



# ABOLITIONIST ARTIFACTS

## Jordan Mundy

### Research Question:

How did objects lead to the end of the slave trade within the British Empire?

### Implications:

Early methods of activism help us understand the past and inform modern advocacy for human rights.

*Artifacts reached wide audiences of Britons and provided a method of promoting abolition to many people who were blocked from other avenues of activism.*

### Wedgwood Cameo

1787

- One of the founding symbols of the abolitionist movement in Great Britain
- The potter Josiah Wedgwood made thousands for free, but the cameo was so popular that imitation versions were produced and sold to the masses
- Made antislavery fashionable and common, particularly as cameos were popular items
- Though women were barred from leading or even participating in antislavery societies, Wedgwood's daughter became a major figure in women's abolitionism

"Of the ladies, several wore them in bracelets, and others had them fitted up in an ornamental manner as pins for their hair."



### Thomas Clarkson's Campaign Chest

1787

- Assembled by leading abolitionist Thomas Clarkson, who acquired goods from Africa and instruments of torture from the Atlantic slave trade
- He took the chest on tour, used it in discussions, and brought it to Parliament when members debated ending the slave trade
- Clarkson worked with lower-class individuals whose testimony and artifacts aided abolition
- Tangibly showed the horrors of the slave trade and the goods of Africa for which Britain could trade

It included, "the thumb-screw, *speculum oris*, and chains and shackles of different kinds... iron neck-collars, and other instruments of punishment and confinement..."



### East India Sugar Bowls

c. 1791

- Part of a wave of antislavery petitions and a movement boycotting sugar produced in British colonies in the Caribbean that even included children and lower-class people
- Provided another method of activism for women and illiterate Britons who were shut out from antislavery petitions to Parliament
- Sugar bowls were key parts of British households and culture as tea and sugar gained traction with rising standards of living
- Were a public statement promoting abolition centered around the important tea-table

Those "who had made this sacrifice to virtue...were all ranks and parties. Rich and poor, churchmen and dissenters."

