

ADVERTISEMENT FOR BOXING LESSONS, 1822

REFERENCE: ZMD 167/1/1080 | SUGGESTED AGE GROUPS: KS3, KS4, LIFELONG LEARNERS | TOPIC AREAS: BLACK PRESENCE, SPORT, CRIME & PUNISHMENT, MIGRATION

BILL RICHMOND

During the eighteenth-century a number of men of African descent found fame as boxers. One of the most famous was Bill Richmond who was brought over from America by Earl Percy (later 2nd Duke of Northumberland). Bill Richmond's parents were enslaved people, legally this meant

that Bill was the property of his parents "owners". It is unclear if Bill had become free by the time he met Percy.

SAM ROBINSON

The advertisement here is for boxing (pugilism) lessons at the Blue Bell Inn at Alnwick in 1822. It is possible that "Mr Robeson" is actually Sam Robinson, one of Bill Richmond's pupils. Robeson and Robinson could easily be mistaken when said out loud, especially if spoken with an unfamiliar accent. It is also likely that Sam Robinson could not read or write.



Sam Robinson was born in New York in 1778. He came to England at about the age of 20 and worked as a servant in London. In the early 1800s Bill Richmond began to train Sam, who was known professionally as “Robinson the Black”. Robinson took part in fights in and around London during the 1800s-1810s. Boxing contests often took place in or near a public house.

In August 1816 Robinson was staying at a pub called the Barefaced Stag in Enfield (North London). One of the customers, John Draper, became drunk and challenged Robinson to a fight. Robinson refused and said that he would call the law if Draper tried to hit him. Draper was found the next day drowned in the pub’s well. The court tried John Tuck, the landlord of the pub, for the murder at the Old Bailey.

After the court case, Sam Robinson, left London and travelled to Scotland. The newspapers report fights that he had in Doncaster, Yorkshire and County Durham along the way, which probably funded his journey. In 1821 Robinson appeared at Durham Races, in a boxing booth. This is the last time he is directly named by the newspapers as a participant in a boxing match. However, he is mentioned in an article dated August 1825, about one of his pupils. “Salmon” died of the injuries that he received during a match in Muire, Scotland.

OTHER ONLINE RESOURCES

BBC History Extra website, page about Bill Richmond by Greg Jenner (Horrible Histories): <https://www.historyextra.com/period/georgian/who-was-black-terror-bill-richmond-slave-bare-knuckle-boxing/>

Independent newspaper website, page about Bill Richmond by biographer Luke G Williams: <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/history/bill-richmond-black-boxer-wowed-court-george-iv-and-taught-lord-byron-spar-10473577.html>

The National Portrait Gallery website, page with portrait and biographical information about Bill Richmond:
<https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw17250/Bill-Richmond-A-striking-view-of-Richmond>

Spartacus Educational website, page about Bill Richmond: <https://spartacus-educational.com/SLArichmond.htm>

BBC Newshour website, sound clip “From slavery to celebrity” (about 4 minutes): <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p06pz2nn>

BBC website, clip from “Black and British” by David Olusoga about Bill Richmond (about 2 minutes): <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p04gk0h9>

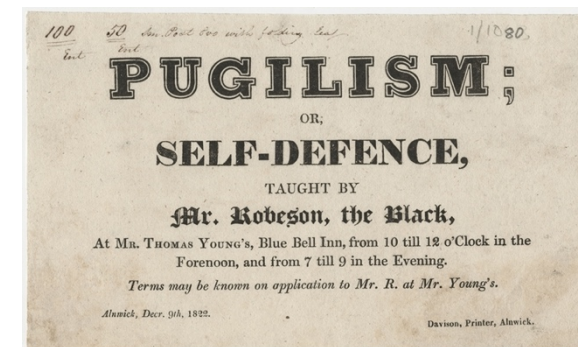
National Fairground and Circus Archive website (University of Sheffield), page about boxing booths:
<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/nfca/researchandarticles/boxingbooth>



