ABOLITIONIST ARTIFACTS

Research Question:

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

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

Implications:

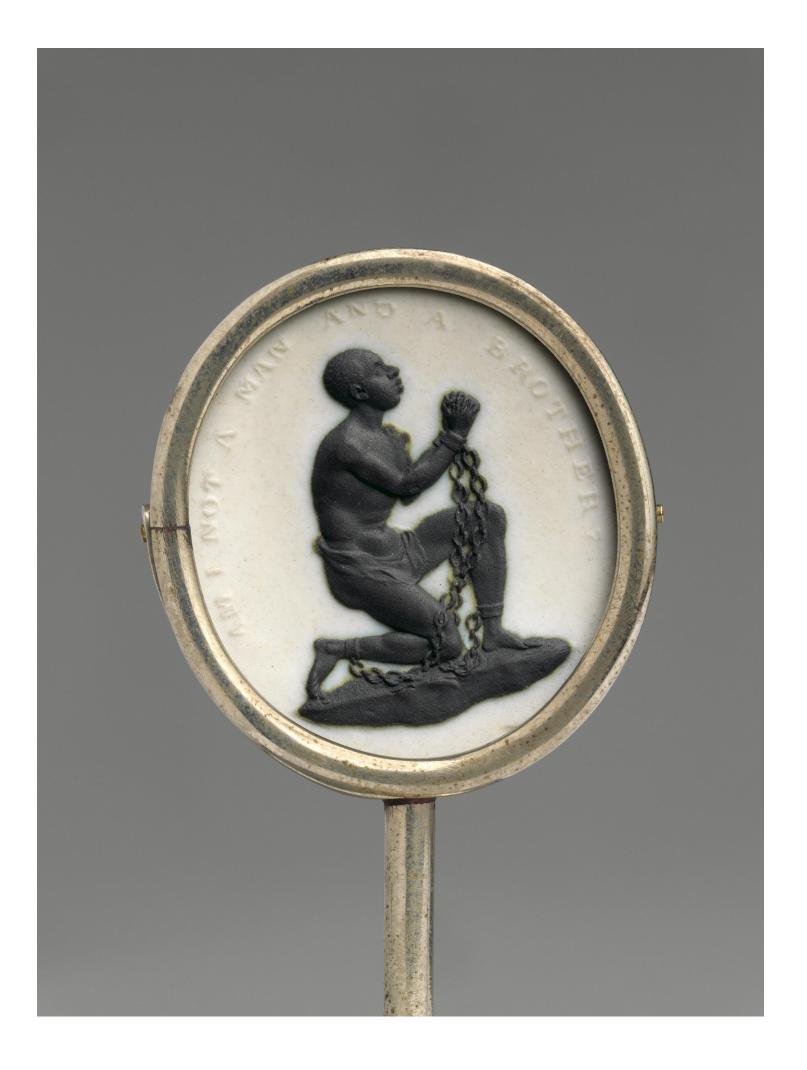
Early methods of activism help us understand the past and inform modern advocacy for human rights.

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."

