

# Heritage education Challenges in dealing with the past

Edited by  
Carla van Boxtel  
Stephan Klein  
Ellen Snoep







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**Colophon**

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This publication presents the initial findings of a research programme on heritage education (2009–2014) undertaken by the Center for Historical Culture at Erasmus University Rotterdam.

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# Foreword

**Carla van Boxel**  
**Stephan Klein**  
**Ellen Snoep**  
 September 2011

The annual survey on cultural education in the Netherlands reports that 83 per cent of primary schools and 91 per cent of secondary schools reserve part of their curriculum for heritage education. The term 'heritage education' refers to a broad array of educational activities and to the use of material and immaterial heritage in an educational setting. The survey shows that pupils regularly visit historical museums and monuments and, to a lesser extent, archives and archeological sites. They also explore their cultural and historical environment. Teachers use physical artefacts, stories and legends in the classroom. We have plenty of *quantitative* information about heritage education but very little qualitative data. In fact, we know almost nothing about the content of heritage education. What do pupils actually experience and learn? And what criteria should heritage education meet to make it meaningful for children and youngsters?

Museums, heritage institutions and teaching manuals often emphasise that heritage provides unique opportunities to learn history. Children do not learn about history as a matter of course, however, and we need to know what specific aspects we are talking about. When we present pupils with the notion of heritage through the material and immaterial remains of the past, important questions arise concerning the purpose and nature of historical knowledge.

In August 2009, the Center for Historical Culture at Erasmus University Rotterdam initiated a research programme on heritage education. The programme (2009–2014) is funded by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) and supported by The Netherlands Institute for Heritage (*Erfgoed Nederland*). The research programme intends to provide a clearer conceptualisation of the goals of heritage education, the opportunities for learning it represents, and what is required for heritage education to contribute to the learning of history. It also aims to acquire a deeper understanding of the practice of heritage education by studying the opinions and experiences of history teachers and heritage educators, actual educational resources, and pupils' learning experiences during heritage lessons. With respect to the research on heritage educational resources, we are specifically comparing Dutch and English resources and collaborating with EUROCLIO, the European Association of History Educators.

At the moment we are at the halfway point in the project. This publication offers an impression of the initial findings of our studies. In the first chapter, Maria Grever and Carla van Boxel provide a theoretical framework and reflect on important issues and constructs related to heritage education. They discuss notions of historical distance, commonality, multiperspectivity, and the dynamic approach to heritage. In Chapters 2, 3 and 4, Stephan Klein, Pieter de Bruijn and Geerte Savenije discuss the preliminary results of their empirical studies. These chapters also include examples of history teachers' and heritage educators' perspectives on heritage education, passages taken from heritage educational resources, and accounts of pupil experiences. Siân Jones (University of Manchester), Alan McCully (University of Ulster), Karel van Nieuwenhuysse

(Katholieke Universiteit Leuven), Carla Peck (University of Alberta) and Kaat Wils (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven) reflect on these examples. In the final chapter, Carla van Boxtel looks at the opportunities and challenges of heritage as a resource for learning history.

This publication is meant to encourage fruitful dialogue with other researchers and practitioners in the field of heritage and history education. We are grateful to Siân Jones, Alan McCully, Karel van Nieuwenhuysse, Carla Peck and Kaat Wils, who were willing to share their thoughts on the examples of heritage education provided in this publication, and to the heritage educators and teachers who were willing to participate in our studies. We hope the publication and the dialogue it initiates contribute to the development of benchmarks – quality criteria – that inspire and support practitioners in designing, implementing and evaluating a dynamic and professional approach to heritage education.

# Center for Historical Culture

Erasmus University Rotterdam

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## Research programme

Heritage education, plurality of narratives and shared historical knowledge

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For information on the progress of the research programme, see:

[www.heritageeducation.nl](http://www.heritageeducation.nl) (English)

[www.onderzoekerfgoededucatie.nl](http://www.onderzoekerfgoededucatie.nl) (Dutch)

# Introduction

## Reflections on heritage as an educational resource

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Maria Grever  
Carla van Boxtel

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In many countries, pupils visit historical sites and museums and explore traces of the past in their surroundings. Some teachers bring heritage objects to the classroom to rouse their pupils' curiosity, illustrate a particular historical narrative, or engage pupils in historical enquiry. Such activities can be referred to by the term 'heritage education'. Although we can easily give examples of heritage education, it is not so easy to provide a clear definition. Heritage education is not a school subject in which key concepts and skills can be inferred from the academic discipline to which it is related. Heritage studies is not a distinct academic discipline, but a hybrid of several different disciplines such as history, arts, cultural anthropology and cultural geography. This hybridity can also be seen in the practice of heritage education, which not only contributes to the history curriculum but also to geography, art education, science, technology, and the development of cross-curricular skills.

To encourage children to participate in the arts and culture, the Dutch government decided in the 1990s that heritage education should become part of the broader domain of arts and cultural education encompassing the arts, media and heritage education. The government encouraged cultural institutions and schools to collaborate on developing educational resources and activities that would introduce heritage education in the curriculum of primary and secondary schools. Educational activities are usually initiated and designed by cultural institutions, and schools choose from this supply. Recently, heritage education was further encouraged by the decision to introduce a canon of Dutch national history in the school curriculum. Schools are obliged to use fifty items from the canon, known as 'windows', as a basis for illustrating elements of the Dutch national history curriculum. The publication of the canon in 2006 led to heritage institutions and local councils developing a large number of regional and local canons of history that frequently refer to heritage.

Whereas some scholars argue that heritage education as a cross-curricular approach centers around issues of democratic citizenship and identity, we focus on the connection between heritage education and the school subject of history. Although we use theoretical frameworks derived from history and history didactics, we do not wish to imply that heritage education cannot or should not contribute to other subjects or to generic skills.

Our research programme uses a provisional definition of heritage education: *Heritage education is an approach to teaching and learning that uses material and immaterial heritage as primary instructional resources to increase pupils'*

*understanding of history and culture*. This definition attempts to balance the three temporal dimensions (past, present and future) and to avoid normative elements as much as possible. There is no consensus in the literature as to the difference between heritage and history, but it is obvious that many associate 'heritage' more with building up historical identities and experiencing the past, and less with questioning and investigating. This raises two important questions concerning educational practices:

- 1 What are the opportunities and constraints associated with an imaginative engagement with the past?
- 2 How can heritage education contribute to some kind of *commonality* between all learners while at the same time acknowledge *multiperspectivity*?

Both questions will be addressed below. We will argue that heritage education should adopt a *dynamic* approach to heritage.

### **Historical distance: imagining the past and historical thinking**

Heritage institutions, but also teacher educators and teachers often emphasise that heritage education can engage pupils in imagining and experiencing the past as vivid and nearby. The experience heritage creates can evoke a sense of direct contact with the past.

Although such imaginative engagement is an important strength of many heritage lessons, it might also generate specific problems when the aim is to learn history. Historians often complain that heritage and heritage education foster a presentist approach to the past, ignoring the historical context, which often seems strange from the present point of view. Furthermore, scholars in the field of history education emphasise that historical empathy is a complex cognitive process that implies a 'rethinking' of the specific decisions taken by actors in the past in order to explain certain actions and behaviour. It indeed requires a careful reconstruction of an historical context. Hence, historians appreciate distance when attempting to understand the complexity of the past because it provides sufficient detachment to look at that past from various perspectives.

