

Heatonial Lucia. Jamaica 24th June 1755 unterestig keep . From Maya Skowett Dear Son, to Rayel San -

A Snow from newcastle which will vail in a few days from Montigo Bay which offen me an Opportunity in having the honor of writing you. By this bewel I work to rend you a Twitte the Swith catchen are bat new and for one perhaps my Good Hortune may while and I shall be happy to have One to pervent to you.

Sam under inclussion fulle Obligations to fin for your very leady attention to my Request by sinding each very lexpectable litters of lindit forthe Tood and for the so remited to me through the tigents Shave write Met "hop Vogelove, to send the hundr what Aslance Smay have in their hands I wing

Iprocured the original of a Letter wrote in my fam. by the General, To der A Clinton, when he told Ites = Excellency I was the strongest instance of highertio Munt that ever was in the service and that I down a Regiment for my Conduct in america; I am therefor now surely discover, of a Majority to pumpase I have wrote Sir & honge, to that Effect. I have been mon cruly treated than any man on the Vennie. Our Scheation here has been critical, ler are not without our franof an Insurrection amongs The higrous. The Extreme absurdity of hour people at home has Occasioned all this The Pious Bishop of London, and Mr Wilberfore with Othin have lass. thaveeds of discontent, and flattered these linfortuna puple with a prospect of brancepation . Heur this takes plan, aduce to your Most India Islands. - Itisa pity, that the Organal lights of manhind cannot be made the Standard of Government. It is a sad hesportun we can Only Justify by policy what monality londemas The Legislature may soften the setuation of these

ambition they should be as comfortable as possible during my absince . -That Tyrant Gen. G. is determined to make n situation as uncomfortable as possible, minte To accommedate his Countrymen, and because saved his Regement from being cut to puces in America .- I take the liberty of Inclosing you a Copy of a memorial, which was presented to the Thing, and his This wer was very Gracious and Plattering to me. That I should be provided for But your very hespectable frind Sir John Such thinks I shall be forgot . If sam not liminded by some person in power to his Mayesty. He talked of Tworting to the Suke of Northum Bioland He said three Lines of a letter from you and him would do the business Mun I was in Sown through Gin Goulas friends

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LETTER FROM JOHN SKERRETT TO RALPH CARR, 1788

REFERENCE: ZCE F/1/1/15/47 | SUGGESTED AGE GROUPS: KS2, KS3, KS4, LIFELONG LEARNERS | TOPIC AREAS: SLAVE TRADE, CONSUMERISM, EMPIRE

JOHN SKERRETT AND RALPH CARR

Northumberland Archives holds the Carr-Ellison family archive (ZCE). This letter is part of that collection. Ralph Ellison was an eighteenth-century merchant, based in Northumberland. He bought Hedgeley Hall, near Powburn, in 1786. The house is still in the Carr-Ellison family. The main focus of his trade was northern Europe, but he also tried to extend his business interests into America. We have found no evidence that he had direct business interests in the trade of enslaved people.

The Skerrett family were friends of the Carr family. There are a number of letters between various members of the two families in the archives. John Nicholas Skerrett was in the army. The letters from John to Ralph repeatedly mention John's wish for promotion and the money necessary to buy a commission. To become an officer in the army, a soldier needed to have a commission, which had to be paid for."

AMERICA



Skerrett refers to America several times in his letter. It seems that he fought with the British against the Americans during the American War of Independence (1775-1783). His letter gives the impression that he didn't receive the recognition that he felt he deserved.

LUCEA

Pronounced loo-sea (like the girls' name, Lucy). The British built Fort Charlotte at Lucea in 1746.

SLAVE CODES

In 1661 Barbados introduced the first "Slave Code", officially named "An Act for Better Ordering and Governing of Negroes". The Code defined people of African origin on the island as chattels – they were the property of slaveholders, to do with as they wanted. The Code gave the holders of enslaved people the right to punish, torture and kill them. Other British colonies introduced similar Slave Codes. Jamaica adopted a version of the Barbados Act in 1664.

REVOLT AND RESISTANCE

The structure of the plantation economies on islands like Jamaica meant that large enslaved African workforces were overseen by a very small number of white European slave holders. Revolt and resistance were a constant fear for the owners of plantations.

