged	Limited
Indomitably	Doing something bravely/without fear
Markers	Placard, Mural, Signage etc

Memorials	Grave or other edifice that commemorates casualties of war, civil unrest, or other tragedy. Mournful rather than celebratory.
Monuments	Statue or similar structure that commemorates an individual or event's legacy. Celebratory rather than mournful.
Names	Street, square, building/institution, etc. named after an individual or event with a contested legacy.
Philanthropist	Someone that gives generous donations to charities.
Probationship	Their tasks and duties
Renown	Famous
Shrewd	Makes sharp and careful judgements
Steadily	In a regular and controlled manner
Stewardship	Looking after/taking care over something/or someone
Supplication	Asking for something
Reviled	Hated and widely criticised
Unobtrusive	Doing something in a subtle manner that doesn't draw attention to it