With respect to both school history and heritage education, the challenge is to translate the meanings attributed by actors at the time to past events into *present-day* meanings *understandable* by pupils, without disregarding the historical context. An important difference between heritage education and school history, however, is that the former often has a more performative character, aimed at experiencing *direct* contact with the past through objects, exhibitions or historical sites. Because the staging of a specific past seeks to engage the public, the impression is that heritage education projects often tend to minimise historical distance. And yet, heritage education involves many different practices. There are examples of educational assignments referring to exhibitions and sites that not only stimulate an interest in history, curiosity about the past and imagination, but also try to enhance critical and historical thinking. Techniques

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to bridge past and present can also be used in assignments that discuss the uniqueness of the represented past, making pupils aware of historical distance. To assess the significance of historical distance in heritage education, we are developing an analysis framework consisting of five dimensions:

<b>Time</b>	<i>Continuity – Change</i>
<b>Person</b>	<i>Identity – Difference</i>
<b>Imagination</b>	<i>Abstract – Concrete</i>
<b>Place</b>	<i>Far away – Close</i>
<b>Engagement</b>	<i>Passive – Active</i>

In our research, we analyse how the past is represented in heritage educational resources. How do these materials try to minimise or construct historical distance? We conduct interviews and observe pupils participating in a heritage education project in order to gain a better understanding of their learning experiences. How do pupils experience these lessons? To what extent does heritage support imagination and the construction of a vivid image of the past? Do pupils engage in historical thinking and reasoning? We interview history teachers and heritage educators to investigate how they reflect on the potential affordances and constraints of evoking ‘direct’ contact with the past and on the possibility of engaging pupils in historical thinking in lessons in which heritage is used as primary resource for teaching and learning.

We have selected three topics to help us investigate the actual practice of heritage education: Christianisation, the transatlantic slave trade, and the Second World War. Our reasons for choosing these topics are: they are part of the Dutch and English history curriculum for primary and secondary schools; they include material and immaterial heritage; the heritage associated with these topics has national, transnational and international dimensions. Moreover, we expect that heritage education related to these topics will reflect an engagement with the past that is both emotional and identity-focused.

### **Issues of identity: the need for commonality and multiperspectivity**

Outcomes of heritage education can be framed in terms of knowledge and skills relevant for the school curriculum but also for developing personal and collective identities. Citizenship refers to the relationship of an individual with his or her environment and with the community in which he or she participates. In learning activities related to heritage, pupils can practise exploring and discussing societal issues on a local level and in the wider community. Several heritage education programmes focus on developing a sense of respect for the environment or for a particular heritage, such as an historical building. The underlying idea is that pupils will view and experience a place differently if they are better informed about its history. Furthermore, heritage learning activities can support pupils in the process of learning about themselves and in understanding others. In this way heritage education contributes to a sense of connection and belonging

that is crucial for citizenship. In particular, when heritage is related to sensitive histories such as the Holocaust, educational resources are often aimed at value development and encouraging pupils to reflect on such values as freedom and equality.

It is precisely the indissoluble alliance between heritage and identity that leads us to consider a dynamic approach to heritage as being important for heritage education. Although heritage lessons may encourage respect for other cultures, tolerance and social cohesion, they can also help strengthen community identities, with the risk of exclusion and a reinforcement of existing social boundaries. In a dynamic heritage approach, heritage has no static, essentialist meaning and is not bound to one static identity.

Hence, when heritage education focuses on developing shared cultural values and the appropriation of a shared history – if that is ever possible – there should in any case be room for the exchange of ideas and dialogue. Recently, museum experts too have argued that museums and heritage institutions should provide a platform for debate and dialogue, and invite people to participate. A dynamic approach implies encouraging critical and historical thinking. Pupils can be inspired to take historical perspectives, for instance, and to understand the ethical dimensions of historical interpretations.

A range of differing perspectives can be woven into heritage educational resources or provided by the teacher or heritage educator. These may concern the positions of historical actors connected to a certain heritage, or differing historiographical views. In the course of time, furthermore, people may come to think differently about the significance and meanings of heritage. Multiple perspectives may, however, also come to the fore when pupils are asked to discuss their ideas and understanding. Pupils are meaning-makers themselves; they actively construct knowledge in interaction with others using cultural artefacts available as tools for meaning-making. Their perspectives may differ owing to differences in identity, background knowledge, disposition, interests and values. Their understanding of heritage and history, for example, is mediated by family and collective memory. What they take away from heritage lessons will also differ. Some pupils may establish a personal connection when they link a particular heritage to their own concerns, values, interests or identity. Other pupils may not establish such a connection.

Identifying and comparing various perspectives concerning the same historical subject matter can encourage pupils to examine educational resources carefully and critically, present plausible arguments, and exchange different views. The very act of discussing and comparing perspectives engenders reflexivity. If the circumstances in a classroom allow for such a dialogue, then the use of diverse perspectives might also create an awareness of living in a pluralist yet common world. Hence, the actual use of various perspectives provides for a common ground. However, finding a common ground does not necessarily mean that people have to agree with one another and end up with the same knowledge and understanding.

Our research is intended to lead to a better understanding of how heritage educational practice addresses the issues of identity discussed above. We also want to know to what extent a dynamic approach to heritage is applied in educational resources and activities, and how. We investigate the ‘entrance narratives’ pupils bring to heritage educational projects, how pupils attribute meaning to heritage, and how they share and negotiate their knowledge, ideas and understanding.

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Stephan Klein

# Heritage and the history classroom

## The views of history teachers and heritage educators in the Netherlands

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‘History’ and ‘heritage’ used to be seen as opposites. Today, many who reflect on historical culture are more interested in the complex varieties of historical representations and the interconnections between both ‘fields’. If such opposites did indeed exist in educational contexts, it might lead to the following – artificial – distinction between ‘history teaching’ and ‘heritage education’:

- the history classroom teaches the past as abstract processes of causes and effects, whereas heritage education teaches the past as a reservoir of human stories;
- the history classroom uses textbooks, whereas heritage education uses material and immaterial traces of the past;
- the history classroom encourages the expansion of knowledge and rational argumentation, whereas heritage education encourages experiences of the past and the development of identities.

These distinctions would not be an accurate assessment of Dutch practices in history education, however. In the first place, although the Dutch history curriculum does require instruction in abstract overview knowledge and historical thinking, teachers also know that pupils can only understand abstract complexity through concrete stories, and by switching back and forth between the two. Secondly, although textbooks indeed are full of written texts, examples published in recent decades are also amply illustrated with photographs, posters, paintings, cartoons and historical texts that illustrate the personal viewpoints of various historical actors. In the classroom, history teachers often use audio-visual material such as audio clips, documentaries and films. Sometimes they plan a museum visit or a walk in the neighbourhood, or even bring an authentic object into the classroom. Thirdly, through the use of historical sources, history teaching also touches upon the affective component of knowledge. Although the time schedule often prevents in-depth classroom activities, many teachers still manage – or at least aspire – to show how history deals with real people who witnessed events that were exciting, disappointing or horrific. Depending on the composition of the classroom and the specific topic at hand, history teachers know they have to be prepared for emotions and identity issues to surface. All three hypotheses, seen from the perspective of history teaching, thus seem to be unbalanced, to say the least.