LEARNING ACTIVITIES: ADVERTISEMENT FOR BOXING LESSONS, 1822

TOPIC: BLACK PRESENCE, SPORT, CRIME & PUNISHMENT, MIGRATION

SUBJECT AREAS: HISTORY, LITERACY, PHYSICAL EDUCATION



Background	Activity	Resources
<p>The advertisement here is for boxing (pugilism) lessons at the Blue Bell Inn at Alnwick in 1822. It is possible that “Mr Robeson” is actually Sam Robinson, one of Bill Richmond’s pupils. Robeson and Robinson could easily be mistaken when said out loud, especially if spoken with an unfamiliar accent. It is also likely that Sam Robinson could not read or write.</p>	<p>See: What is pugilism?</p> <p>See: What is this an advertisement for?</p> <p>See: Who is advertised as teaching the boxing lessons?</p> <p>See: Who is “Mr Robeson” thought to be?</p> <p>See: Where was Sam Robinson born?</p> <p>See: When did Sam Robinson come to England?</p> <p>See: What was Sam Robinson known as professionally?</p>	<p>https://austenvariations.com/pugilism-a-gentlemans-sport/</p> <p>http://www.bencaunt.co.uk/history-of-pugilism.html</p> <p>https://muse.jhu.edu/article/367775/pdf</p> <p>https://blogs.umass.edu/afroam391g-shabazz/files/2010/02/George-Yancy-on-the-Return-of-the-Black-Body.pdf</p> <p>https://wakespace.lib.wfu.edu/bitstream/handle/10339/82162/Lowe_wfu_0248M_1109_2.pdf</p> <p>https://thefactsofwhiteness.org/the-black-gaze/</p>
<p>Sam Robinson was born in New York in 1778. He came to England at about the age of 20 and worked as a servant in London. In the early 1800s Bill Richmond began to train Sam, who was known professionally as</p>	<p>Think: Do you think Sam was born a free man?</p> <p>Think: What is the difference between pugilism and boxing?</p> <p>Think: Are pugilism and self-defence the same thing?</p> <p>Think: Why was amateur boxing thought of as a “gentlemanly” sport?</p>	



<p>“Robinson the Black”. Robinson took part in fights in and around London during the 1800s-1810s. Boxing contests often took place in or near a public house.</p>	<p>Think: Why was professional pugilism (bare knuckle boxing) undertaken by minorities and those in the lower levels of society?</p> <p>Think: What divides and attitudes are shown by minorities competing in pugilism while being watched and bet on by gentlemen?</p> <p>Think: Why do you think Sam was known professionally as “Robinson the Black”? Was it necessary to state the colour of his skin?</p> <p>Think: Is pugilism a form of exploitation?</p> <p>Think: Do you think Sam had a choice whether he fought?</p>	
	<p>Do: Make a list of the connotations you associate with professional fighting.</p> <p>Do: Write a paragraph stating the implications that your list gives about professional fighters.</p> <p>Do: Think about the implications you have made about professional fighters. Consider this in relation to pugilism being an “acceptable” role for people of African descent. Discuss what this might say about the value, worth and recognition of humanity placed on these fighters from minority backgrounds.</p> <p>Do: Is fighting a sport? Discuss this in groups and debate whether boxing should be banned.</p>	



	<p>Do: Discuss whether there was a scale of choice over minorities taking up professional pugilism. Were they meeting a role that was expected of them; were there other opportunities open to them?</p> <p>Do: Research Oppositional Gazes. You could look at White Gaze, Imperial Gaze, Post-Colonial Gaze and Black Gaze.</p> <p>Do: Using what you have learned about Gazes, what can you infer about the gaze on the Black body in pugilism?</p> <p>Do: Say Robeson and Robinson out loud. Do they sound similar? Try changing your accent to see if you can make the words sound more or less similar.</p> <p>Do: Try this with your own name. What could your name be misinterpreted or misspelled as? Think about how this would make you feel. Does a misspelling or mispronunciation of your name make you feel misidentified?</p> <p>Do: Research how boxers are given their nicknames. Discuss whether using a name such as “Robinson the Black” exploits or celebrates the heritage of those of African descent.</p> <p>Do: Ask someone to give you a boxing nickname which refers to your heritage or an aspect of your appearance. How does this make you feel?</p>	
<p>During the eighteenth-century a number of men of African descent found fame as boxers. One of the most famous was Bill Richmond who was brought over from America by</p>	<p>See: During the eighteenth-century, which sport did a number of men of African descent find fame in?</p> <p>See: Legally, who was Bill Richmond “property” of when he was born?</p>	<p>https://spartacus-educational.com/SLArichmond.htm https://www.historyextra.com/period/georgian/who-was-black-terror-bill-richmond-slave-bare-knuckle-boxing/</p>



