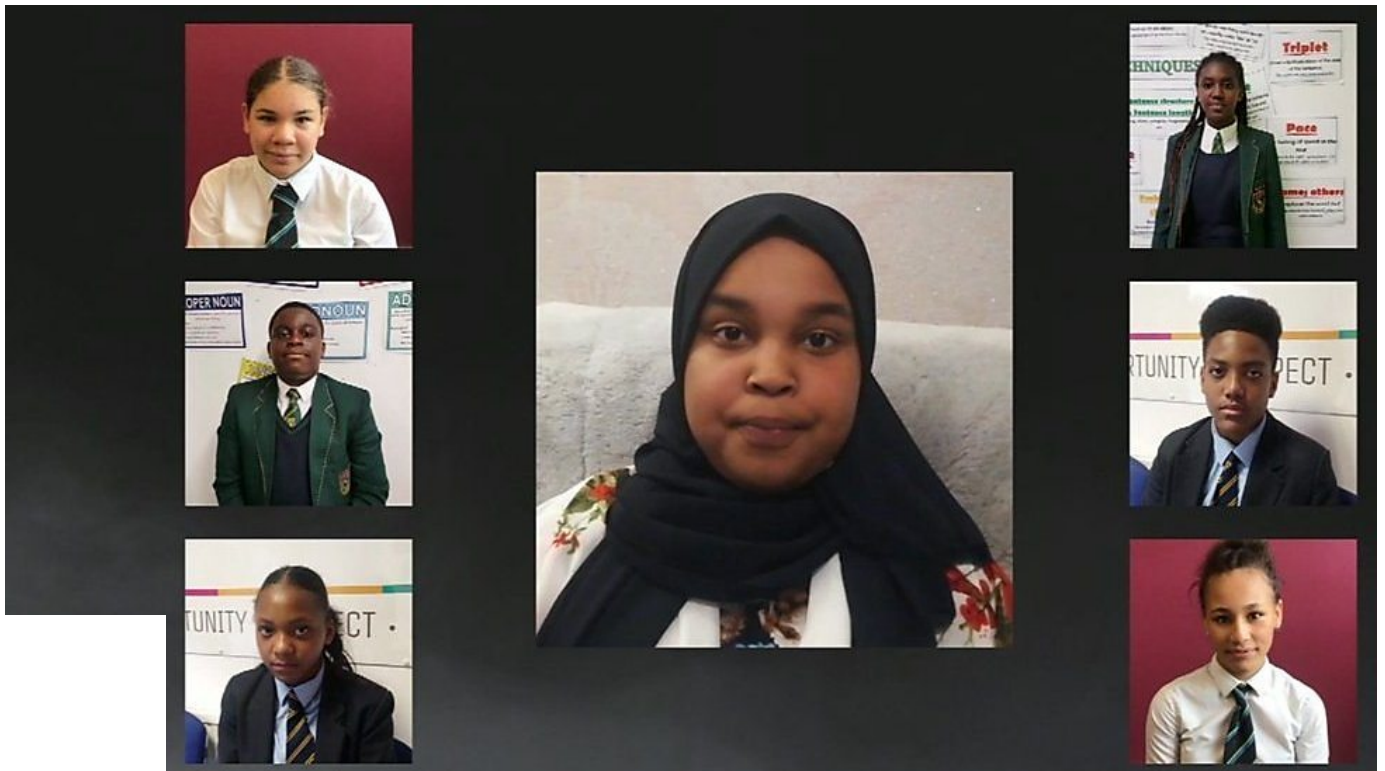


# Black History Month 2021: What is it?

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What's it like being young, black and British?

**October is Black History Month in the UK, an event that has been celebrated nationwide for more than 30 years.**

The month was originally founded to recognise the contributions that people of African and Caribbean backgrounds have made to the UK over many generations.

Now, Black History Month has expanded to include the history of not just African and Caribbean people but black people in general.

"In years gone by, October has been the only time of year when the UK talks about the achievements of black people in Britain," says Catherine Ross guest editor of Black History Month 2020.

"Hopefully, this will be a catalyst for black history to be shared much more widely - in museums, galleries, schools, universities, public spaces and communities."

## **More on Black History Month**

**[Black women you should know about](#)**

**[The black men who made history in Britain](#)**

**[Growing Up Black In America - a Newsround report](#)**



WATCH: Why is Black History Month important?

## **Why is Black History Month important?**

Black History Month was first launched in London in the 1980s, where the aim was for the local community to challenge racism and educate themselves and others about the British history that was not taught in schools.

Black people have been in Britain for a lot longer than previously thought - one of the oldest skeletons ever found was that of the **Cheddar Man** who had dark skin.

Archaeologists, people who study human history by digging up sites looking at bones and ancient objects, think that the skeleton dated back to the stone age.



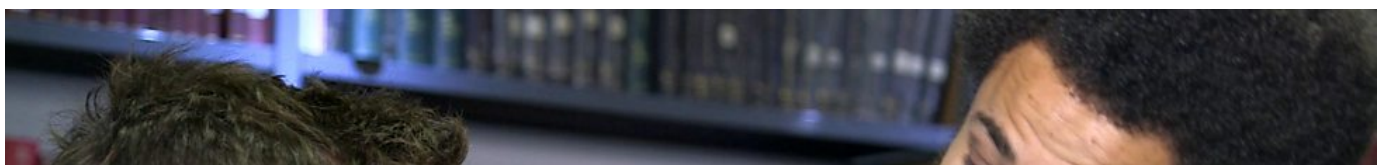
Black History Month: Black Britons who paved the way

Throughout history black people have always been present in the UK but there has been a lack of representation in the history books.

In paintings of Henry VIII you can see black people in the background.

Queen Victoria even had a black goddaughter whose mother was a **Nigerian Princess called Omoba**. She was given to the Queen when her parents died after being captured by slave traders. Her name was changed to Sarah Forbes-Bonetta.

Many people think that it's important to remember the forgotten people who have helped to shape the UK.





WATCH: 'My ancestor was a slave'

## A historic year

2020 saw protests in Britain, and around the world, in response to the death of **George Floyd**, a black man who died after being stopped by police in America.

"2020 has held a mirror up to the world and forced many to see the reality of racism," says Catherine Ross.

In the UK, **Black Lives Matter** protests have called for an end to **systemic racism**, where people aren't treated fairly because they are black.

Premier League footballers have **taken the knee** in solidarity with the movement, while there have been calls to remove statues of white people who contributed to Britain's role in the **transatlantic slave trade** - a time when black people were traded for goods and sold into slavery to work. It lasted for more than 400 years.

"Black Lives Matter protests around the world sparked a commitment among many individuals and organisations to educate themselves about black history, heritage and culture - as part of understanding racism and standing in solidarity against it," Ross said.





Watch our special Newsround bulletin about racism in the UK

## **The Black Lives Matter movement:**

**What does the phrase 'Black Lives Matter' mean?**

**George Floyd: Why are there huge protests in the US and around the world?**

**Why are people talking about Breonna Taylor?**

**Advice to help you if you're upset about racism**

## **How will Black History Month be celebrated?**

Many people take the time to do research into their backgrounds or find out more about black people who have made a difference to the UK.

Some schools teach about Britain's black history, including the slave trade, and important and influential black **men** and **women** from history.

The Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, says it's important to celebrate the influence black people have had in shaping Britain's history:

"For countless generations people of African and Caribbean descent have been shaping our nation's story, making a huge difference to our national and cultural life and helping to make Britain a better place to be.

"It is this contribution of black British people that I am proud to be celebrating Black History Month this October," he said.





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