

Institution: University of Essex		
Unit of Assessment: 28 - History		
Title of case study: Employing drama to transform the teaching, teacher education and public understanding of the transatlantic slave trade		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2005 – 2019		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Jeremy Krikler	Professor of History	1990 – to the present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014 – 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>The transatlantic slave trade has been the focus of recent high-profile and politically-charged controversies about history teaching in UK schools. Media exposure of mock slave auctions and academic research into the alienating and sometimes traumatic classroom experiences of Black British pupils starkly illustrate the critical and urgent challenge to reform how the slave trade is taught. Krikler's research into the 1781 massacre on the slave-ship <i>Zong</i>, published as peer-reviewed journal articles and as a play, provided a unique opportunity to bring complex ethical and historical questions into the foreground in two distinct pedagogical contexts: school teaching and the training of teachers.</p> <p>The filmed scene of the play and associated tailored resources have changed practice in the teaching of the transatlantic slave trade, enhancing student understanding of this topic and advancing their grasp of key historical skills required by the National Curriculum. It has now been provided to 187 schools in Essex and Suffolk. This approach has also raised professional training standards, adding research-based rigour and creativity to the teaching of this topic that increases the confidence of teachers. The Historical Association has adopted this set of resources in their Teacher Fellowship (HATF) programme relating to the transatlantic slave trade. It has also been used on the Institute of Education (IoE) at UCL Post Graduate Certificate of Education since 2019, reaching 50 trainee teachers a year. Beyond the pedagogical impacts, public understanding of the slave trade and its relationship to English law has been improved through the performance of the play. Multiple theatrical events, including a professional production of the play, were held with audience feedback confirming audiences' transformed understanding of its subject.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Krikler conducted original research on a wide range of eighteenth-century records relating to the slave trade and English law to shed new light on the infamous <i>Zong</i> slave-ship massacre in 1781. More than 130 slaves were thrown overboard to drown and the <i>Zong</i>'s owners claimed insurance for these people as lost 'cargo' in the English courts in 1783. Krikler explored the complex legal ramifications of the massacre and subsequent legal case in relation to developments in English law, and especially maritime insurance law, in his 2007 article, 'The <i>Zong</i> and the Lord Chief Justice' [R1]. Krikler paid particular attention to the Lord Mansfield, Chief Justice of England, who played a pivotal role in shaping the legal treatment of the <i>Zong</i> case. Krikler showed that, while Mansfield viewed slavery as odious and counted Dido Elizabeth Belle, the daughter of a slave by Mansfield's nephew, as a member of his close household, he refused to consider the <i>Zong</i> slaves as having been murdered. Krikler established through his research that Mansfield's main concern was avoiding establishing any legal precedents that could disrupt England's trade, even at the expense of the law against murder and precepts of insurance law that he had already established.</p>		

By highlighting the ethico-legal dissonances of Mansfield's judgement, Krikler's research advanced scholarly understanding and also provided the key creative insight he later developed into a play, in which a fictionalised Dido exposes and challenges these dissonances [R3].

Krikler explored the wider context of the *Zong* massacre in his 2012 article, 'A Chain of Murder in the Slave Trade' [R2], showing that it was the end-product of a terrible process in which slaves were dehumanised, partly through a medico-commercial logic, and their captors desensitised to their suffering. Krikler showed that the extreme circumstances of the *Zong* voyage, on which the ship ran short of water due to navigational errors by its inexperienced captain, drove this process to its logical, and dreadful, end.

Exposing this combination of dehumanisation and desensitisation in scholarly publications was an important task, but Krikler recognised that wider public understanding and empathic engagement with this topic required working in a creative medium. His play, *A Peril of the Sea* [R3] drew on extensive archival research and on his previous academic publications, dramatising the ethical conflicts and human trauma of the *Zong* case through scenes between Mansfield and Dido and on the ship itself. The dramaturgical process was advanced through collaborative work with theatre professionals and in response to audience feedback from a series of workshops and rehearsed play-readings he ran in 2014 and 2015 (at RADA and the Arcola Theatre, London, in 2014, and the Mercury Theatre, Colchester, in 2015). Krikler's 'Afterword' to the published play explained how the script relates to the scholarly research and raises some important questions about the relationship of history to drama, as well as offering teachers and teacher trainers valuable insights to aid them in their use of Krikler's educational resources on the *Zong*. With the publication of the play, an enduring cultural resource for public understanding of the slave trade has been provided.

