

The Windrush

What Was the Empire Windrush?

HMT Empire Windrush first began sailing in 1930 and was formerly called MV Monte Rosa. It was originally used as a cruise ship; however, during the Second World War, it was used as a troopship to transport German soldiers from country to country. At the end of the war, it was seized by the United Kingdom as a 'prize of war' and was used to transport British troops instead. It was then that the ship was given the new name - Empire Windrush. It served as a British vessel until March 1954 when, while sailing off the coast of Algeria, a fire broke out. The Empire Windrush could not be rescued and eventually sank in the Mediterranean Sea.



What Was Life like for the Windrush Generation?

The media celebrated the arrival of passengers of the Empire Windrush who had come to Britain to help rebuild the country's economy. However, many of the Windrush generation faced challenges and a mixed response from society. While some British people were welcoming, many Black immigrants suffered discrimination and struggled to find housing because of their race; some felt excluded from much of the social and economic life around them. There were instances of violence and riots broke out in some major cities.

Although they had hoped to find jobs in areas that they had worked in before emigrating from the Caribbean, many accepted positions that they were overqualified for. Many of the Windrush generation worked in key industries, such as transport, manufacturing and the National Health Service (NHS); they played an important part in rebuilding Britain's economy.

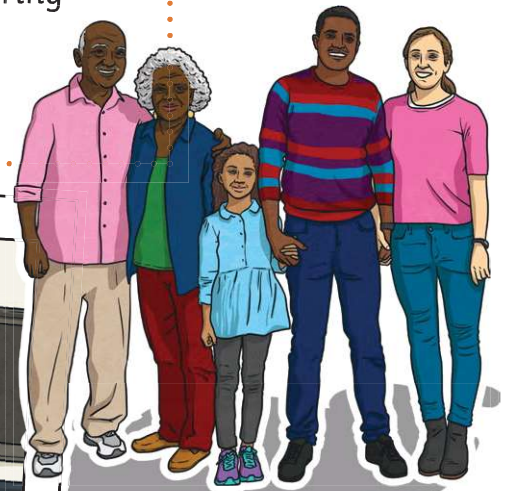
Who Were the Windrush Generation?

In 1948, the United Kingdom was recovering from the devastating effects of the Second World War; the country was struggling financially and had a shortage of workers. The British government tried to encourage members of the Commonwealth of Nations to emigrate by offering affordable travel to anyone who wanted to work in the UK - this attracted many people from Caribbean countries.

In May 1948, the Empire Windrush made one of its most famous voyages and transported 1027 passengers from Kingston in Jamaica to London; these people later became known as the Windrush generation. Although many people only planned to stay for a few years, the majority remained in the UK permanently.



Despite facing prejudices, the Windrush generation played a vital role in shaping British society by introducing their culture, food and music. In 1959, an indoor Caribbean carnival was created in London; in 1966, this became an outdoor festival known as the Notting Hill Carnival. It was created as a celebration of cultural diversity and is now an annual event in London, helping to bring people from different communities together. It is famous for its vibrant colours, dancing and lively atmosphere.



What Was the Windrush Scandal?

In 2018, some of the Windrush generation, who had lived in Britain for years, were threatened with deportation from the UK and arrested. This became known as the Windrush scandal. Although people had worked and lived in the UK for decades, some were told that they were living in the UK illegally because they had no official paperwork. While some people lost their jobs, others were refused NHS care or benefits.

In April 2018, the British Prime Minister, Theresa May, apologised for the government's treatment of the Windrush generation and assured their right to remain in the UK. National Windrush Day was established on 22nd June 2018; it became an annual day of recognition in order to honour the contributions that the Windrush generation made to British society and culture.

Disclaimer: Sensitive and/or upsetting topics may emotionally impact your students due to past experiences. You should consider whether this content is appropriate and ensure adequate support is available for anyone affected.

Questions

1. When is National Windrush Day? Tick one.

- ☐ 20th April
☐ 21st May
☐ 22nd June
☐ 23rd July

2. Draw **four** lines and match each sub-heading to the corresponding sentence from that section.

What Was the Empire Windrush?

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Who Were the Windrush Generation?

The media celebrated the arrival of passengers of the Empire Windrush who had come to Britain to help rebuild the country's economy.

What Was Life like for the Windrush Generation?

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What Was the Windrush Scandal?

It served as a British vessel until March 1954.

3. Look at the sub-heading called **What Was the Windrush Scandal?**

Find and copy one word which means the same as 'against the law'.

4. What was Empire Windrush first called?

5. Fill in the missing words.

It became an _____ day of recognition in order to honour the contributions that the Windrush generation made to British _____ and culture.

6. Why do you think many of the Windrush generation decided to stay in the UK permanently?

7. Name one way in which you think life may have been different for people moving from the Caribbean to the United Kingdom.

8. Predict what you may see or hear at Notting Hill Carnival.

9. ... it was seized by the United Kingdom as a 'prize of war'...

What do you think the author meant by the term 'prize of war'?