Resistance could take many forms; running away (it is estimated that 10% of enslaved people ran away from their holders), maintaining African traditions, refusing to work and even poisoning the food given to slave holders.

Large scale uprisings took place numerous times in Jamaica from 1655 until abolition in 1834. Tacky's Rebellion had occurred 28 years before the writing of Major Skerrett's letter and was therefore still within living memory. Takyi was a Ghanaian nobleman who led the 18-month uprising. (See links below for further information.)

MAROONS

The British took control of Jamaica from the Spanish in 1655. Some of the Africans who had been enslaved by the Spanish took this opportunity to run away into the dense Jamaican jungle and set up communities. They came to be known as Maroons. Further runaways from the British added to their numbers. During the late 1600s and early 1700s the Maroons were in conflict with the British and at war between 1728 and 1739 (The First Maroon War) and 1795-6



(The Second Maroon War). The Maroons used guerrilla tactics against the British, whose troops had greater numbers and more technologically advanced weapons.

WILBERFORCE AND THE BISHOP OF LONDON

At the time of this letter, the Society for the Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade had been meeting for little over a year. Opposition to the slave trade was becoming organised, particularly around the figure heads of William Wilberforce (Member of Parliament) and the Bishop of London. A parliamentary investigation into the trade (rather than slavery itself) was ordered by William Pitt, the Prime Minister, and published in April 1789.

It is interesting to note that Skerrett blames Wilberforce and the Bishop of London for raising the hopes of the enslaved people of Jamaica. This implies that the enslaved plantation workers were receiving, interpreting, and circulating news of political events in England.

MONEY

A very worthy and Respectable Naval Officer, and Merchant has made 50,000

According to the Bank of England Inflation Calculator this would have been worth at least £7.7 million in 2020. This was money made from selling the products grown and processed by enslaved people.

Skerrett also mentions letters of credit worth £1000. This would have been worth about £150,000 in 2020.

Letters of credit and remittances are ways of transferring money. The development of the trade in enslaved people meant that British merchants needed to be able to send and receive money across the Atlantic. During the eighteenth-century the slaving ports of London and Liverpool became international centres for banking and insurance.

SUGAR, COTTON, INDIGO AND PIMENTO

Sugar was the main export from Jamaican plantations. Indigo, a type of dye, and pimento, or all spice, were also grown on the island by enslaved workers.



LANGUAGE

Documents from the eighteenth-century regularly use language that is unacceptable. People of African descent were often called "negroes", as in this letter.

GLOSSARY

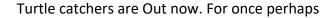
Snow – a type of ship

House of Assembly – the parliament of Jamaica, founded 1664.

LETTER TRANSCRIPT

Page 1	
Historical	Lucea Jamaica 24 June 1788
Miscellaneous	
Interesting keep	From Major Skerrett
	to Ralph Carr
Dear Sir	
A Snow from Newcas	tle (the Atalanta) which will sail
in a few days from M	ontego Bay which offers me
an Opportunity in having the honour of writing	
you. By this vessel I v	rish to send you a Turtle. The





my Good Fortune may smile and I shall be happy

to have one to present to you.

I am under inexpressible Obligations to you

for your very ready attention to my Request by

sending such very Respectable letters of Credit for the

1000 and for the 50 remited to me through the Agents.

I have wrote Messrs Ross and Ogilow, to send Mrs Sherrett

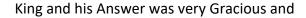
what Balance I may have in their hands. It is my

Page 2

ambition they should be as comfortable as possible during my Absence. –

That Tyrant Gen G is determined to make my situation as Uncomfortable as possible mainly to Accommodate his Countrymen and because I saved his Regiment from being cut to pieces in America. I take the liberty of Inclosing you a Copy of a Memorial which was presented to the





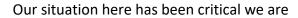
Flattering to me. "That I should be provided for"

- But your very Respectable friend Sir John Dick
- thinks I shall be forgot. If I am not Reminded
- by some person in power to his Majesty. He talked
- of Resorting to the Duke of Northumberland. He
- said thru lines of a letter from you and him would
- do the business.
- When I was in Town through Gen Gould's friends

