



Learning Guide

This learning guide provides information, support and teaching ideas for teachers and their students who are seeing *Coming to England*. Activities are linked to curriculum and assessment objectives where appropriate, but teachers are encouraged to explore and exploit the creative opportunities presented by the production.

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Introduction to Floella Benjamin

Floella Benjamin was born on 23rd September 1949 in Trinidad and spent much of her childhood living in the small town of Marabella. Her father followed by her mother travelled to the UK, but had to leave four of their children, including Floella, in Trinidad where they lived with foster parents for just over a year, who did not treat them kindly. Eventually, Floella's parents were able to save the money required for the children to join them in the UK and Floella arrived in Southampton on 2nd September 1960.

Floella's parents had always emphasised the importance of an education and of hard work. Floella worked in a bank after leaving school at 16, studying for her A levels in evening classes. Although she initially aspired to be a bank manager, Floella auditioned to perform in the national tour of a musical, and this began her career in theatre and TV. She never returned to banking!

Although many people might remember Floella for her work presenting Play School and Play Away, Floella's work is far reaching and prolific, as a writer, independent tv producer, campaigner and business woman. She has written over 30 children's books, performed in TV, radio, film and as a narrator for live orchestral performances. Floella was Chair of BAFTA - Television, and was responsible for creating the BAFTA Children's Awards in 1995, the same year in which *Coming to England* was first published. The book was adapted into a drama for BBC Education and won an RTS Award. BAFTA awarded Floella with the Special Lifetime Achievement Award in 2004, three years after she was awarded an OBE for services to broadcasting.

In 2010, Floella was elevated to a peerage: her full title is Baroness Benjamin of Beckenham. Her campaigns include the creation of a Cabinet level Minister for Children, and after 20 years of advocating for this, it became a reality in 2003. She was responsible for improving the rules for Child Performance Regulations and the making of UK children's TV programmes. In 2018, Floella was instrumental in persuading the government to establish Windrush Day, which now occurs on 22nd June each year. In the same year, Floella was made Chair of the Windrush Commemoration Committee, which commissioned the National Windrush Monument which now stands near platform 19 at London Waterloo Station, where many people including Floella, arrived by train from Southampton once their ship had docked in the UK.

Floella ran with the Olympic Flame in 2004 and was so inspired that she became involved in the activities which won London the right to host the Olympics in 2012. She was made a Dame in 2022 for her 40 years of charitable work and Queen Elizabeth II, two days before she died, appointed Floella into the Order of Merit, the highest order in the land, held by only 24 living people. You may also have seen Floella participate in the Coronation of King Charles III in 2023, where she carried the Sovereign's Sceptre with Dove. In 2024 she was awarded the BAFTA Fellowship for her sterling and outstanding work in the industry for over 50 years, which is the highest accolade in the television world.



Floella carries the Olympic torch ahead of the 2012 London Olympics
Photo: Olympic Organisers



Floella carries the Sovereign's Sceptre with Dove at the Coronation of King Charles III.

Synopsis of Coming to England

Before seeing the production or exploring the synopsis, you may wish to show students this Newsround clip which explains the origins of the Windrush story: [What is the Windrush Generation? | Finding My Family: A Windrush Special | Newsround](#)

The play begins with a flashback to 1980, when Floella is presenting *Play School*, a children's television series. Floella introduces herself to the audience, with the song *High Five Hello!* Floella explains that in the 1980s, it was unusual to see "people who look like me" on TV: it was rare to see people of colour presenting TV shows. Floella explains all of her achievements which have made her proud, and which have helped change attitudes towards diversity.

We are then transported to Trinidad with the song *Island in the Sun*, and Floella describes her home and the beautiful surroundings in which she grew up. We are introduced to the various children, who are delivered by the stork, according to Marmie, Floella's mother. Floella has five siblings, but never sees the stork...The family are happy together and sing *Happy Family*. We learn more about the family's life and Dardie, Floella's father, tells the children stories to entertain them. Floella is encouraged to entertain the family and sings *Clap Hands*.

The school teacher is strict and the children sing *God Save Britannia*, pledging loyalty to the British Queen Elizabeth. Floella sneaks in late and is punished by having her hand smacked with a leather belt. Floella explains to the audience that everyone loved the Queen and felt loyal to Britain, but explains that more challenging events in history, including slavery, was not taught in their lessons. Instead pupils learnt about subjects such as the Battle of Hastings in 1066, and the poetry of William Wordsworth.

As the children play and attend school, the adults see advertisements encouraging them to travel to England to "help the Mother Country" rebuild after the Second World War. The 1948 British Nationality Act means that British citizens across the world can travel to Britain to work. The work includes jobs in the newly created National Health Service (NHS), the railways, buses, factories and the postal service.

Dardie and Marmie discuss the possibility of moving. Dardie wants to be a jazz musician, rather than working as a field policeman in Trinidad. He sings *There's a World Out There*. Floella and Sandra overhear the conversation between their parents but are relieved when Marmie initially stays behind with the children. The family sing *Now Is the Hour*. The children continue to play, go to school and attend carnival: the ensemble sings *Play Mas*. Floella

watches her mother sell her precious jewellery to raise the money for her ocean voyage to Britain. The family reprise *Now is the Hour*.

When Marmie travels to England, the children are split up, with the boys remaining in the south of the island and the girls going north. 'Auntie' is a foster parent to Floella and Sandra, but treats them more like servants, expecting them to clean and do a lot of chores whilst also continuing their school studies. Lester and Ellington have an equally unpleasant time with 'Uncle', their foster father who makes them fight between themselves for food. Floella explains that they later find out that Marmie has been sending letters, clothes and parcels but they have never been given to the girls: 'Auntie' has been keeping the contents for herself, denying that Marmie had ever written to her children.

After fifteen months, the four children are able to travel to Britain and sing *Coming To England*.

Act Two

The act opens with a reprise of *Coming To England*. Sandra, Floella, Lester and Ellington all travel on board the ship, unaccompanied. They depict the two week journey.

As the ship docks, the children see Marmie waiting for them and they are reunited. On the train journey to London, the children see drab scenery which is nothing like what they are used to in Trinidad. After arriving in London, the ensemble sings *London, Wonderful London* and the children see the sights such as Buckingham Palace, the Tower of London and even experience an escalator for the first time. Gradually, however, the children realise that people are staring at them. They look very different to everyone else around them, and the world around them looks drab and grey - a complete contrast to life back in Trinidad.

The children are shocked to discover they will all be living in one room in a large house with many other tenants. A neighbour complains about the noise they are making and reminds them of the 'Going to Britain?' guidelines that have been published to educate people moving to England.

Floella and the family experience racism and discrimination from the people around them, being ignored in shops and being told to "go home" by strangers. Things get worse, with attempted flooding by putting a hose through the letterbox, as well as dog mess. Floella sings *Fish Out of Water*. Things are no better at school, where the children tease Floella who cannot understand what she has done to make people behave in this way. The children sing *Brown Girl in the Ring* to tease and intimidate Floella.

Floella volunteers to recite 'Daffodils' by William Wordsworth. She speaks in her Trinidadian accent, and the teacher is appalled, telling her that she should speak the Queen's English (Received Pronunciation). Floella repeats the poem, this time in RP. She has to change her accent in an attempt to fit in.

The children are exposed to racism, with hints of racial slurs (which are covered by the sound of a car horn in the performance). Marmie reminds Floella and her siblings that they are loved by their parents, but some people reject them because of the colour of their skin. She reminds them to stay strong. They sing *The End of the Tunnel*.

