



Why is trade significant to the City of Bristol?

Very Important Vocabulary

Trade: The action of buying, selling, or exchanging goods and services between people, companies, or countries.

Merchant: A person who buys and sells goods, especially in large amounts or internationally.

Economy: The system of how money is made and used within a particular country or region.

Export: To send goods to another country for sale.

Import: To bring goods into a country from abroad for sale.

Slave Trade: The historical practice of buying, selling, and transporting enslaved people, particularly Africans, across the Atlantic Ocean.

Enslaved: Being forced to work without pay and without the freedom to leave or make choices.

Philanthropist: A person who donates money or resources to help others, especially through charitable causes.

Controversial: Something that causes disagreement or debate.

Bristol, Trade and the Tudor Period

During the Tudor period, from 1485 to 1603, Bristol became an important trading city. As a busy port, it was a hub where ships arrived and departed, carrying goods that were bought and sold across different regions. One of the most famous ships from this time was The Matthew, which sailed from Bristol to explore new lands. Trade was crucial to the city because it brought wealth and people, helping Bristol to grow and prosper. The main goods traded included wool, cloth, wine, and fish. These products were exchanged with other countries, making Bristol a key player in international trade. This constant movement of goods and people made Bristol wealthier and more significant, contributing to its development into a thriving city.

Edward Colston

Merchant

Philanthropist: Funded schools, supported hospitals and built churches

Member of Parliament

Involvement in the Royal African Company

Edward Colston Controversy

Involvement in the Slave Trade

Philanthropy

Public debate and protests



What was the Slave Trade?

The Forced transportation of enslaved Africans to the Americas and England, this was the largest forced migration in history.

Approximately 12 – 15 million people (some historians suggest this figure is higher) were forcibly transported from their homelands in Africa to European colonies and plantations between 1500 and 1870. The labour of enslaved people was used in the Americas to produce goods such as tobacco, cotton, sugar and indigo dye. The exploitation of enslaved people made many Europeans, including the British, extremely wealthy. It is estimated that British ships made around 10,000 voyages across the Atlantic, transporting approximately 3.4 million people, of whom only 2.6 million survived the journey. British port cities such as: London, Liverpool and Bristol rapidly expanded due to the wealth acquired by their involvement in the slave trade.

What was Bristol's Role in the Slave Trade?

Bristol was a major port in the slave trade, especially in the 17th and 18th centuries. Bristol merchants and shipowners financed and managed many of the slave ships. Bristol saw the forced transportation of millions of Africans to the Americas. Bristol was a crucial part of the triangular trade routes, which involved 3 main stages:

1. Ships from Bristol sailed to Africa: they carried goods such as textiles, rum and firearms, which were exchanged for enslaved Africans.
2. Middle passage: these enslaved Africans were transported across the Atlantic to the Americas, where they were sold in exchange for commodities like sugar, tobacco and cotton.
3. Ships then returned to Bristol with these goods, which were sold for profit, fuelling the economy.

Bristol was home to several prominent slave trading companies and individuals such as 'The Royal African Company' and the Bristol Old Bank. Wealthy merchants and prominent families in Bristol, such as the Canynges and the Pinney family were deeply involved in the slave trade.

Controversy

Today, Bristol's involvement in the slave trade is a subject of significant historical scrutiny and debate. Monuments, public spaces and historical figures associated with the trade are being/have been re-evaluated in the context of their legacies.

The Industrial Revolution and Trade

The Industrial Revolution had a significant impact on Bristol's trade. As industries grew, Bristol's port became even busier, handling new goods like coal, iron, and machinery. The city's role as a major industrial hub expanded, with increased manufacturing and the export of industrial products. This period also brought more jobs and people to Bristol, further boosting its economy and solidifying its importance as a trading city. The changes during the Industrial Revolution helped transform Bristol into a key center of trade and industry.

Trade in Bristol Timeline