The same misconceptions may apply to heritage education. This is still relatively uncharted territory, however. Research is needed on the educational material produced by heritage institutions and on learning on location, so that we know whether such institutions in fact approach the past from the other end of the dichotomies suggested here. History teachers and heritage educators may tend to have different biases when thinking about educational practice, but it may in fact be hard to differentiate many of the practices in the two fields in terms of methods, sources and purpose. To understand how the two fields conceptualise their approaches to the past, I present some preliminary results of an interview study involving four history teachers and two heritage educators working with the topic of the transatlantic slave trade. Each participant was

interviewed twice. Questions in the first interview focused on goals and didactics when teaching this topic to a multicultural pupil population. In the second interview, the participants were invited to think about planning an educational exhibition. They were shown 25 PowerPoint items consisting of eighteenth-century illustrations, photographs of buildings, historical monuments and objects, texts, an excerpt from the American movie *Amistad*, and a Dutch reggae clip about the Netherlands' historical involvement in slavery.

One important result is that all the interviewees shared at least one particular way of looking at this wide variety of educational resources: the connection with stories. They often responded to the images, objects and texts in two familiar ways: either by immediately recognising a link to a certain story, or by pondering how the item could be used to enter into a story. All the participants valued material remains as witnesses of personal stories and as examples of larger historical developments. They were thought to support learning by anchoring storylines visually. This common way of viewing heritage was no guarantee, however, that the participants evaluated the content and presentation of such stories in the same way. Two factors can explain this.

First, the participants did not share the same knowledge about history learning in the classroom. The teachers were professionally trained historians. Two of them had taken a degree in history. The two heritage educators also had university degrees, but not in history, and nor were they very familiar with the specific content and concepts of the Dutch history curriculum. These differences in knowledge are important when considering how the past is presented (and represented) to pupils and the assignments they are given. In this case, the history teachers had more explicit expectations as to how content and questions should support history learning in the classroom. For them, heritage should do something that they themselves or the textbooks cannot do or have not done already. As one teacher put it: 'I am not going to use material just because it happens to deal with slavery. It must clarify the subject, it must have something to tell us.' It appears that content overlaps, loose ends or a lack of depth given the target group in question are all factors that can make heritage institutions' educational activities less attractive for history teachers.

Secondly, there were differences in the way the participants identified themselves historically. The historical narrative of a history textbook is an important tool in the teaching process, but so are the teacher and the educator. In educational research, teachers (including history teachers) are described as gatekeepers and mediators who filter content, rework it and pass it on, keeping an eye on how pupils connect new information to their existing knowledge. The same role can be attributed to heritage educators. They also select content and mediate its meaning. When teachers and educators identify differing roles for themselves with respect to a specific historical issue, *dissonance* can occur about what should be taught in which way. Such disagreements may arise between teachers and educators, but also within these groups. For example, two teachers at the same multicultural school in Amsterdam held very opposite views on the

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value of taking their pupils on a heritage trail through the city centre focusing on the slave trade. For the teacher of Surinamese descent, following the trail would help pupils realise the impact of slavery today. His colleague of Dutch descent felt differently. Although his lessons dealt with the transatlantic slave trade in great detail and pupils were invited to identify with the historical accounts, the teacher also confessed that he would feel morally judged when walking past the houses of rich merchants of the West Indian Company (WIC) with his Surinamese and Antillean pupils.

Despite these differences in knowledge and identification, the interviews nevertheless make clear that heritage can be a powerful component of history education, provided that teachers can realise one potential and face up to one challenge:

### **1 Potential: Closing the historical distance**

One of the heritage educators was very explicit about the main goal of a museum. She found that the most important thing was to ‘touch’ pupils in a certain way and make sure that the experience stays with them. However, the history teachers interviewed for this study not only did the opposite by focusing on abstract historical developments, but they were also very keen on finding opportunities for pupils to feel and experience history. In fact, all the participants were very positive about the educational value of a certain photograph that they were shown. The photograph accentuates light and darkness. This would make it a very suitable means for experiencing some of the ominous moments slaves went through when in prison at Fort Elmina (Ghana), awaiting an uncertain future. If even a picture can achieve this, then certainly educators and teachers can agree on other ways of closing in on the lives of people long ago and explaining the impact of the past on the world today.

### **2 Challenge: Thinking historically**

To varying degrees, the teachers interviewed for this study wanted more than an experience and stories. They also wanted to question heritage and how it is presented, more so than the educators did. For example: why is heritage preserved or reconstructed, for whom, and with what motives? To find answers to such questions, historical thinking is needed, and this requires a more detached position vis-à-vis the past. It also requires pupils to accept and appropriate the notion of historical knowledge as a subjective human construct. This notion implies reflexivity about identity issues and a view of history as a process of change rather than as a timespace inhabited by supposedly unchanging identities such as nations, communities or families. Educational assignments therefore also and explicitly need to lead pupils away from an emotional engagement with the past and put them on a more detached footing. Only then does it become possible to investigate different moral frameworks in time and over time. Thinking historically, however, is presumably more second nature for historians than for educators who specialise in other disciplines such as geography, anthropology, literature or the arts.

### **Conclusion**

The challenge for history teachers and heritage educators will be to find out how, in terms of educational activities, pupils can be encouraged to switch between engagement and detachment. This will ensure that their experience of the past and of the process of building up historical identities can be reconciled with a more reflexive attitude, critical judgment and acceptance of plurality. In a dynamic approach to heritage, the point is to open up the discussion, even if what pupils ultimately accept as a shared past is sometimes modest.

# A history teacher in Amsterdam explains why he does not plan to take his pupils on the slave trade trail in Amsterdam's city centre.

## Example 1

**'I don't like doing that because then they follow the slave trade trail in Amsterdam and walk past the houses of people who traded in slaves or owned plantations in Suriname... I totally dislike that because it means attributing responsibility... It should not evoke any guilt, but if I were to walk through the city and have all the buildings pointed out to me where slave owners lived, I would certainly get that feeling.'**

Herengracht 514, Amsterdam. Ornamented with busts of black people. One of the locations along the slave trade trail, suggesting that the owners of this building engaged in trade relations with the West Indies. According to an audio guide (accessed by telephone) 'the Africans are almost presented as caricatures, and although that may have been quite normal at the time, today we think differently about the subject' (call placed on 23 August 2011)  
Photos Stephan Klein, September 2011



## Response by Siân Jones

The transatlantic slave trade is one example of what has been called 'difficult heritage', which people find hard to reconcile with positive forms of identity and self-affirmation in the present. As a result it has often been marginalised by more celebratory national histories. Furthermore, the places associated with slavery have frequently been transformed beyond recognition or erased altogether, with significant implications in terms of social memory. Recent attempts to re-inscribe cityscapes with the history of the slave trade provide important political, social and educational opportunities, but they can also demand a lot of those who mediate and engage with them.