After reacting physically to a boy who tells her to "go back to the jungle", Floella explains that she realises that she must use her brain, not her fists, to fight back against the racism that she has experienced. She sings *Smile*. Floella joins in a game with other children at the school, and suddenly a boy called Norman kisses her. She is shocked - she does not realise it is a game of kiss chase and she slaps Norman's face!

Floella experiences snow for the first time and thinks it is beautiful, despite the harsh cold. She then visits church, and explains that the people who claim to be Christian are hypocritical by being unfriendly and unwelcoming to people of colour. A neighbour calls the police, accusing Marmie and her family of breaking into an empty house when, in fact, they are buying the house. This shocks the (white) neighbours who are worried that it will affect the respectability of the area. Many of the neighbours are abusive, and others move away, unwilling to live in a diverse neighbourhood.

Floella explains that Marmie and Dardie teach their children to live with pride. They have a 'double identity', "being Trinidadian at home and British at school", and are determined to enjoy the life they have worked so hard for. The family sing *Happy Family*. Floella enjoys school, but still experiences discrimination when she is not allowed to take the athletics cup home even though she is the captain of the team. She realises it is because she is Black. Marmie reminds her not to lose faith.

Floella takes this advice. She sings *She'll Be Coming Round the Mountain* and explains to the audience how successful she was at school, and in her auditions to become an actress. Her husband Keith is introduced and Floella reminds us of her '3 Cs: Consideration, Courage and Confidence'.

At the end of the play, Floella celebrates her achievements, and also those of her siblings, all of whom have gone on to make significant contributions to society. This includes Roy's work on the self-checkout machines that we all use today, and Lester's work as an engineer at the Houses of Parliament for which he was awarded an OBE. The play closes with a reprise of *Play Mas*.

Character list (in order of appearance)

In this production, the characters are played by actor-musicians, many of whom will play more than one role during the performance. This is called multi-roling. When the performers change character, simple items of costume will indicate their new character. This includes hats, jackets, carnival costumes and small props.

The style of the production is ensemble-led. The character of Floella both narrates the story and becomes a character within it. The actor playing Floella does not multi-role.

Floella

Sandra, Floella's elder sister

Lester, Floella's younger brother

Marmie, Floella's mother

Ellington, Floella's middle brother

Roy, the youngest brother of the six children

Cynthia, Floella's youngest sister

Dardie, Floella's father

A teacher in Trinidad

'Auntie', the foster mother with whom Floella lives in Trinidad

'Uncle', Floella's foster father in Trinidad

Ship's captain, on the ship on which Floella arrives in Britain

A London neighbour

A teacher in London

Norman

Vicar

Residents 1 and 2

A policeman

Other characters include citizens of Trinidad, including children, carnival performers, the ship's crew and passengers, Londoners - including shop assistants, passers-by - and a church congregation.

Themes

Family

Floella has six siblings, and they are all much loved by their parents, Marmie and Dardie. Although they wish to stay together, Marmie and Dardie make a lot of sacrifices in order to try and give their family the best opportunities in life. This includes the move to Britain. The family's loyalty to each other also helps them cope with the discrimination and racism that they experience when they move to Britain: something they were not expecting.

Education

Marmie always reminds Floella and the other children of the importance of doing their very best at school. Even when the British teachers are dismissive of Floella, and bully her just as badly as the other children do, Floella is determined to succeed. At the end of the play, Floella explains all of the different ways her family have succeeded, and all of the reasons they have to feel proud of themselves.

Racism & Discrimination

Floella is very excited to come to England, and to see the sights such as Big Ben, the Tower of London, and Buckingham Palace. However, other people are not so keen to have people of colour arriving in England, and the family experience terrible acts of racism. It takes great determination and courage to continue living in neighbourhoods where the family is made to feel unwelcome, and strength of character to do as Marmie suggests by fighting racism with minds rather than fists. Floella and her family make huge contributions to English life, which is celebrated at the end of the play in Floella's final monologue.

Courage

There are several acts of courage in this play. Dardie is brave enough to travel alone to England to begin the process of moving his whole family there. Marmie must trust that the children she temporarily leaves in Trinidad will be looked after, and these children must be brave in the face of the poor treatment they receive at the hands of their foster parents. Their courage must continue in England, dealing with physical and verbal racist attacks. Finally, all of the children and their parents show courage in continuing to strive to achieve their ambitions, including Floella's auditions for theatre and TV shows which made her a household name.

Confidence

Floella defines confidence as doing the right thing and being a decent human being. This includes having the confidence to accept other people's differences, even if not everyone acts in that way. Confidence also means believing that you have the ability to achieve your ambitions, and to face failure with positivity.

Consideration

Consideration involves caring for and respecting other people. Everyone is different, and it is these differences that makes our world an interesting and exciting place to live. Consideration includes understanding that not everyone likes and dislikes the same things, or lives in the same way as we do. Finding out more about those differences, rather than criticising them, is a great way to show consideration and understanding.

National and personal identity

As Trinidadians, Floella and her family are entitled to come to England, and settle here. They are shocked by how different the two countries are. Floella finds that sometimes she has to change the way she speaks in order to fit what other people think she should be. She also realises that she has two different identities as a Trinidadian and someone living in Britain, both of which she can celebrate and enjoy. Since coming to England, Floella has developed a TV identity (she is very famous for Play School, for example), but has also worked to celebrate those who came to England after the war to help rebuild the country. This includes chairing the Windrush Commemoration Committee which commissioned the National Windrush Monument that is now at Waterloo Station.

Ambition

Marmie, Dardie, Floella and the rest of the family believe in their ability to achieve their dreams. Although the process is not always easy or straightforward, it is their ambition (and their loyalty to each other) that helps them cope with the difficulties they face. Floella's long list of achievements demonstrates that she has continued to create and achieve her ambitions and make significant contributions to British life and values.

Interview with Floella Benjamin

Your book is very popular in primary schools and with families. When people watch the production, what is the main message that you'd like them to take away from the story?

I'd like people to understand other people's culture and ways of living. It's important that people feel the emotions of the story and develop an empathy for what other people are going through. It is very traumatic to feel that you're not connected with the people and places around you.

Coming to England isn't just my story - it's about understanding other people's lives

The play and my book show how bullying looks, and how bullying feels and I hope that the audience will feel all of the different emotions of the story, as well as developing a spiritual understanding of the world around them. My book and the play both use the senses a lot, and that's an important way of understanding the world around us too.

Can you tell us more about the process of adapting your book and working with David Wood?

I have known David for a long time and we worked together a lot over the years. I have written a number of books and written television programmes, with my husband Keith: I wrote the BBC TV adaptation of *Coming To England*, for example. However, we have never written anything for the theatre, despite our significant theatre work where Keith and I met. We knew that David would do a great job of adapting *Coming to England* for the stage and so I asked him to do it and he agreed!

The reason David is the perfect choice is that David puts children at the centre of the play. He knows how they'll feel as an audience, and he understands a child's way of thinking. David and I both put children at the centre of our work. He has captured the mood of the story and has a great insight into the way the audience will respond. He understands the sensitivities of the topics in the story, too.

When David sent the draft to me, I fell in love with it. We worked together to develop it a little bit further and I wrote one of the songs - *Play Mas* - that the ensemble sings during the play. I also suggested including some of the songs I remember from my childhood in Trinidad, such as *Brown Girl in the Ring*. The music is one of the ways that makes the play a period piece - we wanted the audience to fully understand that period of time.

