



Abdul Miah KS2 Resource Pack



This pack includes:

- Information about the gallery performance
- Background information about Lascar sailors
- A chronology of Lascar involvement with the UK

There will be gallery activities set out for use after the performance suitable for all KS2 groups

Please photocopy worksheets as necessary for your class. We suggest 2/3 per child.

**Organise students into small groups to complete the gallery work.
Please bring clipboards and pencils with you if you would like to take notes.**

Gallery Performance: Abdul Miah – Lascar sailor

What will happen in the performance?

The class will meet Abdul Miah in the Warehouse of the World gallery. Abdul is a man in his mid-twenties who works in the engine room of a steam ship. Abdul was born in 1857 and started sailing when he was 16. Having sailed for 10 years, he is now 26 years old and the class meet him in 1883.

Abdul starts the performance by telling the group about his experiences on board, his life and family that he has left behind in India and his experiences of living in Victorian London as a foreign visitor. He will also tell the group about his hopes for an enterprising and positive future.

The performance lasts for 30 minutes with 15 minutes for the class to ask questions.

Preparation

It would be useful to have a discussion with the class about the British Empire, trade and immigration. The vocabulary sheet provided can serve as a useful starting point for discussion and preparing questions.

Background

Throughout the 19th century many people from all over the world came to London as crew on cargo ships. Many also came in search of work. The British employed many sailors from India, China, Somalia and the Yemen. The character of Abdul Miah is based on the recorded experiences of sailors from India, China, Malaysia and the wider British Empire.

India has a long tradition of seafaring and Indian seaman worked on ships that were trading from India to Burma, China and East Africa. Between 1665 and 1714, Lascars were employed on European-bound ships because of the high sickness and death rates of European sailors. Under the East India Company, increasing numbers were required - especially during the Napoleonic wars. From the 1850s to the 1950s many thousands of Lascars worked on ships, many of whom eventually settled in London.

East London in the 1880s

The drama involves reference to London and Shadwell in the late 19th century and the character discusses the good and bad points to his experience. The children should be made aware prior to their visit that this is a reflection of some conditions in London over 100 years ago in times of

hardship and inequality. Children should be made aware that London was a very different place in this period.

Vocabulary

Lascar	Asian seaman or sailor (the origin of the word is from Khalasi meaning sailor and Kara meaning worker) in Tamil
Agwalla	Fireman (pronounced ag-walla)
Bengal	North East region of India
Sylhet	An area of Bengal
Calcutta	Main site of India's docks and capital of India
British Empire	Countries ruled or governed by British people, largely to develop trade and use resources e.g. India, Africa and West Indies
Empress of India	Queen Victoria was the empress, meaning supreme leader
Ghat Serang	An agent for sailors – sailors had to pay the Ghat Serang to find them work.
Paddy field	Field for growing rice
Cargo	Goods carried on board a ship
Rupees	Indian money (currency)
Lascari-bat	Lascar talk (simple Hindi words) known by all Indian people
Hindustani	Hindi language

Beginnings

Long before Europeans began to explore the world beyond their immediate horizons during the late Middle Ages, trade routes existed in the area we now think of as Asia and China. The first Europeans trading with Asia and beyond travelled by sea across the Mediterranean, then overland to the “Persian Gulf” where they could continue their journey by ship. However, in 1487, Portuguese sailors opened up a direct sea route to India via the Cape of Good Hope. Journeys were no less hazardous, but their length was considerably shortened.

Native seamen would have been very familiar with local conditions and it is recorded that the Portuguese explorer, Vasco da Gama, was helped in his navigation by a local pilot. From early times the term Lascar was used by Europeans to describe the non-European sailors they encountered from modern India, Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar (Burma), China, East Africa and the Middle East. During the 17th century these sailors were increasingly employed on merchant ships trading with Britain. It is generally accepted that the word derives either from Lashkar, a Persian word meaning “band of followers” or from Khalasi and Kara, Tamil words for sailor and worker.

The rise of the East India Company and the East Indies trade.

