

ASANTE GOLD

AT THE WALLACE COLLECTION



This resource is for Key Stage 3-4 History teachers.

It includes a suggested enquiry question and a series of lesson outlines to help you and your class investigate.

An accompanying resource provides contextual information and details about a group of objects at the Wallace Collection that were made in the West African state of Asante, in present-day Ghana, and formed part of the treasure of King Kofi Karikari of Asante.

Through these objects, we can learn more about the history of the powerful Asante state, the importance of gold, trade, and the growth of British imperial power in the 19th century. This can support KS3-4 world history elements.

Why teach about African and Asante history?

[African History] is 'a History which has been neglected for years, and it's largely without written records. But it is preserved for us, in the gold and statues, in the culture, art and legends of the people.'

Dr. Gus Casely-Hayford

Since the 19th century, when philosopher Friedrich Hegel claimed Africa was a 'dark continent', the rich diverse history of Africa has been written out of world history, and consequently, the continent's place within our own national, British story.

History education is enhanced through covering more diverse histories: it becomes more complete.

This resource was developed by the BeBold History Network with the Wallace Collection Learning team.

How might teaching African and Asante history support curriculum demands?

The 2021 report published by Ofsted, Research Review Series: History, is clear that students should be given opportunities in history to:

- Study sources which are diverse in historical setting (location) and type, including non-textual sources
- Learn about diverse narratives
- Reflect on their identity and place within history in modern multi-cultural Britain
- Study their community's diverse past
- Learn about diverse cultures and civilisations in their own right

It is also clear on the national curriculum that diverse histories ought to feature in any KS3 curriculum.

The history of the Asante people might:

- Help us tell pre-colonial stories which give context and raise new questions about the legitimacy of European colonisation of the continent.
- Reveal new insights about the nature of British and pan-European imperialism on the African Continent.
- Raise questions about how the British Empire functioned, what the Empire was for, and whether this was the same everywhere.
- Give agency to students of all backgrounds in their history and help them see their place in the stories of Britain.

Why use objects as a starting point?

One of the core second order concepts taught in UK schools history is evidence or evidential study. Moreover, at GCSE, all major exam boards include source-based questions in which students are required to draw detailed inferences from traces from the past (sources).

Objects and material culture form a rich ground for interesting and detailed sources which we can unpick in the history classroom. We can utilise them to support developing source work from Year 7 onwards.

What might the Wallace Collection Asante gold reveal about the British Empire?

The question stem *reveal* or *revealing* helps centre this enquiry firmly in evidence. It also enables a particular focus on objects. Through this stem, teachers might adapt this enquiry to fit a variety of purposes. For instance, you might ask students to consider what Asante gold might reveal about European versus African interpretations of art.

What follows are suggested lessons and activities for what the Wallace Collection's Asante gold objects might reveal about the British Empire and colonialism.

LESSONS

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1. The Asante Empire and its art
 2. What might the Anglo-Asante Wars reveal about the British Empire?
 3. How did Richard Wallace acquire the Asante gold objects?
 4. What might the Wallace Collection's Asante gold reveal about the British Empire?



Trophy head, 18th or 19th century

THE ASANTE EMPIRE AND ITS ART

Before teaching about the interactions between Britain and Asante, it is important to first visit pre-colonial Gold Coast, its art and culture.

Possible activities

Using high-resolution pictures of the Asante objects from the Wallace Collection, ask students what a selection of objects might reveal about:

- The craftspeople who made them
- Those who ordered or paid for them to be made
- The availability of gold in the region
- The art and appreciation of art in the region
- The culture or ideals in the region

You may wish to differentiate by giving students possible answers for your first few objects.

For example: might the Trophy Head reveal that the craftsmen were a) skilled or b) unskilled?



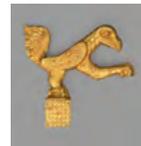
Trophy head



Knife



Knife handle



Terminals



Rings



Swords



Neck chains

WHAT MIGHT THE ANGLO-ASANTE WARS REVEAL ABOUT THE BRITISH EMPIRE?

Here you might cover the first two Anglo-Asante Wars coupled with European attitudes towards Africa.

Possible activities

Begin with Friedrich Hegel's words (c. 1830) that Africa was a 'dark continent' and unpick with students what this might reveal about European attitudes towards Africa.

Following this, you might provide some reading about the first two Anglo-Asante Wars and subsequently ask students if they are surprised by what happened in light of their discussion earlier.

Finally, ask students what this might reveal about the British Empire. You could provide sentence starters such as:

- A. _____ might reveal that...
- B. _____ clearly reveals that...
- C. The _____ suggests that _____ because...
- D. It isn't that clear but _____ probably reveals that _____ because...
- E. We might infer from _____ that _____ because...
- F. _____ is very revealing because it probably tells us that _____ because...

HOW DID RICHARD WALLACE ACQUIRE THE ASANTE GOLD OBJECTS?

In this lesson, you might want students to consider the impact of British Imperial strategies on communities, and evidence of this in museum collections.

Possible activities

Begin with the Trophy Head (now at the Wallace Collection) and ask students where they think this object is now. Is it in Ghana, for instance? Who might look after it?

Reveal it is housed in London and ask students to consider how this might have happened.

You might then want to teach about the Third Anglo-Asante War before revealing how Richard Wallace was able to acquire the objects.

You may also want to pre-teach key words including **acquire** at this point.

Finally, ask students to consider what this might reveal about the British Empire, and stage a discussion before asking students to write two sentences using the starters provided in the previous lesson.

WHAT MIGHT THE WALLACE COLLECTION ASANTE GOLD OBJECTS REVEAL ABOUT THE BRITISH EMPIRE?

In this lesson, students should bring all their ideas together.

Possible activities

You might stage the first part of this lesson as a discussion: what might this case study reveal about the British Empire, its strategies and the effect these had on communities around the world?

What might this reveal about the existence of, or nature of, the Civilising Mission in Africa (a term you will likely have to pre-teach)?

You might finish this lesson by asking students to answer the question:



What might the Wallace Collection Asante gold objects reveal about the British Empire?

Perhaps students could write an email to the Wallace Collection detailing their opinion on what they have learnt.

Get in touch with us at schools@wallacecollection.org.