What advice can you give young people about writing their own personal stories and histories?

When you're writing a story, think about the emotions that you want to communicate. You need to take the reader with you, and encourage them to feel those emotions.

Use a lot of adjectives in your writing, which will help with those emotions, and also set the scene wonderfully. I was once called 'the queen of adjectives!' It's true. When you read my book you'll see that I use a lot of description, for example when I describe the headmistress of the school, the trees in winter, the snow and the steam train that I saw. It's that vocabulary that will develop the images in your readers' minds.

As you write, speak your words aloud. This helps ensure that your work sounds alive.

Another tip is to keep a diary, and take a lot of photographs. Those will help spark something in your brain and help develop ideas. Once you've got those ideas, sit down to write and really focus on what you want to say. You'll find yourself getting into what I call 'the zone': you'll enter a sort of alternative world where you are totally engrossed in what you're doing. I can write for hours like this! I write with pen and paper, rather than on computer, and I like to think of it like painting on the page, like an artist. This 'zone' is important - you can think of it like getting into a rhythm as you write your ideas down. If you feel that your spelling isn't as good as you would like it to be, don't worry. There are ways around that: at this stage it's the feeling that's important.

Let those creative juices flow through your veins as you write. It's the process that takes place in all art forms: music, art, writing, dance and theatre.

If you could talk to your younger self, what would you tell her?

I would tell young Floella that everything happens for a reason and to never, ever give up. You need to run the whole race: if you don't, you don't know what could have happened, so keep going!

My mum always told me, "every disappointment is an appointment with something better"

I can think of lots of examples where people have told me about something that hasn't worked out and it's been very disappointing, but then suddenly something even better has come along.

One important piece of advice to give young Floella would be to keep smiling. When you smile, it gives you a physical boost - a chemical is released in your brain that makes you feel better! It gives you the

power to carry on. Singing and laughing also helps! Smiling also makes you appear confident, even if you don't feel it. It gives the idea that you are totally in control and comfortable. Smiling doesn't just help you, though. It helps everyone around you, too. It can help other people through a really dark time. It's important to keep smiling.

You were instrumental in the creation of the National Windrush Monument which now stands at Waterloo Station in London. Can you tell us more about this?

I am so proud of this monument. It took four long years of hard work to make it happen. Theresa May was the Prime Minister at the time of its commission and she felt it was important that all of those people who had come to Britain were recognised and celebrated.

When I came to England, I arrived at Waterloo Station from Southampton, just like many people who arrived on the ships. It was common for people to arrange to meet up under the clock in the centre of the Waterloo concourse. When we looked for a place to put the Windrush Monument, we decided it should go near platform 19, where those trains used to arrive from Southampton. Now when people are arranging to meet at Waterloo, they don't meet under the clock, they meet at the Monument!

When we unveiled the National Windrush Monument on 22nd June 2022, we invited HRH Prince William to attend the ceremony. We felt it was important to involve younger members of the Royal Family because children and young people are also part of the Windrush story. It was important that they were depicted in the monument, and that is why there is a man, woman and child depicted in the sculpture. You can find out more about the ceremony and the monument here: [National Windrush Monument Unveiling Ceremony](#). The actual unveiling of the monument was done by two Windrush pioneers who had arrived on MV Windrush. They were joined by their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren and it was a very proud moment for me.

I was determined to make the nation proud of everything that the Windrush generation has done for this country.

The Windrush scandal that took place is an important part of the Windrush story: these people have an important legacy and it's important that they are not thought of as immigrants. They were British citizens who were invited by the British government to travel here and make significant contributions to society. They came to rebuild post-war Britain **and** to have an adventure.

When Theresa May gave funding for the monument in 2018, she also gave £500,000 for projects across the country which celebrate Windrush. Every year since

then, projects have received funding to create drama and music performances, social media campaigns and other creative ways to celebrate and spread awareness of the Windrush generation.

Basil Watson's sculpture that forms the monument now forms part of the school curriculum and people travel from all over the country to see this very important statue.

What else would you like to draw to the attention of your audience of primary school teachers, students and families?

Coming to England is a very important book which is now taught in schools across the country and has formed an important part of teacher training, too. In 1994 when my own children were asking what my childhood was like, there were no books, for either children or adults, that dealt with the subject of Windrush. Now we're using it to teach about diversity and, as you can see in this learning guide, a great deal of the National Curriculum.

I was given an Honorary Degree by Exeter University, as a result of my work on *Coming to England*, which they used as a case study on how to teach these topics. There are now several different versions of the book too - including a picture book version.

Finally, I'd like to remind people of my 3Cs, which are covered later on in this guide:

Consideration
Contentment
Courage

We can add lots more Cs to this list, such as being conscientious in everything that we do, and consideration involves caring about other people. When you give to others, give generously and unconditionally. Put others first.

Remember to keep smiling. Adversity can break you, or can make you stronger, which is partly what *Coming to England* is all about.

Winners smile!



Floella at the National Windrush Monument
Photo: Keith Taylor

Interview with David Wood

David Wood is a playwright with over 60 plays to his name, and also writes childrens' books. His plays have been performed all over the world. David was awarded an OBE which was presented by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in 2004. You can find more about David's work on his website: [David Wood](#).

How did you become involved in adapting *Coming to England* for the stage?

Floella and I have known each other for a very long time. We worked together in the TV industry 40 years ago! Floella asked me to adapt the book.

What was the process of adapting the book, which is very popular in primary schools?

When I was adapting the book, I read it many, many times. I decided that the character of Floella should narrate the story as well as being a character in it.

I wanted to show how bright and vibrant Trinidad is, and the happy life that Floella led with her family there growing up. The scenes in Trinidad are a very colourful part of the show, and that then contrasts with the very drab, almost monochrome scenes that Floella and her siblings see when they arrive in England.

What were the challenges in adapting the book into a play?

It's very important that we tell this story sensitively, but we don't sugar coat the problems and challenges that Floella describes. The shock of having to live in one room with her whole family is palpable. The ways in which the family were treated by society - for example, being ignored in shops, being accused of breaking into a house that they were, in fact, buying - is shocking, and it's part of history, but it's also still very relevant in today's society.

Tolerance, awareness of history, and a focus on the importance of diversity is very important in telling the story of *Coming to England*. The production tells the truth about what Floella experienced.

Why do you think this story appeals to children and families so much?

This is a story about triumph over adversity. Fairness is an important theme in *Coming to England*. "It's not fair" is something that children learn to say very early on as they learn to talk. Children have a strong sense of justice, and often root for the underdog - that's why

stories like *Cinderella* are so popular all over the world. Children like stories with a resolution, and a form of happy ending. Stories like *The BFG*, *Goodnight Mr Tom*, and *The Witches* conform to this pattern.

What advice do you have for children and young people who would like to adapt one of their own favourite stories for a drama performance?

Find a story that you love. It can come from anywhere: a myth or legend, a fairytale, you can create characters from inanimate objects, and characters can be larger-than-life. You can then think about how those characters speak (or whether they speak at all), how they move and how they interact with each other.

Remember that not everyone needs to act to put on a performance. In fact, there are a lot of important non-acting roles such as stage managers, narrators, musicians, puppeteers, prop and set designers and builders etc. Students and teachers can work together to make sure that everyone is comfortable in the role that they have, and every role is just as important as the others. *Coming to England* is an ensemble play, and the ensemble is hugely important.

Stories are a vital part of our lives. We tell and listen to stories everyday, from conversations, to films, even to programmes like *Spring Watch* where the storyboarders will decide what story they're going to tell about the wildlife that we're watching.

