

I Am a Man and a Brother

02 STUDENT PACK

V&A
Wedgwood
Collection

01

Intros

Explore Wedgwood's anti-slavery medallion and how its history can inspire anti-racist change today. This pack will develop your skills as an artist, historian and curator.

Let us introduce ourselves...

The V&A Wedgwood Collection is the museum of Wedgwood's design history and creative future. Located in Stoke-on-Trent, an area known locally as The Potteries, it is also home to the Wedgwood anti-slavery medallion.

I am Grace Barrett and I founded I Am Ally to help build anti-racist spaces in schools.

I am Georgia Haseldine and I'm a researcher and artist working with clay at the V&A.

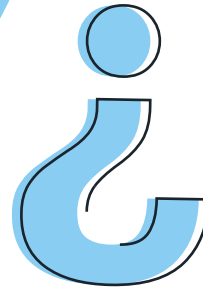
I am Kate Turner and I am an Assistant Curator at the V&A Wedgwood Collection.



Together let's explore how art and history can help to start building anti-racist spaces in our classrooms and museums:

Activity 1: The Wedgwood anti-slavery medallion
Activity 2: Designing and producing a piece of protest
Activity 3: Curating an exhibition
Glossary
Image Credits

02 Activity 1: The Wedgwood anti-slavery medallion



Why was it made?

In 1787, Josiah Wedgwood began making medallions for the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade at his ceramics factory in Stoke-on-Trent. The medallion depicted a kneeling Black man in chains with the slogan 'Am I Not a Man and a Brother?' Thousands of medallions were distributed for free, a bit like a protest badge might be today.

Who made it?

The anti-slavery medallion was probably sculpted by William Hackwood, Wedgwood's top modeller. The design was based on the seal of the Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, whose committee Josiah Wedgwood joined in 1787.

How was it made?

The design was first modelled in wax. A clay cast was then made of the wax sculpture to form a mould, which was dried and fired. Wedgwood then used jasper, a clay body he had invented, which was pressed into the mould. The finished medallion was then dried and fired in the kiln.

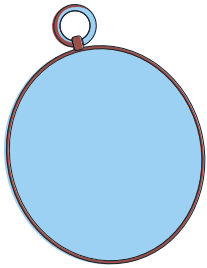
How many were made?

We'll never know for certain how many were manufactured. Although medallions were produced from 1787, they were not mentioned in the Wedgwood oven books (which list what was loaded into the bottle kilns for firing) until April 1792: 'J Steel made 14. Dox black slave cameos, 1 ¼.'

ACTIVITY: What's in an image?

What you need:

Paper
Pencil or charcoal



Look at the medallion on the previous page. Draw the medallion as you see it.

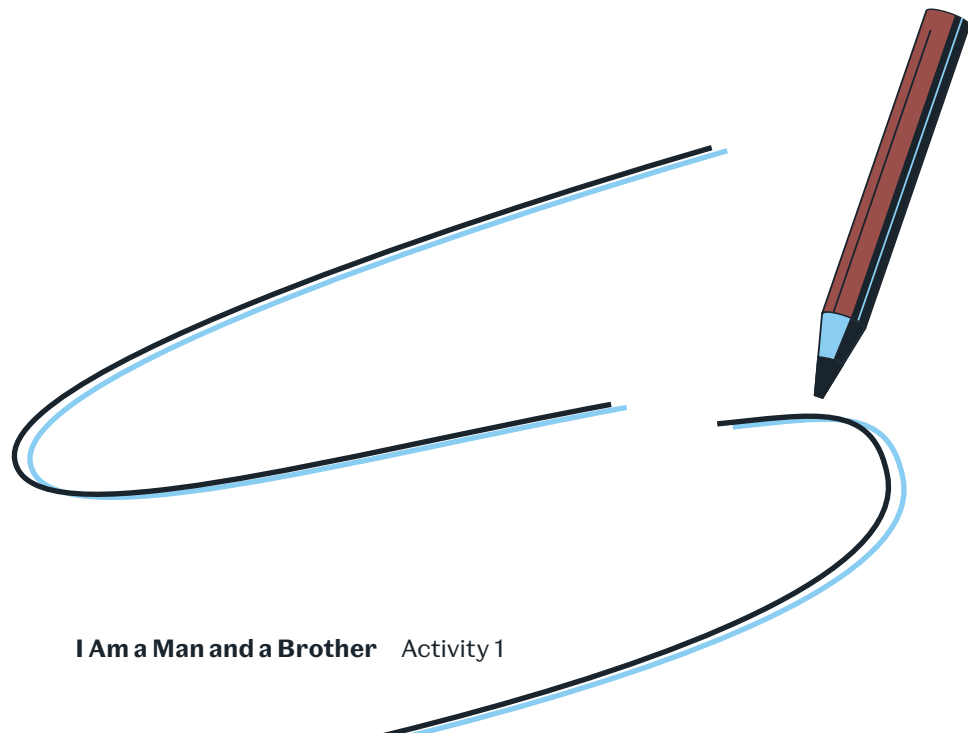
Think about:

- Where is your eye drawn to first?
- What emotions you feel towards the man depicted on the medallion?
- What details do you see now that you are looking at it closely?

Try drawing it with your other hand or using one continuous line.

Does this change anything?

Now in pairs, take it in turns to recreate the posture.





Think about:

- How do you feel?
- How does the person you are addressing feel?
- Would you like an image of you in this pose to be worn by others on their clothes?

Now work with your partner to find a posture that feels powerful. How would you pose to DEMAND change, not ask for it?



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Activity 2: Designing and producing a piece of protest

People have always created images that promote their political ideas. A successful image can capture/represent the key aims of a protest movement. The V&A has many examples of protest designs such as the graphic art made by Emory Douglas (1943–) for the Black Panther Party for Self-Defence. There are also protest badges which supported anti-racism and objects such as Jon Daniels's 'Brotha' and 'Sista' mugs for Afro Supa® Hero which represent Black people as superheroes.



Can you find other examples of images of protest and analyse them?

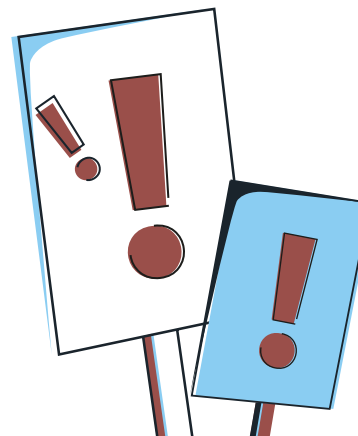
Think about:

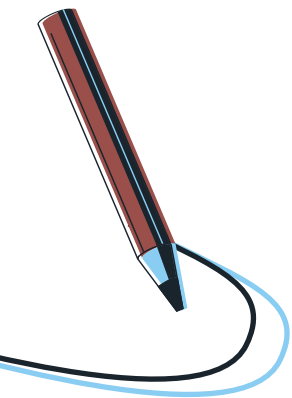
- What makes them powerful?
- What symbols are used?

Looking at the Wedgwood anti-slavery medallion today, does it feel empowering? Why is the Black man asking for his freedom, not demanding it? What would your anti-racist medallion look like?

What you need:

- Paper and pencil
- Air-dry or paper clay
- Round pastry cutter; or circular object to cut around
- Rolling pin
- Depth guides (two pieces of wood at the height you want your medallion)
- Kitchen knives, cocktail sticks or similar modelling tools





Sketch four designs, share and discuss them with a classmate. Do they get the message? Now, reflect on the themes of this pack. How could you make a medallion which encourages people to start their journey to becoming anti-racist? Make a series of rapid sketches to try out various designs. Once you have chosen your favourite design, share your design with a partner and talk it through. Is there anything you could change to make your message clearer?

Sculpt your final design using air drying or paper clay. You might have to simplify your design to work in this material.

Tips for working with clay:

- Place a plastic mat or a square of canvas on the table
- Use a cutter or trace round a circular object to make your medallion shape
- What do you want to do with your medallion: make a hole if you plan to wear or hang it

As inspiration, here are some of the medallions made by students from the City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College.