The history teacher's explanation as to why he will not take his pupils on the Amsterdam slavery tour highlights the uncomfortable and troublesome nature of this heritage and the feelings of guilt and responsibility that it can elicit. For me it reinforces the importance of dealing with slavery within the education system where children can be encouraged to engage critically with the topic and explore its place in eighteenth-century economy and society. They can also explore the emotions this heritage brings forth in a meaningful and structured context. For

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The entrance to a slave's cell at Fort Elmina, Ghana.  
Photo Mr Valenzuela, 2011



instance, pupils can be encouraged to consider the relationship between past and present and the place of slavery in social memory, breaking down essentialist categories of 'victim' and 'perpetrator' that can come to dominate historical consciousness and lead to divisiveness. However, the interview also highlights the need for appropriate resources, training and support for teachers so that they feel confident in addressing 'difficult heritage' and mediating the reactions of pupils. Research into the needs and responses of heritage educators is therefore critical if topics such as slavery are going to be dealt with successfully in the school curriculum.

# A history teacher in Rotterdam talks about visiting heritage sites and creating common knowledge.

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## Example 2

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**‘Secretly, I hope of course that these kinds of visits create a kind of group, a kind of worldview, in which you share more and more elements... I can take my pupils to Delft, to the New Church, where they enter and see the mausoleum for the first time. There is that initial moment when they hear, “Yes, William of Orange played a major role in the history of the Netherlands”. In the same way, this is new for children who have another cultural background. They will agree – it sounds a bit silly – but they will agree that both groups can say “Yes I know who William of Orange is”. It is something they share, just as both groups know what kebab is, or understand a few shared words of street slang.’**

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## Response by Kaat Wils

Creating common knowledge is one of the basic aims of education, and this is all the more the case when pupils come from differing cultural backgrounds. The question of course is which knowledge you want to share and which end this ‘sharing’ should serve. If ‘creating a kind of group, a kind of worldview’ (as the teacher formulates it) is the dominant aim of a history course, some skepticism might be in place. Because this well-intentioned aim might – even unconsciously – amount to confirming canonical, heroic accounts, contributing to romantic or otherwise complacent representations of the national past, in which William of Orange can act as the ‘greatest Dutchman ever’. If shared knowledge about the Netherlands also consists of knowledge of the political, economic and cultural mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion that equally ‘ground’ this nation (mechanisms which are an inherent part of the history of any nation, for that matter), the history course will have better fulfilled its mission of citizenship education in a multicultural era.

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Pieter de Bruijn

# Engaging heritage Plurality in educational resources

<sup>1</sup> Although the example is completely imaginary, there are several heritage sites in Britain that resemble the site described here. For example, London has the Churchill War Rooms, an underground command centre during the Second World War. English Heritage maintains the Secret Wartime Tunnels beneath Dover Castle, where the British government directed the evacuation of French and British soldiers from Dunkirk. Both heritage institutions offer educational programmes.

Imagine you are standing in an underground bunker. You can vaguely hear the sounds of a war raging outside. Airplanes are flying overhead. You feel explosions penetrating the thick layers of earth above your head. Meanwhile, all around you, you hear telephones ringing. Military officers are shouting commands and a plotting table in the middle of the room reveals a battle plan that is being executed. All this gives you a good impression of how it must have been to be at the top of the military chain of command in Britain during the Second World War. And yet, what ordinary people experienced at that time has been left in the dark. Who were the people flying the spitfires? How did it feel to be at home while your husband or father was off fighting the war? And what about the Germans? What did their pilots experience when they dropped bombs on major cities?

This example illustrates the core of what this research project is about. Although it is an imaginary heritage site, it gives us a good idea of how heritage institutions try to bring the past closer to pupils in their educational programmes.<sup>1</sup> It also shows how the use of bridging techniques can exclude certain perspectives. Because this imaginary scenario relies on reconstruction and authenticity to let pupils experience the past, its perspective is limited to a local – or maybe the national – level and confined to only a few historical actors. Such restraints on plurality may have a considerable impact when an aim of heritage education would be to construct commonality. Focusing on the experience of British males could easily lead to feelings of exclusion, especially when dealing with multicultural classes.

This research project explores how heritage institutions in England and the Netherlands construct plurality in perspectives and historical distance (or proximity) in educational resources concerning the transatlantic slave trade and the Second World War. Reconstructions and audio-visual experiences are only two of the many techniques regularly employed to bring the past closer. In this chapter, I examine the notions of distance and plurality in two examples of heritage education covering the transatlantic slave trade: a heritage trail in the city of Middelburg (Netherlands) and a heritage trail in Bristol (UK).

### **Localising the transatlantic slave trade**

Standing in a grassy field facing the small yacht harbour in Middelburg, we can hardly imagine that it was bustling with activity in the seventeenth century. The wharves of the Dutch West India Company and Middelburg Commercial Company, where shipbuilders constructed sailing vessels bound for West Africa and the Caribbean, are long gone. In fact, there is nothing to indicate the site's former function, except for an occasional warehouse. Despite this lack of references to Dutch seventeenth-century history, the Zeelandisch Archives has attributed historical meaning to the site by incorporating it into a heritage trail for school pupils. The trail takes them past several spots that can be related to Middelburg's role in the transatlantic slave trade.

On the one hand, attributing new meaning to the grassy field along this trail may bring the history of transatlantic slavery much closer to pupils, because it

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2 In 2001 the Victoria County History Project – established during the late nineteenth century to produce a regional history – created the website ‘History Footsteps’, which included a virtual slavery trail through Bristol for school pupils. This resource was revised and updated in 2011 and turned into a downloadable teacher’s pack. This article is based on the 2001 version of the trail.

emphasises the locality of this history and accentuates the historical significance of the very soil they are standing on. On the other hand, visiting this site may induce a feeling of distance, as it shows that little of that history has survived the test of time. The visit to this grassy field is only one of many examples along this trail that illustrate the bridging technique of ‘constancy of place’. One advantage of using this technique is that pupils may become more involved in learning about this history. However, a significant disadvantage to employing ‘constancy of place’ along this trail is that it affords little opportunity for a plurality of perspectives. As the history of the slave trade is narrated by means of sites in Middelburg, the trail describes that history from a European perspective. Most of the time, its point of view is that of the explorers or merchants who eventually began trading in African people. There are few references to the experience of those who were enslaved. When they are mentioned, it is often in the passive voice (as cargo), devaluing them as active agents.

The lack of plurality appears to be a characteristic of other heritage trails as well. For example, the Bristol Slavery Trail – a product of the Victoria County History Project<sup>2</sup> – is similarly limited when it comes to plurality of perspectives. Although this English resource does refer to a few slaves who lived in Bristol, for example a woman who served a wealthy plantation owner, the story is told from a European perspective. But although they fail to present several important points of view, both trails do feature a number of historical actors who are rarely mentioned in other educational resources on transatlantic slavery. For instance, the trail through Middelburg describes the role of the clergy in fostering support for or against the slave trade, and the Bristol resource includes educational activities focusing on the lives of the shipbuilders who constructed the vessels destined for Africa and the Caribbean. Including such actors may enrich pupils’ understanding of this history, but overall the history narrated in both trails remains one-sided. However, the English resource also demonstrates that it is possible to incorporate multiple perspectives when using a heritage object in learning, even if the object itself represents a certain perspective.