What advice do you have for teachers if they'd like to work on drama with their students?

Going to the theatre is a luxury these days, and so when we explore drama at school we need to make sure that everyone understands the genre. Playing, putting on a play or watching one are communal activities that need everyone to work together. That experience is fairly unique - the closest we might come elsewhere is the experience of a football match.

Children and young people have enormous imaginations and so with very little guidance, can create great things. They don't need a whole ship to represent one - they can help an audience imagine one. The challenge of creating different locations on stage can be solved creatively. Children need some guidance on different techniques (which can be found in the Drama section of this guide) but they will have lots to offer when telling various stories.

It's important to remember that if you are adapting a story for a performance to a paying audience, you must check that you have permission from the people or estate who own the copyright to the story.

Interview with Denzel Westley-Sanderson

Director Denzel Westley-Sanderson explains some of the main elements of the production's style and visual appearance to help students prepare for seeing the production. Denzel is a London-based director from Trinidad. He has directed a range of productions, including *Jesus Christ Superstar - The Concert* (Regent's Park Open Air Theatre), *The Importance of Being Earnest* (English Touring Theatre) and was Associate Director for the National Theatre's production of *Small Island*.

Can you describe the performance style of *Coming to England*?

The style of the show uses short vignettes – different episodes from Floella's life, and that's what keeps the show fluid.

Physical theatre is really important in telling this story, in particular stylised movement which indicates location, such as when characters are on a train, it's their movement that suggests momentum and the direction of travel. Before rehearsals we workshopped a couple of scenes and so we experimented with moments like boarding the ship and climbing a rope ladder and so these will be communicated through clear but stylised physicality. Our choreographer Chloe will also be creating a lot of the movement and dance moments in the production.

How does the design of the production help tell the story?

We use symbolic props and structures to indicate location, so we don't have a fully naturalistic set. We have two mobile staircases which will create some of the locations, and there are various pieces of set which are flown in – suspended from above the stage – to help suggest particular settings. For example, the house in Trinidad has a huge window that's flown in. Some of these structures are oversized, by about 20%, so it gives the sense of the size of the world through a child's eyes. You'll also notice that the stage is framed by a border like a huge TV. Early in the play we see flats (vertical structures either side of the stage) which depict giant hibiscus flowers and palm trees. Later, the church will be signified by a large cross, and there are some suitcases which also create locations such as the ship on which Floella travels to England.

Trinidad is a very vibrant place, although sometimes the perception is that it isn't very well equipped. A lot of the film footage we see of the Windrush is black and white as well, which can affect the way the audience imagines Trinidad. In *Coming to England*, we want to change that perception, and emphasise how bright and vibrant it is.

Going into act two when we come to England, the audience will sense a colour drain of the whole space. This time the flats that fly in are grey and the English people's costumes are grey and muted. There are a lot of vignettes of Floella doing similar things that she did in Trinidad, such as going to school and going to church, but it's a monochrome version. Whereas the chalkboard in act one is green, the English one is exactly the same size and shape but it's black. All the school uniforms are grey. Floella's family's costumes change too: they are bright and colourful in act one, but in act two we use more pastel shades so they become muted.

Carnival is important in the play and we'll show two. The first will be in Trinidad in act one, but act two will close with Notting Hill Carnival 2024, showing a fusion of colour and cultures coming together.

Floella experiences culture shock when she arrives in England. How are you demonstrating the differences between the Trinidadian and English ways of life?

Again, movement is key. Trinidadian culture is much slower and laid back. It's hot, so we don't move fast. In England, our characters will carry themselves much more stiffly, with a sense of rigidity. That lack of flexibility or freedom will then emphasise the unsympathetic, rigid response to Floella and her family.

The Windrush generation came to England because they were initially encouraged and welcomed to travel here. They were told they were needed, and that they had a place here. But once they got here, they were constantly being told that everything they were doing was wrong. They were told 'don't do this, don't do that'. Floella constantly has to shrink and hide her talented personality, in order to try and fit in.

The song 'Brown Girl in the Ring' is an example of how something that was fun and accepted in Trinidad is used against Floella in England. Many people know that song from Boney M's recording of it, but it's actually from a cultural Caribbean clapping game that children play. However, in act two, the children use the song to taunt Floella cruelly, emphasising that she doesn't belong, and making her Other because of her skin colour.

How have you created a sense of safety and openness around the issues in the play within the rehearsal room?

It's important to have open conversations, and also base our work on thorough research as well. We're looking back at a historical moment and depicting what it was like, but we also know that things still need to change.

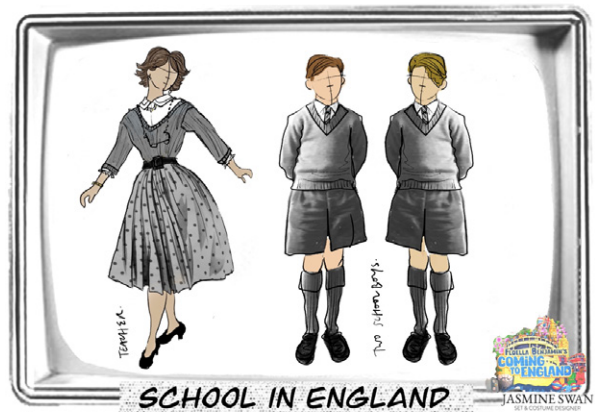
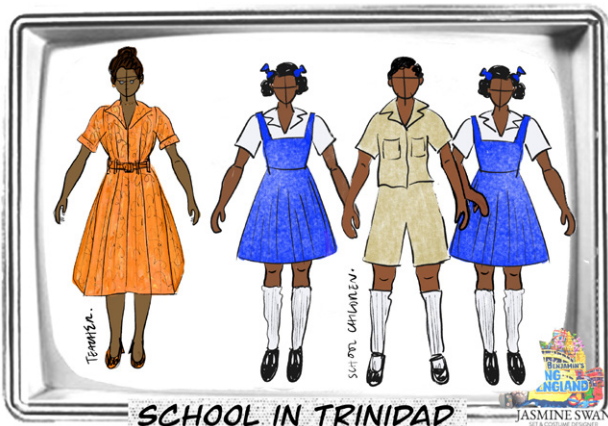
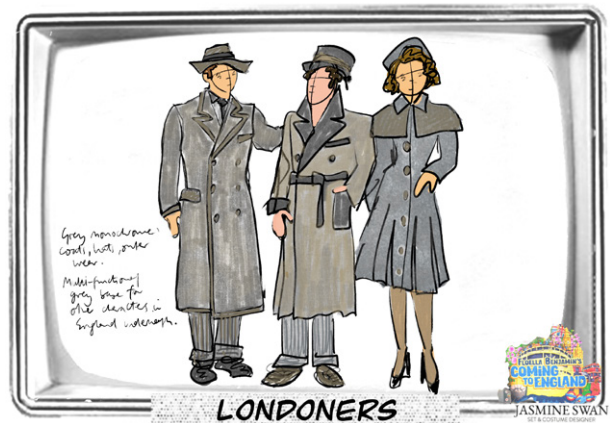
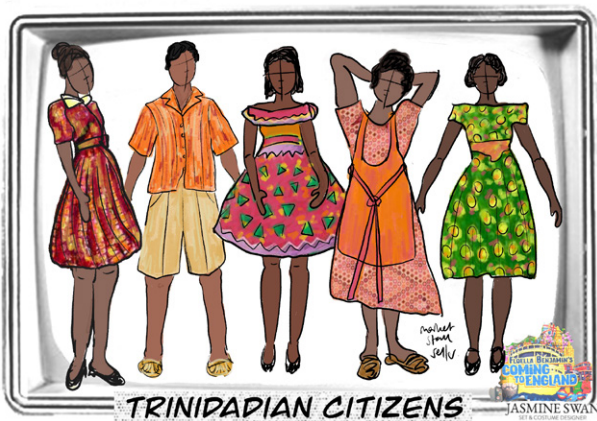
As we go into rehearsal we're very aware of the protests that have taken place in England (during August 2024), and it's important that we discuss those moments. Our rehearsal room will be one of openness and safety, where we can have conversations and check in about how we are feeling.