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02 Activity 3: Curating an exhibition

Object cut outs



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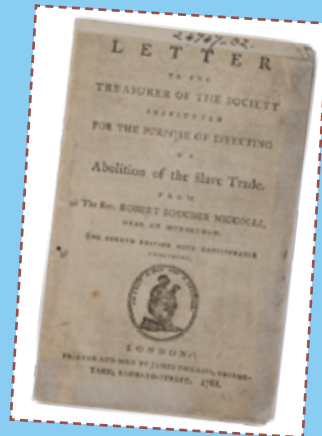
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03 Museums and how we use them

Do you have a collection? If so, what does it contain? How do you organise it? How do you tell people about it? What words do you use? Museums like the V&A Wedgwood Collection are just like your collection, a place to care for and share objects and their stories.

Try to remember a time you have visited a museum or gallery. If you're visiting the V&A Wedgwood Collection or another museum as part of this project, think about how you explore the spaces. Where do your eyes go first? Are you drawn to text, images or objects?

Now it's your turn to stage an exhibition. This is a great way to share your work with others.

What you need:

- Objects cut out from the previous page
- Cardboard or pins
- Pens

What do you want to say?

A good place to start is to think what key words you want to include, for example 'Racism' or 'Protest'. Working in groups draft:

- A title – no more than 7 words!
- An introduction to your exhibition's key message – no more than 20 words!
- An overview of what visitors will discover – no more than 50 words!

Who are you writing this for? What might they want to know? This story includes parts that could be triggering – how will you ensure that everyone feels seen and safe?

What are the key objects?

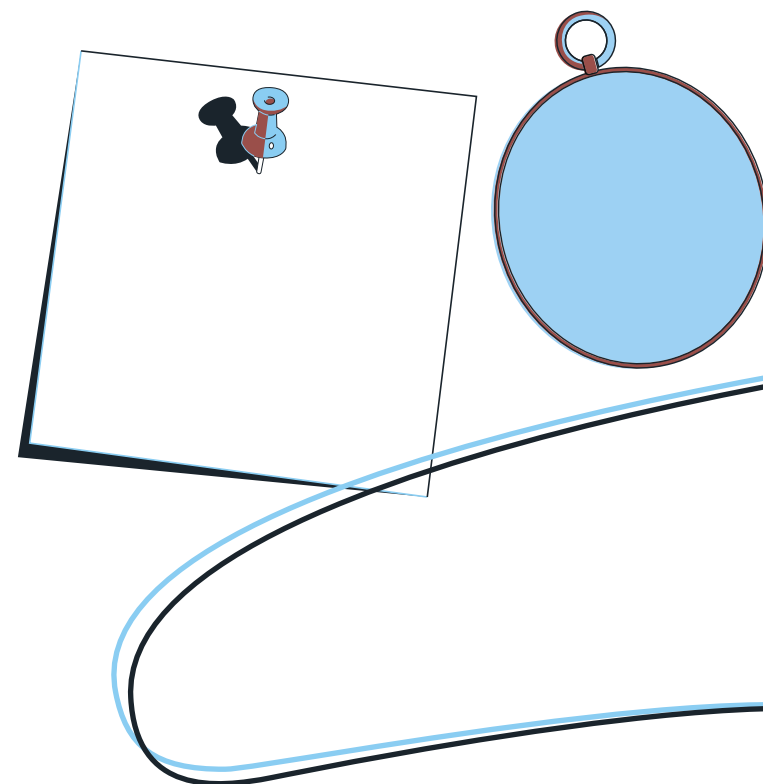
Interview each other about what the objects mean, and why it is important. Record key quotes – these need to be short – no more than 30 words!

Now it's time to curate. Cut out the images of objects on the previous page and stick them on card. Try to arrange the objects in different ways.

Think about:

- What story do these objects tell when they are displayed in this order?
- What is missed out?
- How could we make this more powerful?

Once you are happy, each group can now present their exhibition. Perhaps you can even invite another class in to view it?