### **Colston statue: multiple perspectives**

Several Bristol streets, schools, landmarks, and even a bread bun are named after Edward Colston, an English merchant, member of parliament, and one of the city’s leading philanthropists. Recently, however, people have drawn attention to the fact that Colston also played an important role in the transatlantic slave trade. The Bristol Slavery Trail includes several sites and references to Colston. While it would be easy to present him either as a ‘hero’ or a ‘demon’, the trail offers a multi-layered account of Colston. This approach is most evident in a classroom activity related to a statue of Colston, situated in the middle of a busy traffic island in Bristol’s city centre.

The resource attributed three different meanings to the statue, giving pupils a more nuanced account of the controversial figure that it represents. First, it briefly depicted Colston as an historical actor in the history of the transatlantic

slave trade. It referred to his trading activities and his contributions to the city of Bristol. Second, it mentioned the statue's nineteenth-century meaning by relating that the Victorians honoured Colston with a statue because of his generosity. Finally, it described how Colston is remembered in the present day and asked pupils to formulate their own opinion. The resource therefore did not simply opt to bring the past closer by using the statue as an illustration or by referring only to Colston's present-day 'demonic' status. On the contrary, it showed multiple (present-day and nineteenth-century) perspectives concerning this heritage object. Instead of imposing one meaning on pupils walking the trail, the resource encouraged them to take a stance and position themselves in today's memory culture.

### **Conclusion**

This short analysis of two heritage trails focusing on the transatlantic slave trade shows how heritage educational resources can construct historical distance and plurality of perspectives as well as some of the constraints and possibilities. The bridging technique of 'constancy of place', used to bring the past closer to pupils, does not always transcend the local level and include the perspectives of other, non-local historical actors. Nevertheless, the Bristol Slavery Trail also illustrates that a heritage object connected with a certain place can still open up multiple perspectives. Although the Colston statue does not evoke those perspectives naturally, carefully designed educational activities can do so. Heritage education thus allows for a more open narrative, providing a basis for finding common ground about the past.

# 'My history begins in Africa'

## Example 1

\* Text and assignments are part of: NiNsee, *Kind aan de ketting. Opgroeien in slavernij – toen en nu* ('Child in chains. Growing up in slavery – then and now').

**'Gwen: "Some black people trace their history back to slavery. Others, like me, trace it to Africa. The people who ended up in slavery lived a normal life there, like any other. When I turned fourteen or fifteen, I wanted to know more about it."**

In 2007, Gwen joined a group of youngsters, artists and researchers to search for his roots. But where do you start if you hardly know anything?

A bureau in the United States has collected DNA samples from Africans who live in areas where many slaves came from. They compare that DNA with the DNA of people who are descended from slaves.

Gwen's DNA resembled the DNA of people who live in the Bamilieke area. The Bamilieke are a tribe in Cameroon. Gwen paid them a visit. They may be genetically related going back many generations. They were certainly culturally related, because Gwen had been taught some of the same rituals and customs. Apparently these had survived slavery.

- In which countries or regions do your roots lie?
- Do you think it is important to know more about where your roots lie? Explain your answer.
- Why do you think Gwen went in search of her roots?
- If you were Gwen, would you have done the same thing? Explain your answer.\*

## Response by Karel van Nieuwenhuysse

### Strengths

Studies show that pupils consider their family history the most interesting kind of history lesson. Personal and family history gives the school subject of history more meaning and motivates pupils to learn more. The interdisciplinary approach (incorporating DNA research and cultural habits) has added value. Investigating one's own history is also valuable and encourages active historical thinking.

### Pitfalls and opportunities

As a carrier of collective memory, heritage involves engagement, subjectivity, and a focus on the present and the future (confirmation of identity). To connect with history as a science, this example best serves as a starting point for further reflection. Otherwise there is a risk of presentism, with personal experience becoming a form of self-proclaimed victimhood and the uncritical projection of past situations of social inequality on to the present.

It is important to fit the findings of personal historical research into a broader historical perspective. Contextualisation, focusing on the interaction between personal history and the broader story, and critical questioning of present-day representations and interpretations of the past are all essential. Only then can pupils begin to really think historically.

Another pitfall is an overemphasis on affective historical empathy, resulting in an uncritical identification with the victim's perspective, and a moralising discourse on the 'wrong' colonial past. It would be better to create cognitive historical empathy leading to multiple perspectives or 'perspective recognition'. The responsibility of history lessons is not to nurture emotions but, on the contrary, to teach pupils to find a place for their emotions within an historical multiperspectivity.

The project also seeks to connect with intercultural and world history, on the one hand based on the idea that interaction between cultures and civilisations is a major dynamic force in world history, and on the other hand because intercultural and world history focus on meaningful themes in our globalising society (for example the interaction between cultures/continents and migration).

# A heritage trail through Middelburg

## Example 2

\* Zeeuws Archief, *Geboeid door het Zeeuwse slavernijverleden* ('Gripped by Zeeland's history of slavery')

The Zeelandish Archives has plotted a heritage trail through the Dutch town of Middelburg in which pupils are guided past several locations that refer or can be related to the history of the transatlantic slave trade.

The Middelburg Commercial Company (MCC), established in the eighteenth century, was heavily involved in the slave trade. The Dutch West India Company (WIC) also had offices in Middelburg. The field shown in the picture is one of the sites that pupils visit on the trail.

**'At the end of Dokstraat ("Dock Street") is a large grassy field that slopes gradually down to the harbour. This was once the site of the WIC and MCC wharves, where the two companies built their ships.'**\*

At the end of Dokstraat in Middelburg. Once the site of the WIC and MCC wharves. Part of a heritage trail through Middelburg.  
Photo Pieter de Bruijn



## Response by Siân Jones

This passage from the Zeelandish Archives', heritage trail in Middelburg raises a number of issues and questions. Pupils are guided past a large grassy field at the end of Dokstraat; once the location of wharves where slave ships were built. Visiting the physical site of past events and activities can provide a tangible sense of connection and reality. This is particularly important with uncomfortable aspects of history such as the slave trade, which have often been silenced by celebratory forms of national heritage. However, buildings and places do not

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offer straightforward forms of historical witness. They are subject to physical transformation over time and are selectively bound up in ongoing processes of identity construction and place-making.

In this case, there is a strong disjunction between the past that pupils are asked to engage with and the present cityscape with its neat, cut grass overlooked by modern houses and a marina filled with recreational sailing vessels. To make the most out of the educational experience, in my view, it would be important to engage directly with the potentially uncomfortable feelings and thoughts that this juxtaposition elicits. Pupils would need enough contextual information to imagine the eighteenth-century cityscape and to think about its social, economic and political dimensions. But they could also be encouraged to consider how it has changed over time and what forms of memory, identity and place-making it might be associated with today. What traces of the eighteenth-century cityscape survive, if any, and how might its slave history be represented? Furthermore, what would be the implications of doing this? By asking the pupils to consider such issues we can bring forth an awareness of the selective and contested nature of heritage and of the ways in which it is remembered and forgotten, produced and consumed.