<p>Earl Percy (later 2nd Duke of Northumberland). Bill Richmond’s parents were enslaved people, legally this meant that Bill was the property of his parents “owners”. It is unclear if Bill had become free by the time he met Percy.</p> <p>Sam Robinson was born in New York in 1778. He came to England at about the age of 20 and worked as a servant in London. In the early 1800s Bill Richmond began to train Sam, who was known professionally as “Robinson the Black”. Robinson took part in fights in and around London during the 1800s-1810s. Boxing contests often took place in or near a public house.</p>	<p>See: Who brought Bill Richmond to England?</p> <p>See: Was Bill free when he came to England?</p> <hr/> <p>Think: Why was being a successful professional boxer an acceptable way for minorities to enter high society? Were there other ways for them to be accepted?</p> <p>Think: Were successful professional boxers of African descent actually accepted into high society? Were they ever viewed as peers?</p> <p>Think: Does society still ascribe “acceptable” roles to people of African descent and other minority backgrounds?</p> <p>Think: What does “equality” mean?</p> <p>Think: Is there equality in sports?</p> <p>Think: Are sports and politics connected?</p> <p>Think: Can you think of any moments in the recent past that showed an example of inequality in sports?</p> <p>Think: Can you think of any moments in sporting history that had a message about or impact relating to inequality?</p> <hr/> <p>Do: In groups, discuss what you think are the major issues of inequality in sports today.</p> <p>Do: Discuss how closely tied issues of inequality in sport relate to inequality in society.</p>	<p>https://www.bostonglobe.com/magazine/2019/08/21/why-are-black-males-only-supported-when-they-athletes/QwspMiHYguiEvhWi3VSI7L/story.html</p> <p>https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/mar/30/black-power-salute-1968-olympics</p> <p>https://www.history.com/news/1968-mexico-city-olympics-black-power-protest-backlash</p> <p>https://www.legacy.com/news/culture-and-history/the-long-loud-history-of-sports-and-politics-in-66-pictures/</p> <p>https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/2020/06/01/colin-kaepernick-kneeling-history/</p> <p>https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/55360210</p> <p>https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2019/may/09/i-thought-the-main-issue-in-womens-sports-was-equal-pay-i-was-wrong</p> <p>https://www.womeninsport.org/about-us/sexism-in-sport/</p>
---	---	---



Do: Is there a way for these issues to be rectified? Discuss what changes would have to be made to make sports more inclusive.

Do: Major sporting events such as the Olympics claim to be politically neutral and have banned political expression and demonstrations. Discuss whether you think this is the right approach for sporting events and event organisers to make.

Do: Choose a significant moment from sporting history related to politics or inequality. Make a list of the events that inspired and led up to that moment.

Do: Make a second list of the positive changes and repercussions that the event caused.

Do: Write a journalistic exposure of what you perceive as the major issues in sports today. You could refer to events that highlight these issues.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/08/sports/women-sports-equality.html>

<https://health.ucdavis.edu/health-news/newsroom/simone-biles-withdrawal-at-olympics-shines-light-on-need-to-recognize-mental-health/2021/07>

<https://www.npr.org/2021/07/12/1015239599/prince-william-and-boris-johnson-denounce-the-racist-abuse-of-englands-soccer-te>

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/oct/14/people-shunned-me-like-hot-lava-the-runner-who-raised-his-fist-and-risked-his-life>

<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2021/oct/14/michael-johnson-athletes-protesting-centres-of-power-getting-directly-involved>