04 Glossary

Abolition: the action of abolishing a system, practice, or institution. In the eighteenth century ‘abolitionists’ were people who wanted to end the trade in enslaved people from Africa by British traders.

Allyship: The process of using privilege to create change in problematic systems. Allyship requires learning to define the problem, but it also requires action to create change. This can be in any area in which you have a say.

Anti-Racism: the practice of actively identifying and opposing racism at the individual and institutional level.

BAME: BAME stands for Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and is a term which includes, for example, the white ethnic group of Irish Travellers.

Black Power: the idea has its origins in the revolutionary African-American movements of the 1960s which sought to build racial pride, economic power, and create political and cultural institutions that empowered Black people.

Boycott: to protest by not buying, selling or using something. Eighteenth-century abolitionists boycotted sugar as it was grown by enslaved people, for example, and were known by some as ‘antisaccharites’.

Enslaved Person: a person who has been made the legal property of another and is forced to obey them. It is better to say an ‘enslaved person’ rather than ‘slave’ as the latter focuses us onto the action of removing a person’s freedom.

Equity: Unlike equality – which is about sameness – equity when applied to racial justice is the intention of prioritising changes to policies and societal structures which disproportionately disadvantage the lives of people of colour.

Jasperware: a high-fired non-porous, often unglazed stoneware body which can be coloured with a mineral oxide stain.

Manumission: to be released from slavery; Olaudah Equiano was one of the very few enslaved people who was able to purchase his own manumission.

Medallion: a piece of jewellery or sculpture, often oval or round, which could be worn or displayed.

Person of Colour (POC): a person who is not white or of European descent, sometimes also known as ‘person of the global majority’.

Racial trauma: race-based traumatic stress, is the cumulative effects of racism on an individual’s mental and physical health.

Racism: the belief that ‘races’ have distinctive characteristics, which make some ‘superior’ to others which can lead to abuse or discrimination based on this belief.

White Privilege: a set of advantages, entitlements, benefits and choices bestowed on people solely because they have white skin.

White Supremacy: the idea that white people constitute a superior race and should therefore dominate society.

05 Close

This V&A Wedgwood Collection project would not have been possible without:

City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College
SABLE – Staffordshire Association for Black Lives Equality
Art Fund

Fiskars and the amazing workers in the Wedgwood Factory
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06 Image Credits

1. Medallion, by William Hackwood and the Josiah Wedgwood Factory, about 1787, England. Museum no. 414:1304–1885. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London
2. *‘Brotha’ and ‘Sista’ mugs* from the Afro Supa® Hero collection, designed by Jon Daniel, 2013, Museum nos. C.18–2016 and C.19–2016. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London
3. Medallions made by students from Stoke-on-Trent’s Sixth Form College, June 2021
4. *People of the World Unite*, Poster, 1967 (published), Author Unknown, Museum no. E.41–1968, © Victoria and Albert Museum, London
5. Letter showing the proposals for publishing by subscription *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Mr Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, The African*, 1788. V&A Wedgwood Collection archives, L74–12632. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London
6. Badge, 1960s (made), Author Unknown, Museum no. E.605– 2002, © Victoria and Albert Museum, London
7. Portrait of Josiah Wedgwood by Sir Joshua Reynolds, 1782, Oil on canvas, Museum no. WE.7851–2014. © Fiskars
8. *An Abstract of The Evidence Delivered Before a Select Committee of The House of Commons for The Abolition of The Slave Trade, 1790 – 91*. V&A Wedgwood Collection archives, E32–24747. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London
9. *All power to the people*, Poster, by Emory Douglas, USA, 1970 (made), Museum no. E.754–2004, © Victoria and Albert Museum, London
10. *Reticule*, by Samuel Lines (designer) and Female Society for Birmingham (maker), Birmingham (made), ca. 1825 (made), Museum no. T.227-1966

11. Sugar bowl, 1775–80, black basalt, Museum no. WE.4006–2014, © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

12. *I Am a Man and a Brother*, designed by Amy Sproston, 2021, City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College