Page 3

I procured the original of a Letter wrote in my favour By the General, to Sir H Clinton, when he told His Excellency I was the strongest instance of Neglected Mint that ever was in the service and that I deserved a Regiment for my Conduct in America. I am therefore now surely deserving of a Majority to purchase. I have wrote Sir G Yonge to that Effect. I have been more cruely treated than any man in the Service.





not without our fear of an Insurrection amongst the Negroes. The Extreme Absurdity of your people at home has Occasioned all this. The Pious Bishop of London and Mr Wilberforce with Others have laid the seeds of discontent and flattered those Unfortunate people with a prospect of Emancipation. If ever this takes place, Adieu to your West India Islands. – It is a pity, that the Original Rights of Mankind cannot be made the Standard of Government. It is a sad misfortune we can Only Justify by policies what Morality Condemns.

The Legislature may soften the situation of these Page 4

unfortunate Race of human beings. The Planters should be compeled to treat with attention. The Young, the Aged, and the Infirm; the woman who has brought the Planter Six Children, should have her freedom. Salves who have been remarkable for their Fidelity in giving Information, or suppressing of Rebellion. The same in diligence should be extended[?] to.

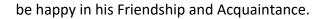




The French treat their Slaves much better than we do. They endeavor to soften their situation, are much kinder to them and speak to them with Mildness and the Negroes are found to be less Stupid amongst the French. John Bull does not endeavor to Conciliate their Affections. He sees that they are well fed, but then he sometimes exercises those Cruelties at which human Nature no less Recoils. I do believe it is Tyranny that plunges them in that Profound Stupidity in which we always see in a Jamaica Negro.

The crops of Sugar this Year, are more abundant than ever was known, and what is Remarkable we have not Ships to take of the Sugar, Cotton, Indigo and ye Pimento. It will be many Years before the Planters get out of Debt. – A very worthy and Respectable friend of mine. Major Malcolm who is in the house of Assembly, a Planter Naval Officer, and Merchant has made 50,000 and Remited most of it home. He will leave this Island next month for Europe, and intends with the usual discretion of his Country to visit his Nature Country. If you should see the honest little man. I beg you will do me the honour to introduce him to Mr John & Ralph Carr, They will





I saw a very particular friend of Yours Mr Seton. Governor at St Vincents. He asked very Affectionatly after You. I continued with him Three Days. He desired I would Offer his Warm Respects to you. I must now My Dear Sir bid you Adieu wishing Every possible happiness to You and your family. It is so hot now I can hardly Breathe The Thermometer in ye Shade stands at 98 and in ye sun 126 I have ye honour to be Dear Sir your most [affectionate?] friend

J Skerrett

OTHER ONLINE RESOURCES

REVOLT AND REBELLION

The National Archives website, pdf of learning resources: <u>https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/education/resistance-and-rebellion.pdf</u>

The National Archives website, pdf of learning resource for Bussa's Rebellion: https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/education/bussa.pdf

BBC Bitesize website, page about "Slave revolts" including a list of West Indian revolts and a short video about Jamaican Maroons: https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z732pv4/revision/5

Abolition Project website, page about resistance (includes links to pages with case studies): http://abolition.e2bn.org/resistance.html



British Library learning website, page about "slave revolts" (including Toussaint Louverture): https://www.bl.uk/learning/histcitizen/campaignforabolition/sources/antislavery/slavrevolt/slaverevolt.html

History in Focus website (archived, no longer updated) from Institute of Historical Research, page by Natalie Zacek "Reading the rebels: currents of slave resistance in the eighteenth-century British West Indies": <u>https://archives.history.ac.uk/history-in-focus/Slavery/articles/zacek.html</u>

Understanding Slavery website, page about resistance: <u>http://www.understandingslavery.com/index.php-option=com_content&view=article&id=310&Itemid=222.html</u>

TACKY'S REBELLION

Jamaicans website, page about Tacky's Rebellion, including video (7 minutes 28 mins): https://jamaicans.com/tackys rebellion/

Guardian newspaper website, page reviewing booking about Tacky's Revolt: <u>https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/feb/29/tackys-revolt-review-britain-jamaica-slavery</u>

Future Learn website, page about Tacky's Rebellion: https://www.futurelearn.com/info/courses/slavery-in-the-british-caribbean/0/steps/162134

Understanding Slavery website, page about Tacky's Rebellion: <u>http://www.understandingslavery.com/index.php-option=com_content&view=article&id=382&Itemid=244.html</u>