# Bristol Slavery Trail

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## Example 3

\* *Victoria County History, History Footsteps: Bristol Slavery Trail*  
Retrieved 12 January 2011 from [www.historyfootsteps.net](http://www.historyfootsteps.net). The trail is currently available at <http://explore.englishpastforeveryone.org.uk/taxonomy/items/1027>.

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**‘In Bristol city centre stands a nineteenth-century statue of Edward Colston. Colston was a wealthy trader who was praised for his generosity. Much of his wealth, however, came from the transatlantic slave trade.**

**Recently, a debate arose between people who argued that all references to Colston in Bristol should be removed and those who thought that this was unnecessary.**

**The following three questions, taken from an educational resource based on a heritage trail through Bristol, illustrate different approaches to the Colston statue:**

- 1 **Circle any of the words below which you think describe the memorial statue of Edward Colston.**  
“Thoughtful, kind, cruel, considerate, harsh, proud, selfish, compassionate, rough, uncaring, gentle, insensitive”
- 2 **Why do you think that the church and the sculptor wanted to present this sort of image of Edward Colston?**
- 3 **Some people feel that Colston should not be remembered since he made a lot of his money from the slave trade. Bristol is hoping to build a new concert hall to replace Colston Hall...  
Use the letters from the Bristol Evening Post to help you decide whether the name of the Colston Hall should be changed. On a sheet of paper, write down your views.’\***

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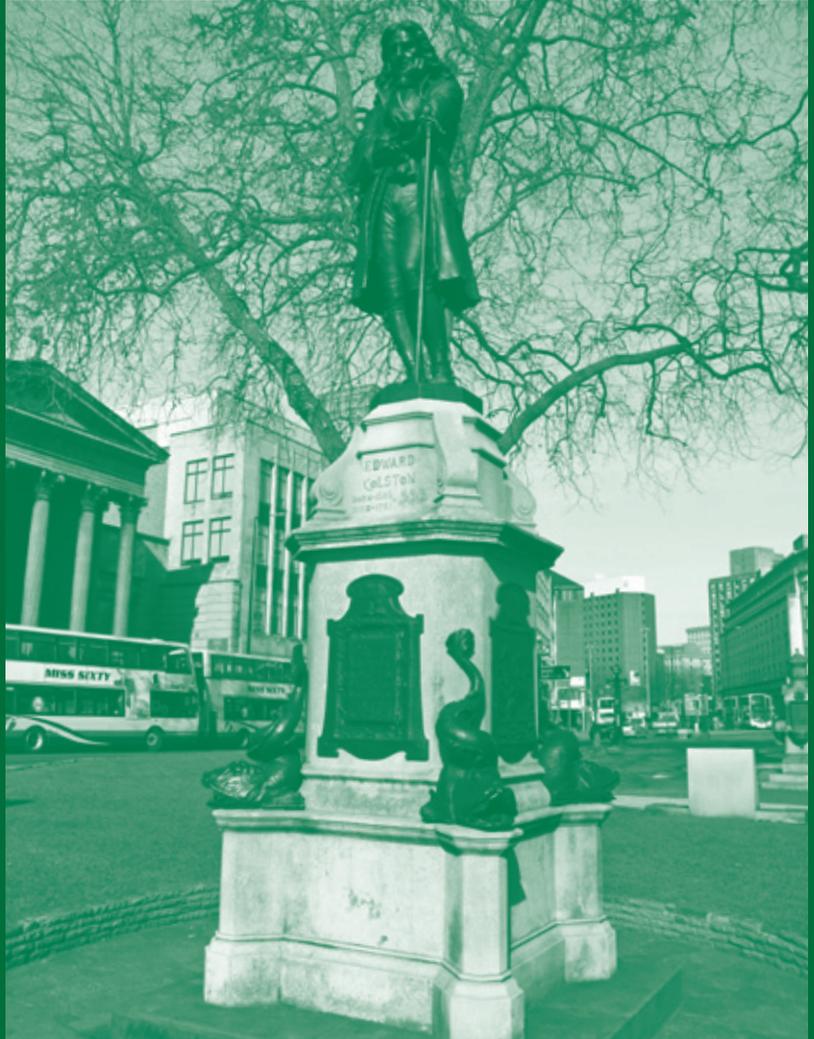
## Response by Kaat Wils

From the perspective of history didactics, one of the main opportunities afforded by heritage education based on historical monuments is that it offers pupils a chance to reflect on the ways in which public history has functioned in the past and functions or might function in the present. This is not an easy undertaking, as it comes down to learning to historicise the memory politics of the past and to debate the ways in which we should deal today with the memory politics of the past. The concrete, material nature of historical monuments can help make similar questions less abstract and more accessible.

Making such an undertaking meaningful requires pupils to have enough contextual knowledge of both the historical person or event represented by the monument and the historical context in which the monument was erected. In the specific case of the Colston memorial statue, pupils should not only have some knowledge of the slave trade and the ways in which daily Western consumption

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The Colston Statue in Bristol.



patterns depended on the economic system based on that trade; they should equally know, for instance, a few things about Colson's involvement in the Church, if it was indeed the Church that commissioned the statue. They should also know something about the nineteenth-century's 'statuomania'. If they lack this knowledge, questions like the ones presented here risk becoming historically meaningless, unable to transcend the easy presentist moral judgments that adolescents (and adults alike) spontaneously make when dealing with what is known as the 'dark pages' of the past.

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Geerte Savenije

# Discussion in chains

Pupils' ideas  
about slavery  
heritage

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When we consider the specific features of heritage education and how we can improve its quality, we approach it from various perspectives. Reasoning from the designers' perspective, we think about objectives, subject content and teaching methods. The focus is on what to convey, for what reasons, and how to do so. We can take the other side's position as well, i.e. the perspective of those who participate in heritage education projects, mostly primary and secondary school pupils. What is the precise nature of their experiences and their learning during such projects? Can we find elements related specifically to heritage they encountered or to the way it was discussed during the project? Such knowledge may give heritage educators important insights into their own educational designs and practice.

Pupils learn about the heritage of the country they live in both inside and outside school. They enter a heritage education project on the transatlantic slave trade and slavery with narratives that are already more or less structured. 'Entrance narratives' of this kind includes knowledge and perspectives, personal experiences, memories and feelings. Pupils' entrance narratives are influenced by various sources of historical knowledge, for example family, media, peers and school. In particular, when studying the sensitive heritage of the transatlantic slave trade, pupils may well contribute a diversity of narratives and tell differing stories about the past.

Heritage can encourage pupils to share their ideas about meaning, allowing them to enrich their entrance narratives. The interesting thing about heritage is that it raises many questions. It must be important to someone, because it is there and it is well preserved. But for whom is it meaningful, and why? How do I relate to the meanings that other people attribute to it? In addition, the experience of heritage can be visceral. That is itself an important reason to employ heritage in education. Heritage can evoke the past so vividly that it feels as if past and present exist at the same time. It allows us to imagine what life was like back then. Sharing such an experience, sharing a moment of fascination concerning a certain object or story, might make it easier to express personal thoughts or feelings about its significance in the past and present.