One of the aspects of the play is Floella's accent, and how she had to change it to fit in or conform when she arrived in England. That's going to be a big conversation (see the activities in this learning guide around code switching for more information). A younger generation will think that it was wrong that Floella would need to change her accent, but I also want to look at how that change was a method of survival: if she hadn't changed it to RP (received pronunciation) Floella might not have been able to be a television presenter and we wouldn't be doing this play now!

We have quite a poignant scene in the play where a teacher calls Floella a 'guttersnipe'. Language is incredibly powerful. Young people are very switched on to this. In rehearsals we will be exploring the N-word, and how to suggest it: the script has it 'bleeped' with the sound of a car horn. It's important that we talk to students about how language has changed, and again young people are very alert and aware of the sensitivities around language but it's a good idea to have conversations around that before seeing the show.

Designing Coming to England

The design of play helps to emphasise the very different mood and atmosphere in Trinidad and the UK. For example, we see the bright and vivid colours of citizens and school children of Trinidad versus the grey and drab colours of the London schoolchildren and residents. Look carefully at Jasmine Swan's designs below, and see how many differences you can spot. Rather than just thinking about colour, think about shape, fabric, fit, cut and texture, too.



Design and images by Jasmine Swan

There are also a number of important elements to consider in the set design. See what you spot about:

- The importance of Floella's career as a TV writer, presenter and producer, and the influence of television
- The creation of settings including a ship and a classroom
- The creative ways that the importance of books is suggested
- How the designer creates space for the carnival scenes

Classroom activities:

Drama

The following activities are intended to be appropriate for a wide range of experience and ability. They can be adapted as teachers see fit. They do not have to be completed in their entirety, or in any particular order, but are designed to help students explore the themes and performance style of *Coming to England*.

Key vocabulary:

Vignette

A brief description or episode. In *Coming to England*, we are shown brief episodes in Floella's life which have been particularly formative or influential for her. By using this structure, a quick and engaging pace can be created and sustained.

Flashbacks

Scenes which are inserted into a narrative to show something that has happened in the past, usually to explain the reasons or motivation for something happening later in the chronology of the story. When using flashbacks, it's important to have a moment of transition before and after the flashback in order to help the audience understand what's happening.

Flashforward

A scene which shows something that is going to happen in the future, or perhaps something that a character is imagining might happen if they take a particular course of action. Like flashbacks, the actors need to ensure that it's clear that a change in time is taking place, and when it returns to the main narrative.

Multi-role

When an actor plays more than one character in a performance. The change between characters is often signalled by a costume change, which can often be very simple, as it is in *Coming to England*.

Tableaux:

Activity: Floella's Photograph Album

Work in groups of 5 or 6. Consider the story that Floella tells in *Coming to England*. Imagine that you are creating a 3D photo album that tells the story. For each point in the story that you think is important, create one tableau. You need to be able to hold that pose still for as long as possible, so think carefully!

You could choose some of the following moments:

- Floella and her siblings playing in the sunshine, enjoying being outside
- Floella at her very strict school in Trinidad
- Saying goodbye to Dardie as he boards the ship for England
- Saying goodbye to Marmie as she boards the ship
- Unhappy life with the foster parents
- Life on board the ship to England
- Being reunited with Marmie and Dardie
- The shock of realising everyone would be living in one room
- Being stared at and being refused service in shops
- Neighbours calling the police as the family look at a house they wish to buy
- Floella's experience at her new school
- Floella presenting a TV show
- The coronation of HRH King Charles III

Task: Exploring Chronology

Floella's story begins with a flashback to her days as a Play School presenter. The story then goes back to the beginning, with Floella growing up on Trinidad. It is then presented in chronological order (the order in which it happens).

Exploring the tableaux that were created in the task above, explore what would happen if these events were presented in non-chronological order. For example, what would happen if you placed the scene in the Trinidadian classroom right before the scene in the English classroom? How might that help draw attention to the differences that Floella experienced, and how the audience reacts to them?

Task: Narrating your first day at school

In groups of 4 or 5, students should nominate a narrator. The other 3 or 4 students will act. Using a real or fictional version of one person's first day at school, students can explore telling the story of being in a new environment. The group might include all or some of the following:

- Speech
- Narration
- A song
- Movement
- Tableau(x)

Explore the idea of vignettes with students. Once groups have rehearsed for about 20 minutes, students can each perform to each other, creating a whole class, vignette-based performance called 'First Days'.

Also known as freeze frame, actors create a still picture of a moment in time. To make these effective, encourage students to think about using different levels, consider the direction in which they are looking, and what groupings might demonstrate relationships between characters. Importantly, there is no speaking or sound in a tableau: everything needs to be communicated through the use of our bodies and facial expression.

Task: Creating locations, using our bodies

In the production, you will see the actors create lots of different modes of transport by using their bodies rather than the real thing. You will see a car, a train, a ship and an escalator, and perhaps even more!

Ask students to consider the different experiences of travelling on those modes of transport. Which parts of their bodies do they use to respond to the momentum? How do they keep themselves steady, for example when standing on a bus, or when travelling in a car with a lot of people?

Allocate students into groups of 4-6 and ask them to create a short performance showing three or four contrasting modes of transport. The rest of the class should be able to guess what they are. Depending on your group, and the space in which you are working, you may ask them to do this task with no additional items or you may like to offer items such as chairs, lengths of fabric, a pole or broomstick handle to help them suggest the differences between travelling on land, rail or sea.

Dance and Movement

You will need a large space for these activities, ideally a hall or even a large open space outside.

Task: Exploring similarity and difference, and developing physical awareness

Ask students to find a space in the room and stand in it. They can stand neutrally - hands by their sides, knees soft, feet hip width apart. By encouraging them to stand neutrally, they are asked to conform to one (comfortable) way of standing. Once students are focussed, ask them to walk around the room at a moderate pace, carefully avoiding bumping into anyone else. They should aim to walk in their natural, usual way.

Ask a couple of students to step out of the activity and observe. Who is going quickly, and who is going slowly? What do they notice about arm swings, length of stride, etc. Is everyone walking at the same pace?

Ask all students to freeze (at which point the observers can step back in). Their task is now to try and all walk in the same way at the same time, starting with the same foot. However, no-one should lead the group in doing so. They should observe and be aware of what other people are doing.

After a minute or two, freeze the group again, and this time, not only should they all walk uniformly, they have to come to a stop all at the same time. Again, no one should lead the activity - it is all about responding to the dynamics in the room.

At this point, ask a few different students to come and observe what is happening.

When the group has managed to be as uniform as they can, ask them all to stop and sit down on the floor. Discuss how it felt to be trying to conform, when there were no clear 'rules' about what had to happen, how and when. How did people try and communicate to get people to do what they wanted? Did people whisper? Did some people try and make hand gestures, or complain that people weren't doing what they should? Is it possible to get this game 'wrong'?

