Mary Seacole
Videoconference support materials KS1
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Curriculum links

KS1 History

The visit will link to KS1 History work on Mary Seacole, the life of a famous person, and is recommended as linking to work on Florence Nightingale and 'people who help us'. Mary Seacole can also be studied during Black History Month, although study of her life is relevant throughout the year. An understanding of her life experiences, and the reasons for her actions, will help pupils develop a deeper understanding of the diversity of experiences within Victorian Britain and across the British Empire at this time.

Session description

The actor will be dressed in costume as Mary Seacole, but will initially introduce the character and how we know about her from the book she wrote, so that children are not confused into thinking they have met the 'real' Mary Seacole. This also allows the actor to answer pupils questions out of character at the end of the session, reflecting back on Mary's life in general. The main part of the session is a fun, interactive dramatisation is fun, in which pupils will be encouraged to dramatise parts of the narrative (such as nursing wounded soliders or travelling on a sailing ship) and to ask and answer questions.

The actress tells of Mary’s childhood in Jamaica, her extensive travels as a Victorian buisness woman, her time in the Crimea and her old age in London. The actress will reflect on Mary’s position as a black British woman in Victorian society, and on her ability as a nurse (using skills learnt from her mother in Jamaica), buisness woman (running the British hotel at which she cooked and sold provisions to soliders) and as a biographer (who wrote her own successful biography, from which we know about her life).
Practical guidelines

To maximise the enjoyment and value of the videoconference please consider the following:

- check your equipment is working prior to the day of your videoconference (please arrange a test call with JVCS and the Museum may wish to arrange a test call with you too)
- please call 020 7814 5574 for any videoconferencing enquiries prior to and after sessions
- if you need to get in touch during sessions please ring 020 7814 5650
- seat your pupils so that they can both see and be seen. We suggest that they sit on the floor in rows with the back row on chairs or benches
- please join in with any interaction yourself, and encourage pupils to join in
- seat yourself close to the microphone, in a position from which you can be seen and heard by our facilitator and from which you can best support your pupils' interaction. It usually helps if you can repeat pupils’ questions with the name of the pupil who has asked the question
- responsible teachers should not leave the classroom or hall when the session is taking place
- please note that you are responsible for students’ behaviour at all times during the session
- **please note that no filming or recording of the videoconference is permitted**
- **please fill in an evaluation form for the session. Your feedback is very important to us and our funding depends on it.**

Cancellation charges

We are able to offer these sessions free to schools thanks to generous funding. However, any cancellations will incur a charge. For details of cancellation charges please see www.museumoflondon.org.uk/schoolsbookings
Videoconference preparation and pre-session activities

To maximise the enjoyment and value of the visit please consider the following:

• introduce to the group some general background about the Museum of London
• undertake at least one of the suggested pre-session activities.

1. Sing the Mary Seacole song with your pupils before the conference (song on page 7).

2. Look at books and websites about Victorian times and about Mary Seacole. Mark the Crimean War on a time line, how long ago was this? Discuss the role of women and black people in Britain at this time.

3. Read extracts from *The Wonderful Adventures of Mary Seacole* to your class.

4. Look on a map of the world and find some of the places (Jamaica, The Crimea, London) that Mary Seacole went to during her life. Draw them on the map.

5. Discuss with the group what sort of questions they would like to ask and why.

6. Introduce to the group some general background about the Museum of London.

What was London like in the past?

Browse the Museum of London online resources for materials to introduce pupils to the themes and concepts they will encounter during their session. Visit the Museum’s website at [www.museumoflondon.org.uk](http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk) for downloadable resources.
Follow-up activities

These activities are designed to apply and extend the knowledge gained from your visit to Museum of London back in the classroom.

1. Set up a role play area of the British hotel and help children act out healing and feeding the soldiers. Children can use this to help imagine Mary’s life.

2. Make a list of adjectives to describe the conditions in the Crimea that Mary Seacole worked in.

3. Write a diary extract or draw a scene representing a day in the life of Mary Seacole.

4. Create a ‘What we know about Mary Seacole’ book following the visit and after meeting the character. Include a contents page, glossary and page numbers.

5. Imagine that you are Mary Seacole and you are looking for help in the British Hotel in the Crimea. Design an advertisement for staff. Think about the types of staff you would need and their duties.

6. Discuss children’s own experiences of doctors, nurses and hospitals and create a class poster comparing Victorian health care with that of today.

7. Design an advert for a miracle ‘cure’. Include a picture of the product, a description of what it will cure, the price and comments from satisfied customers.