In this chapter, I present results of a multiple case study. Two classes at a secondary school in Amsterdam visited National Institute for the Study of Dutch Slavery and its Legacy or NiNsee and the Dutch national slavery monument. The pupils in these classes reflected the multicultural, multi-ethnic population of this urban area. The pupils were in their second year of secondary school, aged 13 or 14. I conducted whole-class questionnaires and thirteen pupils were interviewed individually before and after the heritage project.

### **'The' significance of slavery heritage**

The pupils shared an interest in slavery heritage and many of their ideas about the significance of that heritage were the same. In both the pre-test and post-test, 80 per cent of the pupils were interested or very interested in the subject, and especially in issues of equality and freedom in relation to slavery heritage. The

same percentage of pupils stated, on both the pre-test and post-test, that slavery heritage is significant. They especially agreed that slavery heritage is important for the descendants of slaves and in order to remember there has not always been equality and freedom (see **Tara in Example 1**). Many pupils considered this the most relevant lesson to be learned from the history of slavery. They thought slavery heritage could help convey this message.

Still, some differences came to the fore in the individual interviews. Most pupils had not really discussed these differences in the classroom. If they found they had different ideas, they easily reached agreement for the duration of the exercise and did not enter into personal discussions. The examples included in this chapter show some of the ways in which pupils attributed meaning to slavery heritage in the pre-interviews.

A few pupils gave personal reasons for believing slavery heritage to be significant. They mentioned their family's connection with the history of slavery and regarded slavery heritage as valuable for their families. However, their family relationship to the subject did not result in a similar personal engagement with slavery heritage. Evelyn, for example, explained that although she knew slavery had changed the lives of her ancestors and she had discussed the subject at home, she did not feel engaged with slavery heritage and it had nothing to do with who she was (**Example 2**). Giulio, on the other side, did recognise slavery heritage as something relevant for him personally, as part of his identity. He wanted to know all about it so that he would get to know himself better. He thought it was important to learn about his family history and what his ancestors had been through in the past. In discussing heritage preservation, he described its significance for the descendants of slaves and explicitly reckoned himself to be part of that group. He also discussed the importance of slavery heritage in remembering inequality (**Example 3**).

Three others pupils also related personally to slavery heritage, although in a different way. Before the project began, most of the pupils had not been aware of the role of the Dutch in slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. Noa, Bas and Thijs, who described themselves as 'thoroughly Dutch', had been aware of that role, however. They argued that, because they were Dutch, they felt ashamed in some way for what Dutch people in the past had done to African people by enslaving them and taking them to the Americas (**Example 4**).

### **Museum experiences**

We found that pupils displayed significantly more interest during their visit to NiNsee and the national slavery monument. A much smaller group of pupils felt bored or neutral during the museum lesson than during the preparatory and concluding lesson at school. Instead, some felt compassionate or ashamed. More than 90 per cent of the pupils said that the visit to NiNsee and the national slavery monument had given them a better picture of the slavery era and made them feel like it 'really happened'. Bas and Giulio described how this worked for them:

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**Bas** ‘Rather interesting, you could see real objects and all the paintings showing how it looked there and everything, and I always find that rather interesting to see.’

*Interviewer* ‘Yes, what do you find interesting about that?’

**Bas** ‘Well, it gives you, it gives you a better idea of how it worked, because sometimes you have a certain idea in your head and it might be correct but it might be totally different, and it can feel very strange when you find out.’

*Interviewer* ‘Did you have an experience like that?’

**Bas** ‘Uh yes, a little bit, with the slaves in the boat, I thought that they were transported really differently, but they had lie really close to, almost on top of one another. I thought that there was a bit more space, but they were all really crammed together.’

**Giulio** ‘Yes, like the canoe, you saw just how they sat and you also saw the levels of a boat and I could also see where my ancestors sat and what they went through. Yes, I also found that there was more of a story of somebody who experienced it, and that’s when I really thought “that’s really important”. When you hear the story from someone who has actually experienced it and written it down, then it’s a bit clearer, then I can believe it.’

As these remarks make clear, the heritage objects and stories presented at NiNsee are important for the experiences Bas and Giulio had during their visit. This can also be seen in pupils’ responses to our free recall questions after each lesson. Pupil references to heritage objects and stories increased from 31 to 75 per cent after the museum visit. For example, one pupil’s first recollection was ‘the boat in the museum’. Many other pupils mentioned the punishments meted out to the slaves, for example ‘you can see the weapons and methods of torture’. In listing what they had not known before, many pupils mentioned the national slavery monument in the park.

### **Conclusion**

Pupils’ entrance narratives of slavery history and heritage showed several similarities. All pupils found that slavery heritage is significant for the descendants of enslaved people even before visiting NiNsee. However, a deeper discussion of the subject in the interviews showed that pupils did differ in their ideas concerning the significance of slavery heritage, and that they attributed meaning and significance to that heritage in many ways. Considering the wide variety of ideas that they held – a variety that is not immediately apparent – it would be interesting to encourage pupils to express their own ideas and reflect on these and other perspectives in the rich environment that a museum clearly offers them.

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The museum lesson enlivened pupils' image of the slavery past and they were fascinated by the heritage objects and stories. This heritage appears to offer an interesting and inspiring opening for learning about and discussing the history of slavery and slavery heritage with pupils, and for improving their understanding of it without framing it within our own perspectives and ideas. It might be worthwhile to consider whether heritage institutions should pay less attention to creating awareness and evoking empathy in favour of reflecting on ideas pupils already have and using heritage to open up the discussion.

# Pupils' view of Dutch slavery heritage

\* The quotes come from the pre-interviews.

## Example 1

Tara described her ethnic and religious identity as Dutch-Surinamese-Spanish and not religious. Her parents' birth countries are Suriname and the Netherlands. Tara on the value of slavery heritage today:

**'Uhm, because people who have experienced that always carry something with them, it is a kind of memory and they have, like, some kind of feeling, I think. That's why I think it is important that these objects and stories are still here for those people.'**

**'I think what is most important is that there was no equality. That just really got to me, no freedom. ...There are still enough people who think "there's that black again" or "there goes that ape" or that kinds of thing, well I just think that's really bad.'**\*

## Example 2

Evelyn talks about what slavery heritage means to her. Earlier in the interview, she said she had discussed the subject at home and knew slavery had changed the lives of her ancestors. Her parents come from Curacao and the Netherlands. She describes herself as Dutch-Antillean and Christian. Evelyn says:

**'I think it is personally who I am, yes, but because now there's no more slavery, I think it has nothing to do with me and I have never had anything to do with it, you see. I have never had to work or had my father taken away suddenly or anything, so I think it isn't relevant for me.'**\*

## Example 3

Giulio describes himself as Surinamese, Polish and Dutch, and not religious. His parents were born in Suriname and the Netherlands. Giulio reflects on the importance of slavery heritage:

**'In the past people were just very racist and I'm black too and I just cannot understand that people did that, that they were so racist, and I think it is important to remember that, because they were racist to my family as well.'**\*

## Example 4

Bas talks about the role of the Dutch in the transatlantic slave trade. His parents were born in the Netherlands and he considers himself Dutch and not religious. He says:

**'Well the Netherlands had many slaves and that is kind of shameful for those who are Dutch too, and it feels like you have just abused people or, well, your ancestors have. It's kind of shameful that we abused people so badly.'**\*

The Slavery Monument in the Oosterpark, Amsterdam. By Erwin de Vries.