Finally, link this discussion with how Floella feels when she is in England. Nothing she is doing in England is considered 'wrong' in Trinidad but when she gets to England, people tell her she is doing things the wrong way. In order to survive, she has to try and fit in, and lose any element of her previous identity and self-expression. Not knowing the new 'rules' made life particularly difficult.

Task: A Parade and a carnival

Present day carnival is often associated with particular types of dance and movement, as well as the exaggerated costumes that we see in photographs. However, carnival started as a parade: somewhere to see others, be seen by other, to celebrate and have fun. People did dress up, for example as sailors, and then would parade and dance. You can find out more about carnival here [The Origins and Evolution of Carnival in Trinidad and Tobago – Retrospect Journal](#).

In small groups of 4 or 5, students should create a short dance or sequence of movement which they could include to represent their own personalities in a parade. This might include gymnastics, dance moves seen on social media, or singing a few verses from a song with some actions. To add a group learning or leadership aspect to this activity, you could pair groups together to learn each other's sequences. Finally, a 'dance off' or scoring system for each carnival performance would add a competitive level to this activity (although the ethos of carnival is not competitive in itself).

English

Task: *Windrush Child*

John Agard reads his poem *Windrush Child* [John Agard - Windrush Child | Centre for Literacy in Primary Education](#).

In 'Windrush Child', Agard captures some of the same elements of leaving home for England as Floella does in her story.

Agard's poem is quite long. It has three lines in each stanza, repeats the phrase 'Windrush child' numerous times and focusses on the natural imagery that is being left behind.

Task: Exploring poetic forms

With your students, discuss and mindmap Floella's different physical and emotional experiences in Trinidad and in England. Once you have done that, ask students to write poems in one or more of the following forms:

Haiku (three lines, 17 syllables in lines of 5,7 and 5 syllables respectively)

Tanaga (four lines, 7 syllables each. You can also introduce the challenge of including an AABB, or ABAB rhyme scheme)

Acrostic (spelling out a word(s) vertically and starting each line of the poem with that letter). Students could use Floella's name, the title of the play, or 'Trinidad or England', for example

Task: Writing a monologue

Explain that a monologue is a speech for one person (mono = one, -logue = speech). Monologues are often used to directly address the audience in a play, to tell the story from one person's perspective. Floella's narration can be considered as monologues.

Ask students to choose a different character in the play, and write a short monologue from their perspective. For example, what might Marmie tell the audience about the decisions that she needed to make with Dardie about moving to England? How did she feel when people responded so cruelly when the family tried to buy their house? Students might even consider giving voice to the foster parents who were supposed to look after Floella and her siblings, but instead treated them cruelly. How do they try to justify their behaviour? Finally, more able students could take up the challenge of speaking from the point of view of the English people who treat Floella's family with such disdain. Where do those feelings of hatred come from? What do they hope to achieve by treating people so poorly? (You can also link this to a PSHE discussion based on the riots and protests of summer 2024 in England.)

Task: Autobiographical Writing

The play is based on Floella's autobiographical story *Coming to England* which was first published in 1995. Earlier in this pack, the main themes of the story are outlined. Choose one or more of these themes and ask students to write their own autobiographical account of a particular moment in their life.

Prompts might include:

- A time you felt left out
- An event that you looked forward to
- A time when you felt unfairly treated
- A time when you helped someone feel welcome
- A moment when you visited a new and different place (this might include travelling on a plane for the first time, visiting a different part of the UK, or starting a new school, for example)

Creating a travel brochure

Using online or traditional paper-based travel brochures, students should study the language and imagery that is used to advertise and sell holidays to the Caribbean.

Attention can be drawn to:

- Positive adjectives: 'crystal clear water'
- Dynamic verbs: 'dive into a new adventure'
- Descriptions that use triplets, alliteration and rhythm; 'sensational sparkling, sun-soaked days'
- Exaggeration or hyperbole: 'there's no better place'
- Emotive language: 'You deserve to be spoilt'

Director Denzel Westley-Sanderson says "I want to emphasise the uniqueness of Trinidad: all of the Caribbean islands all have very unique identities and cultures". As they do their research, encourage students to consider this statement so that their research is culturally and geographically accurate.

Music

In *Coming to England*, Floella, her family and the ensemble all sing various songs. The production has a full soundtrack, and steel pans are played during the performance

One of the main influences in the soundtrack to *Coming to England* is **Calypso**.

Famous Calypso singer **Lord Kitchener** arrived on MV Windrush, and this Pathé newsreel captures the moment he sang for a reporter [Lord Kitchener: The King of Calypso | Museum of London Docklands](#). The soundtrack to the video is also an excellent example of calypso music.

The key features of calypso are:

- Syncopated polyrhythms (several rhythms being played at the same time, which often change suddenly)
- The use of steel pans, brass instruments such as trumpets and trombones, saxophones (the instrument played by Dardie), guitars, tuned and untuned percussion, including bongos and timbales.
- Call and response
- The lyrics often refer to social or political issues, or are reworkings of popular folk songs
- A 4/4 time signature

Task:

Using the instruments that you have available to you, and perhaps any instruments that your students play, improvise a range of 4/4 rhythms, and explore ways of i) syncopating rhythms ii) signalling when to change rhythms. You may wish to use a backing track or full track on platforms such as YouTube or Spotify to guide the improvisation.

In contrast to calypso, *Coming to England* makes references to British anthems and songs associated with patriotism, including:

- Rule Britannia [Henry Wood - Fantasia on British Sea Songs: VII. Rule Britannia](#) (You may wish to discuss the lyrics of this piece of music, and its recent controversy as it is included in the BBC's Last Night of the Proms: [BBC considers dropping Rule Britannia from Last Night of the Proms | Proms 2020 | The Guardian](#))
- Land of Hope and Glory Elgar: [Land of Hope and Glory - Arr. from "Pomp and Circumstance" March No. 1](#)
- God Save the Queen (which would have been the National Anthem in 1960 when Floella arrived in England) [The National Anthem \(arr. Elgar\) \(1995 Remastered Version\)](#)

Task:

Compare the lyrics to the two national anthems below.

- What do students notice about the language in the two anthems? What do they suggest about who or what is important to these two countries?
- What do these anthems suggest are the responsibilities of the citizens of the two countries?
- Ask students to write at least one verse of a new national anthem, either for Britain or a different country, depending on preferences and cultural experiences within your class.

Trinidad and Tobago (from 1962)

Forged from the love of liberty,
In the fires of hope and prayer,
With boundless faith in our Destiny,
We solemnly declare,
Side by side we stand,
Islands of the blue Caribbean Sea,
This our Native Land,
We pledge our lives to Thee,
Here every creed and race finds an equal place,
And may God bless our Nation,
Here every creed and race finds an equal place,
And may God bless our Nation.

²We have included references to Her Majesty the Queen because this is who was on the throne when Floella arrived in England.

Great Britain (until 2023)

God Save our gracious ²Queen!
Long live our noble ,
God save the Queen!
Send her victorious, happy and glorious,
long to reign over us,
God save the Queen!

Thy choicest gifts in store
on her be pleased to pour,
long may she reign!
May she defend our laws,
and ever give us cause
to sing with heart and voice,
God save the Queen!

God Save our gracious Queen!
Long live our noble Queen,
God save the Queen!
Send her victorious, happy and glorious,
long to reign over us,
God save the Queen!