3. References to the research (can be supplied by HEI on request)

- R1. 'The *Zong* and the Lord Chief Justice', *History Workshop Journal*, No. 64 (Autumn, 2007), pp. 29-47 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dbm035>
- R2. 'A Chain of Murder in the Slave Trade: A Wider Context of the *Zong* Massacre', *International Review of Social History*, 57 (2012), pp. 393-415. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0020859012000491>
- R3. *A Peril of the Sea* (York: Methuen, 2019) ISBN-10 : 0413778363

4. Details of the impact

A full professional production of the play was performed at the Lakeside Theatre, Colchester, and the Bloomsbury Theatre, London, in 2017. Key scenes of the play were filmed for use in teaching in schools. Educationalists from the Historical Association were invited to the Bloomsbury show to elicit valuable feedback about using the play in teacher education. This number included a teacher educator from IoE who has particular expertise in inclusive education and the history of Black British communities; he is also a co-founder of Justice 2 History, an educational consultancy committed to developing pedagogy with social justice and equality as core values. Krikler's collaboration with the IoE teacher education specialist throughout the impact period, including formal evaluations, was critical to refining the resources to ensure that the benefit for classroom teaching and teacher training was maximised.

In Colchester, History, Drama, Law, Philosophy/Ethics and English secondary school teachers from the area were invited to the Lakeside production and to a follow-up workshop. Krikler sought their advice as current practitioners on how the play could be used effectively in school teaching, producing an evaluation report [S1]. Krikler subsequently worked in close collaboration with the chair of the teachers' workshop – a teacher at the Plume Academy (in Maldon, Essex) – to develop, pilot and evaluate the lesson plan and resource pack, integrating the play into Key Stage 3/Year 8 teaching of the slave trade.

Changing practice in the teaching of the transatlantic slave trade in schools and enhancing student understanding

In 2018, Krikler led a collaboration with the Plume Academy History teacher resulting in a successful pilot of the lesson plans and teaching resources, including the filmed scene, with a mixed ability Year 8 class in February 2019. The teacher formally evaluated the pilot to establish its efficacy amongst students with a range of abilities [S2]. In the same year, the IoE teacher education specialist also conducted an evaluation from a strategic perspective, highlighting the potential further use of such resources in Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5. He remarked that the play's dialogue with matching historical documents offered "*a very valuable exercise to [...] make for a much more authentic discussion of the notion of 'usefulness of a source'*" [S3]. He also commented that: "*It is important that the issue of race is considered as an integral part of the history of transatlantic slavery and the slave trade, and the play is a very good way in to such discussions*". He confirmed that "*Justice to History will be using this in the upcoming Historical Association Teacher Fellowship programme on the subject*" [S3].

The Plume teacher's evaluation of the pilot study found that students were clearly '*fascinated by the film[ed] scene*' and this helped them to engage '*very well*' with the tasks designed for them [S2]. The use of it allowed students to create meaningful connections with this complex and challenging topic, helping them to reflect in nuanced ways on perceptions of history. Students offered '*sophisticated and thoughtful answers*' when asked about the usefulness of the filmed extract as a way of understanding the topic. They judged it as '*a more accessible/interesting way to present information*' compared with a text book and that the play served '*as an example to future historians [of] how 18th century slavery was perceived*' in the 21st century [S2].

To facilitate a more creative approach to understanding this subject and its sources, Krikler had devised another exercise requiring students to match sets of cards, one with excerpts from the play and another with 'facts and quotations' from the primary sources. So, for example, a conversation between sailors about the conditions in which slaves were kept below decks was matched with a primary-source account given by a surgeon in the slave trade in 1788 [S4]. The teacher evaluation commended Krikler's success in this area, noting that students' understanding of the transatlantic slave trade was enhanced, particularly with regard to the "*conditions of the ship*"; they were clearly developing their skills in '*using primary sources and modern interpretations*' [S2].

When the COVID-19 pandemic closed schools in 2020, Krikler acted to provide teachers with resources they can download and use with classes working remotely. The lesson plan and accompanying resource pack was re-designed in conjunction with the IoE teacher training specialist and made available in digital format, allowing it to be taught under pandemic conditions. Since they were made available in December 2020, 187 schools throughout Essex and Suffolk can now benefit from being able to access these resources online [S3, S5, S6]. This timing was important as the slave trade is usually taught in Spring and Summer terms.

The combination of witnessing dramatised historical events from the play and opportunities to deploy 'facts and quotations' related to what they saw was both immersive and meaningful to the students, helping them to assimilate rich yet distressing material. A testimonial from the Plume teacher who conducted the original pilot study confirms that this approach offers '*a new pedagogical approach in how students understand the Transatlantic Slave Trade and build[s] on knowledge that they have acquired*' [S7]. The use of primary and secondary interpretive sources has also helped secondary school students to overcome '*the preconception that the past is in some way 'final' and cannot be re-interpreted*' [S7].

Raising professional training standards in teaching the transatlantic slave trade

While focusing on classroom practice enabled immediate changes to the teaching of the transatlantic slave trade, Krikler also addressed the need to address the training of the next generation of history teachers. In order to equip them with the skills and confidence to teach this difficult and traumatic past well, and informed by current scholarly research, he collaborated with Justice2History and the IoE. The play, the teaching resources and the pilot study became a springboard to embedding the resource (and the pedagogic thinking behind it) formally into IoE teacher training in 2019-20.