Photo Stephan Klein, September 2011



## Response by Alan McCully

Lowenthal demonstrates that the power of heritage is both positive and negative. These quotes indicate that the young people's initial exposure to slavery heritage has been a force for good. There is curiosity to explore further and also evidence of heightened awareness in relation to identity (Tara and Giulio), of the need to challenge racism and intolerance (Giulio), and of national reflection on past wrongs (Bas).

Lowenthal also insists that heritage and history are different, albeit related experiences: 'History explores and explains pasts grown ever more opaque over time; heritage clarifies pasts so as to infuse them with present purposes'. Certainly, the young people's responses reflect Barton and Levstik's 'empathy as caring' dimension of history – 'a tool to establish their connection to the past'. However, other aspects of the responses are unhistorical, especially that each seems firmly rooted in a presentist perspective – Giulio equates racism then to racism today, Tara applies equality and freedom today to the slavery era, and Bas accepts responsibility for the actions of the Dutch then.

This could be risky if these heritage experiences are not contextualised in historical thinking. Is there a danger, for instance, that Giulio will carry that sense of grievance into present-day relationships or that Bas will be overburdened by his feelings of shame?

In relation to Northern Ireland, there are familiar aspects to the quotes. Each of the pupils responds from the perspective of their own background, even Evelyn. That connection is central to their engagement but also a challenge to their objectivity. Evelyn is particularly interesting in that she acknowledges the link but then distances herself from its implications. In Northern Ireland such responses often were interpreted as 'avoidance'; an unwillingness to confront the possibility that I might hold some of the thoughts and feelings encountered by others of my background.

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**Response by Carla Peck**

Historical significance concerns decisions about what we should teach, learn, commemorate, and remember. These decisions hinge on several factors, including concerns about why an historical phenomenon is important for us *now* – what is the relevance of this or that historical event for me today and, for pupils, why should I care about this? However, decisions about historical significance also need to be tempered by a contextualised understanding of the phenomenon under consideration; situating an historical event, person, development or idea within its historical context – or placing it within a larger narrative – is crucial for making informed decisions about historical significance.

Two types of historical significance are apparent in the selected excerpts: symbolic significance and significance for the present-future. At its basic level, symbolic significance can be ascribed to an event if it is believed that the event teaches a lesson. Tara and Bas seem to indicate that slavery heritage is significant because it teaches that slavery is ‘wrong.’ This may seem an obvious conclusion, yet not all pupils get there. For example, Evelyn and Giulio focus on their personal connection to slavery, which is important because it gives them a reason to study the phenomenon. Importantly, these two pupils have drawn on their perceptions of their identities to help them think about the significance of slavery for their own lives. However, they have not yet connected their personal histories to a larger historical narrative. For Bas, on the other hand, the significance of slavery lies in the involvement of the Dutch in slavery in the past. Tara seems to take her thinking a step further, connecting the influence of past racisms (slavery) to current examples of racism, which could be an example of significance for the present-future.

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Carla van Bortel

# Heritage as a resource for learning Opportunities and challenges

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It is clear that heritage provides ample opportunities to contribute to the learning of history in a meaningful and positive way. Material and immaterial heritage can easily trigger curiosity, and authentic objects and sites can foster empathy and support pupils' imagination of what it was like in the past. In heritage lessons, pupils can also engage in historical enquiry. Exploring historical evidence, reflecting on aspects of change and continuity, or critically questioning historical representations by using heritage may contribute to pupils' historical thinking and reasoning. In this way, heritage can be considered a powerful resource that engages pupils with the past and enhances the learning of history.

Another, more unique way in which engagement with the past through heritage might contribute to the learning of history is by encouraging reflection on the significance of the past for people in the present. Pupils can gain a better understanding of how different people connect in various ways to the past, what they might have in common, or establish a personal connection.

We have also pointed out the potential constraints of imaginative engagement and the construction of proximity, however. They may encourage presentist thinking and obstruct historical understanding. When pupils are emotionally engaged, it is, for example, more difficult to acknowledge other perspectives. Moreover, when heritage is considered to have a static, essentialist meaning that is bound to one static identity, it is likely to promote exclusion. In a dynamic approach, heritage can have multiple meanings and belong or connect to different identities.

A careful design of heritage lessons and integration into the curriculum is needed to materialise potential affordances, but also to resolve constraints and avoid some pitfalls. There are two main challenges.

The first challenge for teachers and heritage educators is to construct a meaningful balance between historical distance and proximity. For example, there should be enough opportunity to construct an historical context and to include perspectives from various historical actors. Representations and interpretations of the past must also be questioned. All this also requires a balance between the cognitive and emotional.

The second challenge lies in the design of heritage educational materials and activities that reflect a dynamic approach to heritage. The heritage narratives that are communicated to pupils should not be closed, but open texts, reflecting different voices, for example, on the meaning of certain heritage. Multiperspectivity and inclusiveness can also be achieved through activities in which pupils are supported and encouraged to explicitate, share and reflect on their prior knowledge, interest and experiences, especially when there are a variety of 'entrance narratives'. If we take the idea of pupils as meaning-makers seriously and want an inclusive approach, then our heritage lessons should provide pupils with opportunities to explore different perspectives on the significance of heritage. Reflecting on different interpretations and beliefs may contribute to pupils' awareness that their own and other people's identity influences their interpretations of the past. We should be careful, however,

to prevent the desire to consider cultural, ethnic and religious diversity in classrooms from resulting in fixed and stereotypical images of what that diversity amounts to.

The notions of historical distance, multiperspectivity and significance are important for a dynamic approach to heritage. Being aware of them may support professionals in the field of education in the design and evaluation of heritage education. The affordances and constraints will be different for each lesson or project in which heritage is used as a primary resource for learning. The practice of heritage education shows that in heritage lessons outside school, for example in a museum or at a heritage site, it is possible to construct a balance between historical distance and proximity, to open up multiple perspectives and to discuss significance. However, in contexts outside school it may be difficult to contextualise in depth, to respond to all the questions that are triggered by heritage objects, and to engage pupils in sharing and discussing knowledge and feelings. That is why teachers and educators should carefully embed the use of heritage in their lessons and educational material, instead of 'doing' heritage on the side when the opportunity arises.

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# Heritage education is an approach to teaching and learning that uses material and immaterial heritage as a primary instructional resource in order to increase pupils' understanding of history and culture.

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This publication presents the initial findings of a research programme on heritage education (2009–2014) undertaken by the Center for Historical Culture at Erasmus University Rotterdam.

The introduction reflects on such concepts as historical distance, commonality and multi-perspectivity, each of which plays an important role in the dynamic approach to heritage in education.

The chapters based on empirical studies show the relevance of these concepts when studying the pedagogical decisions of history teachers and heritage educators, when investigating heritage educational resources, and when exploring how pupils who visit a heritage site or museum learn. They all focus on the topic of the transatlantic slave trade and how it is taught in multicultural classrooms. The aim of this publication is to encourage fruitful discussion among researchers, history teachers and practitioners working in the field of heritage education.