Task:

Ask students to research popular music from the late 1950s and the early 1960s. This will include jazz, skiffle, and American artists such as Buddy Holly, and the Beatles (formed in 1960). Ask students to compare this music with the calypso music that they hear in *Coming to England*. What do they notice about the instruments, tempo and style of the music? Which do they prefer, and why?

Art

In *Coming to England*, Floella describes the differences between the vibrancy of Trinidad and the greyness of post-war Britain. These activities are intended to assist your students explore the imagery and art of Trinidad and compare it with work by British artists.

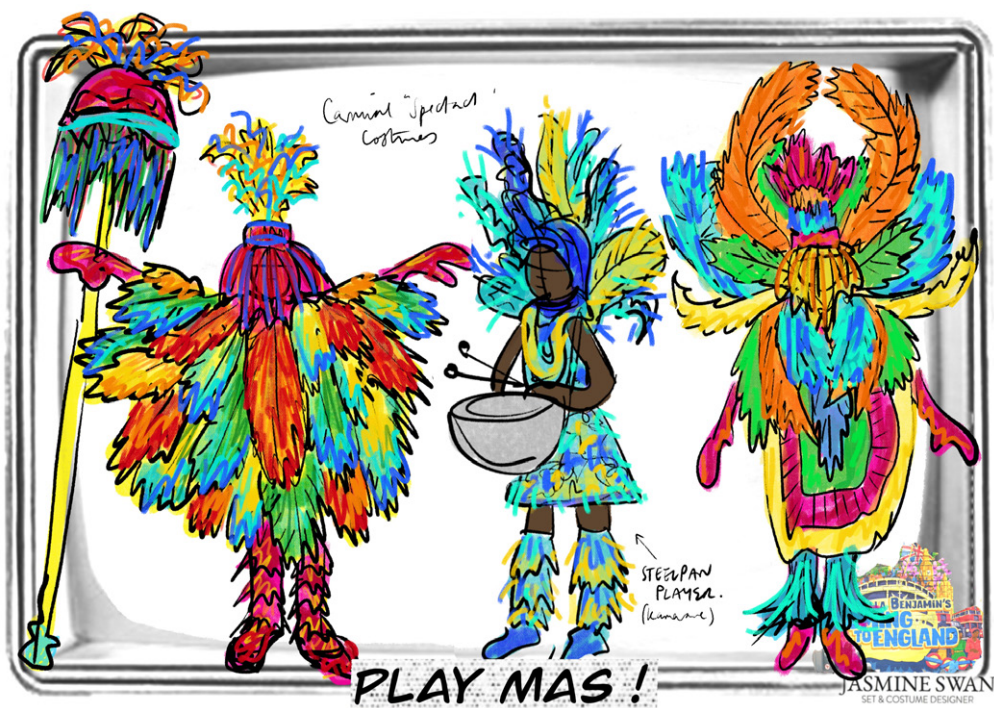
Explore the art of Trinidadian artist Valerie Belgrave via these images: [Wash Day Valerie Belgrave | On A Journey to Self](#) and [View from the Window North Coast, Trinidad by Valerie Belgrave | On A Journey to Self.](#)

Task: Design a costume for Carnival

Floella Benjamin describes Carnival on pages 27-29 of *Coming to England*. This brief description can be helpful to students in imagining the sights and sounds of Carnival.

Watch the introductory video to the [Trinidad and Tobago Carnival Museum](#), which shows footage of various carnival costumes and parades.

You can also look at Jasmine Swan's costume designs for Play Mas for inspiration:



Credit: Jasmine Swan

Before or after seeing *Coming to England*, you can explore the creation of Carnival costumes (including headgear).

- Start by looking at imagery from the natural world of Trinidad, particularly plants and fruit. Create a collage, moodboard or still life drawing which explores the colours and shapes that have been noticed. Consider how different materials (acrylic, coloured pencil, crayon) might convey the depth and vibrancy of the colours.
- Now look at the animal life in Trinidad. What do students notice about size, scale, shape and texture of the animals and their bodies? Guide their attention to feathers, skin or fur, for example. Consider how those animals might blend in to their natural surroundings with camouflage.
- Once all of this research is done, students can create a full or partial Carnival costume, inspired by the preparatory work that they have done. Some costumes for Carnival are more like monsters than real animals. Students may wish to consider how their research might be exaggerated to create the monster-style costumes that Floella describes in her book.

Task: Production Poster

Students will be familiar with posters for films, computer games and other products that they have seen advertised.

Read David Wood's interview at the beginning of this pack, in which he explains the way that the play is divided into the colourful life of Trinidad, and the black and white of England. Floella experiences a number of challenges that she must overcome in the story, to become the successful woman that she is today.

Using any media that you deem appropriate (computer, pastels, acrylic, collage, sketching, printing), create a production poster or website image for *Coming to England*. You could look at the production website [Children's Theatre](#), and analyse this image together with your students.

Include the following details

The name of the production - Floella Benjamin's *Coming to England*

Playwright's name - Adapted by David Wood

Venue - this could be where you have seen this production, or a real/fictional theatre of students' choice

Dates of the production - again, either the date on which your students have seen the production or dates of their choosing (they might like to choose 22nd June - Windrush Day - for example, or dates in October for Black History Month).

Task: Sculpture

Ask your students to consider everything they have learnt about the people who came to Britain from the Caribbean and West Indies after World War Two. Their task is to design, and create a maquette (prototype) sculpture or statue to commemorate the people now referred to as the Windrush Generation.

Students might like to consider the following themes or ideas:

- Starting a new life
- Carrying luggage
- Travelling by ship across a wide ocean
- Displacement
- Community
- Courage
- Ambition
- Family
- Contributions made by immigrants to the Armed Forces, NHS, Post Office and railways, as well as working as engineers, teachers and other key workers.

Students should then:

- Sketch or mindmap their ideas on paper, considering colour, scale, texture etc. They may also like to research London Waterloo, where the National Windrush Monument is situated.
- Watch these pitch videos by two of the artists who were shortlisted to design the monument [Journey of the National Windrush Monument](#) and then create their own pitch
- View the [Windrush Monument](#) website, which explains the different elements of the monument's design
- Adapt their design
- Create their design from clay or any other appropriate or available material.



The National Windrush Monument
Photo: Keith Taylor

History

Floella's [BLACK HISTORY MESSAGE](#)

Black History Month takes place in October each year.

The Black History Month website www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk has a wealth of resources to support schools in their work around Black History Month. For example, this focus on Dame Jocelyn Barrow explores her work as Governor of the BBC, and her advocacy for people of the Windrush Generation. Windrush Pioneer: Dame Jocelyn Barrow - Black History Month 2024. In this video, Dame Jocelyn says, "there's no point shouting and screaming because nobody listens". This is an excellent 'hook' for work on peaceful protests the Civil Rights Movement, including Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr.

Teachers may wish to use this material to discuss protest and freedom of speech, particularly in the light of the violence and unrest during the summer of 2024.

Task: Researching Carnival

Using the resources cited throughout this pack, you may wish to research Carnival and its relationship with Black history. In this production of *Coming to England*, Denzel (the director) has made links between the Trinidadian Carnival and the Notting Hill Carnival that takes place in London every year.

Many people do not know that the reason the Notting Hill Carnival was originally created was as an attempt to ease racial tensions that existed. In 1958, Oswald Moseley's Union Movement began a campaign to 'Keep Britain White'. Attacks on Black communities took place across England, including Nottingham and London's Notting Hill. In 1959, a carnival was arranged in St Pancras (also in London) to help bring Caribbean communities together and create a sense of safety and solidarity. In 1966, Rhaune Laslett and Andre Shervington created a carnival in Notting Hill, partly as a way to entertain children, but it still had its roots in trying to ease racial tensions between communities. This was the beginning of the Notting Hill Carnival that we know today.