In 2019, Krikler's *'highly innovative project'* [S8] was incorporated in the national Historical Association Teacher Fellowship (HATF) programme on Britain and the slave trade, on which fifteen teachers were initially selected and enrolled [S8]. As the IoE teacher education specialist notes, *'many of the attempts to work with empathy in history classrooms have been woeful'* and have sometimes sought to avoid the examination of past human experiences or failed to *'develop historical consciousness'* [S8]. The play and additional resources were held to redress this directly, by providing an antidote to negative attitudes to 'empathy' and 'imaginative' pedagogical approaches to this complex and sensitive topic: *'The place of historical empathy in history education has been hard to navigate in recent decades, with an antipathy even to the term itself following a good deal of loosely, indeed poorly, conceived 'imaginative' work in earlier years. The rigorous research base behind the play and its evocative representations show educators a proper connection between empathy and evidence'* [S8]. Krikler's play and contemporary eighteenth-century sources also help to address *'[O]ne of the harder aspects of this work [which] is showing pupils the way in which sources are used by historians in the production of their interpretations'* [S8].

Teachers on the Fellowship programme not only explored *'practical applications of the play'* in school teaching but used it to explore *'ethical dimensions of history education'* and how conscious departures from the historical record in fictional work can nevertheless be used to pedagogic effect. This was particularly prized by those attending this training: *'[S]uch 'messiness' in the ethical dimensions of history education is useful in avoiding simple binary judgements about 'proper' history'* [S8]. The success of Krikler's project within the Fellowship programme has meant that it will feature in the forthcoming book by members of the HATF team, to be published by UCL press, on the teaching of the transatlantic slave trade [S8].

Since 2019, the IoE has also fully integrated Krikler's innovative resources into its Post Graduate Certificate of Education, on which around 50 teachers a year are enrolled. They are used in sessions dealing, not only with the teaching of slavery, but also those concerned with historical interpretation more generally. In the PGCE, the trainees have been encouraged to use the play in their placement schools. A variant of the exercise has now been integrated into a model lesson plan on the slave trade in the training of teachers at the Institute of Education [S8]. For time-poor teachers, having *'something that they can trial directly as an activity'* [S8] is hugely beneficial and boosts uptake of the resources. In this context, having the play published [R3] was important for teachers and teacher educators to ensure the ongoing availability of the text as a pedagogical resource [S8].

Enhancing and enriching public understanding of Britain's involvement in the transatlantic slave trade

Theatre-goers were introduced to the research findings through the multiple theatrical events in London and Colchester and key scenes were also previewed at the Essex Book Festival. Over 400 people attended the various events in small, studio theatres, with more than 300 people watching the final production at the Lakeside and Bloomsbury Theatres [S9].

Feedback from audience members at the Lakeside and the Bloomsbury theatres showed that over 96% of respondents confirmed that the play deepened their understanding of the slave trade; for a still higher proportion (100%) the play transformed their understanding of the slave trade's relationship to English law [S10]. Free text comments confirmed the effectiveness of the play as a drama as well as its ability to illuminate its subject and to provoke thought about its contemporary relevance: *'The play brought to life in brilliant and macabre detail the horrors of the Atlantic Crossing, the full psychic horror of people seen as property, and the range of people complicit in the trade'*. The play *'deepened my understanding'*, *'found resonance'* with the modern day, and provided *'an insight into the nature of law...Excellent, brilliant and theatrically compelling'*. Others commented that: it *'has inspired me to read and better understand the role of property law in the slave trade...The play was very vivid and has left a lasting impression on me, including what steps can be taken to end modern slavery'*; *'I had never really thought about how legal rationality worked...to dehumanise whole groups and justify the slave trade. A wonderful production, through and through'* [S10].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- S1.** Report on teachers' workshop (December 2017) on use of the play in school teaching
- S2.** The Plume Academy evaluation of use of the play and associated materials in teaching in February 2019
- S3.** Evaluation report (2019) on educational value and potential impact of 'A Peril of the Sea' on secondary school teaching by Co-Director of Justice to History, Institute of Education, UCL.
- S4.** Lesson plan/exercise on the slave trade
- S5.** Digitised lesson plan on the slave trade for online teaching
- S6.** List of schools provided with the digitized slave trade lesson in Dec. 2020.
- S7.** Testimonial of a Plume Academy teacher who has used the play in teaching in successive years
- S8.** Testimonial by Co-Director Justice to History, Institute of Education UCL, regarding use of *A Peril of the Sea* on UCL's PGCE and the Historical Association Teacher Fellowship programme in 2019-20.
- S9.** Ticket sales data for Lakeside Theatre and Bloomsbury Theatre production of the play (Dec. 2017) and confirmation of attendance figures at Arcola and Mercury Theatre readings (Nov. 2015; Nov. 2016)
- S10.** Survey of audience responses to 'A Peril Of The Sea' shows of December 2017