8. Look on a map of the world and find all the places that Mary Seacole went to during her life. Draw them on the map.
Background information

Character profile

Name: Mary Seacole
Born: 1805, Kingston, Jamaica
Died: 1881, London

You will meet Mary Seacole at different times in her life. The storyteller will come in and out of character to tell her life story.

Family history
Mary Seacole was born in Kingston in about 1805 of a Scottish army officer and a native of Kingston. As she was of mixed race Mary was called a Mulatto or Creole. Her mother was a doctor using traditional herbal medicines from Jamaica and English medicines to cure disease. Being a doctoress was one of the few jobs open to black women. Mary often helped her mother attend the sick, including British army officers. Eventually Mary took over the running of her mother’s boarding house and became a skilful and respected medical practitioner. Mary decided to travel to Panama to treat cholera victims. She returned to Jamaica where she learned about the war in the Crimea and decided to head there to tend the soldiers.

Her role in the Crimea
Mary applied to the War Office in England for money to set up a hospital in the Crimea but her application went unanswered. She tried to see the Secretary of War, Sidney Herbert, but was told that he was too busy. She then tried the medical department. She even applied to be an assistant to Florence Nightingale, but was told that there were no vacancies. People were prejudiced against the colour of Mary’s skin and refused her money and jobs. There was no organised provision of food for soldiers in the Crimea. Instead ‘sutlers’ sold overpriced food and drink to the soldiers. Mary decided that she
could recoup the money she had spent on her fare to the Crimea by becoming a sutler herself. Mary opened the British Hotel, with the help of a distant relative. The British Hotel was very different to the other canteens serving wholesome food at reasonable prices, along with homemade drinks. Mary also gave medicine to soldiers and attended to the wounded behind the frontline, despite its dangers.

Her old age in London
After the Crimean War Mary found herself bankrupt in London. Soldiers who were grateful to her for her work in the Crimea raised a fund to help support her, and she wrote a best seller about her life entitled *The wonderful adventures of Mrs Seacole in Many Lands*. She spent her old age between Jamaica and London and died as a well off, respected member of London society. She is buried in London.
Mary Seacole song

The song below was printed in *Punch* to be sung to the tune of ‘Old King Cole’.
The children will sing one simplified verse during the video conference.
First sing ‘Old King Cole’ with your pupils – and then teach them the following verse:

**Mary Seacole was a kindly old soul,**
**And a kindly old soul we’re told,**
She gave her aid to all who prayed,
To hungry, and sick, and cold.

As an extension you could sing the whole song verse by verse, explain it was printed in a paper during Mary’s lifetime. The words are difficult so you will need to discuss what they mean with your pupils.
Your pupils might like to make up their own song about Mary Seacole using the tune of ‘Old King Cole’.

**A Stir for Seacole**

DAME SEACOLE was a kindly old soul,
And a kindly old soul was she;
You might call for your pot, you might call for your pipe,
In her tent on ‘the Col’ so free.
Her tent on ‘the Col’. where a welcome toll
She took of the passing throng,
Toiled wearily along.
That berry-brown face, with a kind heart's trace
Impressed in each wrinkle sly,
Was a sight to behold, through the snow-clouds rolled
Across that iron sky.
The cold without gave a zest, no doubt,
To the welcome warmth within:
But her smile, good old soul, lent heat to the coal,
And power to the pannikin.
No store she set by the epaulette,
Be it worsted or gold-lace;
For K.C.B., or plain private SMITH,
She had still one pleasant face.
But not alone was her kindness shown
To the hale and hungry lot,
Who drank her grog and eat her prog,
And paid their honest shot.
The sick and sorry can tell the story

Of her nursing and dosing deeds.
Regimental M.D. never worked as she
In helping sick men's needs.
Of such work, God knows, was as much as she chose,
That dreary winter-tide,
When Death hung o'er the damp and pestilent camp,
And his scythe swung far and wide.
And when winter past, and spring at last
Made the mud-sea a sea of flowers,
Doughnut, race and review her brown face knew,
Still pleasant, in sunshine or showers.
Still she'd take her stand, as blithe and bland,
With her stores, the jolly old soul-
And - be the right man in the right place who can -

The right woman was Dame SEACOLE
She gave her aid to all who prayed,
To hungry, and sick, and cold:
Open band and heart, alike ready to part
Kind words, and acts, and gold.
And now the good soul is 'in the hole,'
What red-coat in all the land,
But to set her upon her legs again
Will not lend a willing hand?