Discussion: Once you have explained the nature of carnival, and what happens at a typical carnival, discuss with the students why these events can help communities heal and create solidarity. How can celebrating difference achieve racial equality?

Geography

Basic information about Trinidad, including population, landscape, climate and animal & plant life can be found using <https://www.britannica.com/place/Trinidad-and-Tobago> as a starting point. You may like to encourage students to use online resources, as well as globes, maps and atlases to discover more about the location of Trinidad.

Task: Making a comparison between the island of Trinidad, and the British Isles.

Using their existing geographical knowledge and skills, students should make a list of aspects of the islands that are mentioned in *Coming to England*. This could include vegetation, topography, population, plant and animal life, imports and exports, etc. Students could present their findings in various different ways, including:

- Drawings of the two maps on transparencies or tracing paper, which are laid over each other to depict size and scale of the countries, and then appropriate details and keys where necessary
- A chart or table
- Pie charts
- In full paragraphs, using discourse markers such as 'however', 'in contrast', 'similarly' and 'likewise'
- Labelled sketches, presented side by side
- PowerPoint presentations
- A verbal presentation using a globe

Task: Create a map of your local area and identify different cultural influences. Celebrate the various different cultures within your school/class

Focussing on the mapping skills of your particular class, ask students to create maps of the local area. Whilst these might be accurate maps, these might also be more pictorial to explore:

- What is at the 'centre' of the area or community? (for example, a church or mosque, a parade of shops or the school)
- Where do students come from to come to school? What do their journeys to and from school look like?

Celebrating Difference

Before starting this task, read this article from the BBC which explains how some children who had travelled from the Caribbean were sent to special needs and labelled 'educationally subnormal'. The article includes individual stories about how children were 'diagnosed' with special needs in response to difference (including different accents).

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-57099654>

Discussion: In our schools in 2024, differences are celebrated. Reflect on your school's ethos about community, and being kind. Consider all of the different religious and cultural celebrations the school has across the academic year. You might like to discuss how your school welcomes students of all abilities, and look at ways in which diversity is celebrated rather than criticised. With older or more able students, you may wish to discuss why the adults in the 1960s wrongly sent students away from their school. How have things changed? If you met those people from history, what would you tell them? How would you help them understand why their actions were wrong?

In preparation for these discussions, you may wish to watch this BBC documentary: [Subnormal: A British Scandal - BBC One](#)

British Identity: the *Going to Britain* guide

Listen to this extract from the BBC Caribbean Service guide, *Going to Britain*, read by Lenny Henry. [Words and Music - 1950s cricket tips for Caribbean migrants - BBC Sounds](#)

Discussion: What does this tell us about Britain in the late 1950s? How have things changed? What **cultural stereotypes** can you hear in this extract? Do you think that this extract gives an accurate representation of British life? Is the tone patronising or helpful, in your opinion?

Tasks:

- Create a written guide to one aspect of British culture that you think is important in the 21st century. It could be our love of sports commonly associated with Britain, or the polite social rules about using mobile phones in public, or explaining how our road system works (e.g. for people unfamiliar with driving on the left hand side. There are some countries that don't use roundabouts, for example!). Include photographs, images and/or drawings.
- Alternatively, create a short (no more than 2 minutes) TV advert which explains your chosen aspect of British life. Imagine that this advert is being shown to people who are ready to travel to Britain for the first time. The aim is to explain important social or cultural rules, you can include i) voiceover ii) freeze frames (also known as tableaux) iii) an interview with an 'expert' iv) a carefully chosen location in which your segment is 'filmed'. For example, if you're talking about the British climate and how to prepare for it when packing, you may need to be able to see out of a window to look at the weather outside.

Identity and Code-Switching

Before embarking on the following activities, you may like to read this article which discusses the experience of code-switching as a multi-lingual school student.

[On Multicultural London English and the Power of Code Switching | Magazine | The Harvard Crimson](#)

Provide the students with 3 outlines of a person, preferably on A3 so that they can sit side-by-side. For each one, ask students to caption their pictures for a different aspect of their identity. For example, 'home', 'school' and 'football team'. They should then:

- Draw the clothes they are likely to wear when they are in each particular situation or version of themselves. Encourage them to pay attention to colour, fabric, shape etc. Football team colours, for example, tell us a lot about fitting in with a particular group.
- Create speech bubbles for words and phrases they are likely to use in each situation. For example, "Good morning (teacher's name)" in the school version, would be replaced with something much less formal in the football team version when addressing their teammates. They may even use or combine different languages depending on where they are and who they are with.
- Once they have completed all of their drawings, students should then make a list of the similarities and differences between each version of themselves. Can they identify the different ways they try to fit in, or stand out, in each of those versions? If they were to do the task for Floella, what are the different ways that she tries to assimilate to British culture? For example, her use of the Queen's English when reciting a poem is a response to being criticised for using her own Trinidadian accent. Floella and her siblings change into their Sunday best when they arrive in Britain. Many of the Windrush stories describe the cultural importance of smart (and colourful) dress, and the shock of seeing drab, post-war clothing when people arrived in post-war Britain. How might this be reflected in the comparisons.
- Lead a discussion with your students about the ways in which we code switch or alter our language and behaviour depending on who we are with. When is it appropriate to do so, and when might it be a response to discrimination or criticism? How can we make our class more tolerant and appreciative of difference, as well as similarity?

Floella's 3 Cs.

At the end of the play, Floella reminds us of her 3 Cs:

- **Consideration:** respecting and caring for others
- **Courage:** to be strong, even if you have to work twice as hard to make a success
- **Confidence:** to do the right thing, and to be a decent human being

Floella's Challenge:

In one week, how many times can each student demonstrate the 3 Cs? A chart, daily celebration or peer nominations are a good way to encourage students to embrace these qualities. A discussion on a Monday morning in which you set this challenge can be a great motivator throughout the week!

Further Reading and References

This production is adapted from Floella Benjamin's book *Coming to England*, published by Macmillan Children's Books. ISBN 978-1529045444.

The Book Trust provides resources and tasks surrounding Benjamin Zephaniah's book *Windrush Child*, with which you might extend your exploration of the Windrush generation. These resources can be found here: [Benjamin Zephaniah on new book *Windrush Child*: 'We have to learn from the past' | BookTrust](#)

The British Library has curated a number of oral histories of key figures from the Windrush generation, including author Andrea Levy, civil servant in the Houses of Parliament Sonia McIntosh MBE, and Donald Hinds who worked as a bus conductor, teacher and oral historian. You can find these recordings here: [Stream The British Library | Listen to Windrush Voices playlist online for free on SoundCloud](#)

The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education has created this resource to support reading Floella's book *Coming to England*. [Teaching Notes Coming to England.pdf](#). (Please note that some of the links to the British Library are currently unavailable due to the 2023 cyber attack on the British Library's online resources. These are likely to become available gradually.)

The National Windrush Museum has curated a number of short films that will explain various aspects of Windrush and migration, including footage of the arrival of MV Empire Windrush at Tilbury Docks in 1948. These resources can be found here: [Explore Our Exhibitions Celebrating Black British Heritage — National Windrush Museum.](#)

Royal Museums Greenwich also provide various resources, and detailed explanations of the Windrush story. These can be found here: [The Story of the Windrush Generation](#)