MAROONS

Maroon Sovereignty Project (Harvard) website, page about the history of the Maroons: https://cyber.harvard.edu/eon/marroon/history.html

National Geographic website, page about Maroon communities in Jamaica: <u>https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/legendary-community-that-fought-for-its-freedom-in-Jamaica</u>

University of Miami student website, pages about resistance in the Caribbean including the Maroons: https://scholar.library.miami.edu/slaves/Maroons/individual essays/leanna.html

INDIGO



A Parcel of Ribbons website, page about Indigo production in Jamaica: <u>http://aparcelofribbons.co.uk/tag/indigo/</u>

FORT CHARLOTTE

Jamaica Travel and Culture website, page about Fort Charlotte: http://www.jamaicatravelandculture.com/destinations/hanover/lucea/fort-charlotte.htm

Jamaica National Heritage Trust website, page about Fort Charlotte: http://www.jnht.com/site fort charlotte.php

JOHN SKERRETT

Canadian Dictionary of National Biography, page about John Skerrett: <u>http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/skerrett_john_5E.html</u>

RALPH CARR

Northumberland Archives blog, page about Ralph Carr and his business: <u>https://www.northumberlandarchives.com/2021/03/31/trading-with-america-business-misfortunes-in-18th-century-newcastle/</u>

THE BANK OF ENGLAND

Bank of England website, statement apologising for links to slave trade: <u>https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/news/2020/june/statement-in-relation-to-the-banks-historical-links-to-the-slave-trade</u>

Positive Money website, page about the Bank of England's apology: <u>https://positivemoney.org/2020/07/the-bank-of-england-and-the-slave-trade-why-apologies-are-not-enough/</u>

Guardian Newspaper website, page about Bank of England apology: <u>https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/jun/18/bank-of-england-apologises-for-role-of-former-directors-in-slave-trade</u>

Bank of England website, page with historical inflation calculator: https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator



LEARNING ACTIVITIES: LETTER FROM JOHN SKERRETT TO RALPH CARR, 1788

TOPIC: SLAVE TRADE, CONSUMERISM, EMPIRE

SUBJECT AREAS: HISTORY, LITERACY

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Background	Activity	Resources
The Skerrett's were friends of the	See: Who wrote this letter?	https://www.barnardos.org.uk/blog/white-
Carr family. There are a number of letters between various members of	See: Who received this letter?	privilege-guide-for-parents
the two families in the archives. John Nicholas Skerrett was in the	See: Who were William Wilberforce and the Bishop of London?	https://theconversation.com/white- privilege-what-it-is-what-it-means-and-why-
army. The letters from John to Ralph	See: How were Wilberforce and the Bishop of London involved in	understanding-it-matters-166683
repeatedly mention John's wish for	the abolition movement?	https://blacklivesmatter.uk/
promotion and the money necessary	See: Which groups of enslaved people did John Skerrett mention	https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/cugoano/cug
to buy a commission.	should have their freedom?	oano.html
At the time of this letter, the Society for the Effecting the Abolition of the	Think: What impression do you have of John Skerrett after reading	https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eccodemo/K0
Slave Trade had been meeting for	the letter?	46227.0001.001/1:5?rgn=div1;view=fulltext
little over a year. Opposition to the	Think: What is white privilege?	https://spartacus-
slave trade was becoming organised, particularly around the figure heads	Think: Is white privilege shown in this letter?	educational.com/USAScugoano.htm



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of William Wilberforce (Member of	Think: Did you find the candid discussion of enslaved people	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zQaF4B
Parliament) and the Bishop of	surprising?	NY9LA&ab channel=DafyddHumphreys
London. A parliamentary investigation into the trade (rather	Think: What were John Skerrett's attitudes towards enslaved	https://spartacus-
than slavery itself) was ordered by	people?	educational.com/Sequiano.htm
William Pitt, the Prime Minister, and published in April 1789.	Think: What were John Skerrett's attitudes towards abolitionists?	
published in April 1789.	Think: Did most people in Britain share John Skerrett's attitudes	
It is interesting to note that Skerrett	towards slavery and abolitionism at the time?	
blames Wilberforce and the Bishop		
of London for raising the hopes of	Think: What was the abolition movement?	
the enslaved people of Jamaica. This implies that the enslaved plantation	Think: Who was involved in the abolition movement?	
workers were receiving,	Think: What tactics were used to progress the abolition movement?	
interpreting, and circulating news of political events in England.	Think: How might enslaved people in Jamaica have been receiving and interpreting news about Wilberforce from England?	
	Do: Read through the letter and break it down into sections where different topics are discussed.	
	Do: Analyse each section of the letter. What is the main theme of	
	each section?	
	Do: Analyse how the tone of the letter changes. What does this say	
	about John Skerrett's attitudes towards each topic?	
	Do: Consider John Skerrett's comments about which enslaved	
	people should be free. What does this imply about the "duty" and	
	expectations of an enslaved person?	







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	Do: Research Ottobah Cugoano. What can be learned from his	
	autobiographical account about his experiences as an enslaved	
	person?	
	Do: Research Oladuah Equiano. What can be learned from his	
	autobiographical account about his experiences as an enslaved	
	person?	
	Do: Research Mary Prince. What can be learned from her	
	autobiographical account about her experiences as an enslaved	
	person?	
	Do: Discuss how the personal accounts of enslaved people	
	contributed to the abolitionist movement.	
	Do: Consider the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020. Discuss	
	whether there any parallels between the media narrative around the	
	BLM protests and the attitudes John Skerrett shows towards	
	abolitionists.	
The structure of the plantation	See: Why were revolt and resistance feared by the owners of	https://runaways.gla.ac.uk/minecraft/index.
economies on islands like Jamaica	plantations?	php/slaves-work-on-sugar-plantations/
meant that large enslaved African		
workforces were overseen by a very	See: What forms could resistance take?	https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/z2qj6
small number of white European	See: How common were uprisings in Jamaica?	sg/articles/z6cptrd
slave holders. Revolt and resistance		http://slavenorth.com/columns/frenchslaver
were a constant fear for the owners	See: What was Tacky's rebellion?	
of plantations.		<u>y.htm</u>
	Think: Why did numerous uprisings take place in Jamaica?	https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/prince/prince
		.html
	Think: How did these uprisings take place?	<u></u>
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Resistance could take many forms;	Think: What were the causes and effects of uprisings?	https://www.maryprince.org/
running away (it is estimated that	This is the state of the state	
10% of enslaved people ran away	Think: How did Tacky's Rebellion contribute to future uprisings?	https://slate.com/human-
from their holders), maintaining	Think: What impression does the letter give about the treatment of	interest/2015/08/the-most-successful-slave-
African traditions, refusing to work	enslaved people?	rebellion-in-history-created-an-independent-
and even poisoning the food given		haiti-and-secured-the-louisiana-purchase-
to slave holders.	Do: Consider John's statement about how the French treated their	and-the-expansion-of-north-american-
Large scale uprisings took place	enslaved people. Can you find evidence that John's statement might	<u>slavery.html</u>
numerous times in Jamaica from	have been false?	https://www.history.com/this-day-in-
1655 until abolition in 1834. Tacky's	Do: Research autobiographical accounts about being an enslaved	history/haitian-independence-proclaimed
Rebellion had occurred 28 years	person. What can you learn from these first-person accounts? Do	
before the writing of Major	they corroborate John's statement?	https://www.historyextra.com/period/georg ian/haitian-revolution-rebellion-hispaniola-
Skerrett's letter and was therefore		· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
still within living memory. Takyi was	Do: Look at the images of Caribbean plantations on the Runaways	what-happened-toussaint-louverture/
a Ghanajan nobleman who led the	website. What impression does this give you of the plantations?	https://history.state.gov/milestones/1784-
18-month uprising.	Do: Research the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804). Who was involved	1800/haitian-rev
	in this revolution?	
		https://www.blackpast.org/global-african-
	Do: Research the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804). What was the	history/haitian-revolution-1791-1804/
	cause of the revolution and how was it connected to the French	https://www.britannica.com/topic/Haitian-
	Revolution?	Revolution
	Do: Research Toussaint Louverture. What was his role in the Haitian	
	Revolution?	
	Do: Discuss the impact of the Haitian Revolution and the changes	
	that occurred as a result of it.	