Lascar sailors were to play an important role in the life of the East India Company, which owed its origins to a charter granted by Queen Elizabeth I in December 1600, giving London merchants the right to trade with the area then known as the East Indies. The Portuguese had been the first Europeans to lay claims to parts of India but London merchants were quick to exploit the trade routes being opened up. The Company’s trade monopoly was to last 226 years, sealed a few years later when King James I granted it exclusive trading rights with the East Indies. This included India, Sumatra, Java and other islands to the east of India. Valuable cargoes would have included silks, spices and other exotic goods. Tea from China became an additional luxury. A successful voyage could make a ship-owner and his associates wealthy men.

When King Charles II gained Bombay as part of his marriage settlement with the Portuguese Catherine of Braganza, Britain gained control of a potentially valuable trading post. Other trading posts were subsequently established in Madras and Calcutta, the latter being permanently secured for Britain by the Battle of Plassey in 1757.

During the 17th and 18th century the East India Company’s control in India increased as the Indian Moghul’s rule became less and less effective. With its power to make judgements in civil and criminal proceedings, to mint money

and even to wage war, the East India Company was in effect acting as a government outpost. By 1784, this role was formalized by the India Act, which appointed a Governor General for India and put the East India Company under direct control of the British Government. Finally, in 1856, the charter that had given the East India Company rights of administration in India was not renewed and the British Government took control of all its former territories.

The formalization of British power in India increased the potential for trade and the need to transport personnel (soldiers, administrators and their families) to the new outposts. As shipping increased, so did the numbers of Lascar seamen.

Recruiting Lascars

Lascars were recruited at the port of departure by a foreman called a serang, a word derived from the Persian for overseer. The same serang would supervise and discipline the Lascars on board ship, ensuring a degree of isolation from the rest of the crew. The Lascars would pay the serangs a high price to secure a place on a ship and they often borrowed money from the Ghat Serangs who acted as labour agents, money lenders and lodging-house keepers at the ports. The Lascars were also paid at the local rate, rather than at the recruitment rate of their British counterparts, so they provided a cheaper source of labour for a ship's captain. Between them, the serangs and the ghat serangs had considerable influence over the Lascars' lives and employment rights.

Travelling around the world

Lascars in peace time

The earliest British based merchant ships carried British crews. Inevitably, some crew members would be unavailable for the return voyage thanks to illness, desertion and death. Early in the 17th century Lascar seamen, already familiar with sea-routes East of India, began to replace these casualties and sail as part of the crew of merchant ships returning to Britain. However, exact numbers are unknown. They were usually employed in the same capacity as the British able seaman, working particularly as deckhands, and later in the saloons and engine houses of steamships.

Lascar sailors were also used to man the routes East of India to China, helping to crew British owned ships involved in the valuable tea trade with Britain. Their horizons extended further in 1813, when an Act of Parliament was passed allowing Lascars to sail on British ships trading with Australia. The Act was passed because desertion by British crew members eager to join the Australian gold rush led to a shortage of manpower. South Sea Islanders now joined the Lascar crews working on board British Merchant ships.

As ships became more efficient and trade routes were opened up to competition in the 19th century, more and more Lascar sailors were employed on British registered craft, including the luxury liners sailing worldwide which became such a feature of travel in the first half of the 20th century.

Lascars in Wartime

During the Napoleonic Wars, and later during World Wars I and II, Lascars played an important role replacing British sailors deployed into the Navy. In WWII, in particular, many Lascar sailors were employed on Naval vessels, such as troop carriers. In wartime merchant ships are no less vulnerable to enemy action than the Navy and many Lascars, like their British counterparts, were injured, killed or taken prisoner.

During the Napoleonic wars, Lascar sailors manning non-British registered ships also helped to maintain the merchant shipping trade with Britain in a period when British ships were requisitioned to carry supplies for the Navy.

Life at Sea

Although it wasn't until the second half of the 20th century that Lascars were able to enjoy the same rights of employment and pay as British sailors, conditions at sea for all seamen were often hard. Life below deck was very different from that of the officers and fare-paying passengers. The ordinary seaman would wash in a bucket and Lascars often cooked their own food on deck, away from the main galley. All seamen worked in shifts, often in cramped and (before electricity) dark conditions. As steam power became more popular, heat and dust from the fuel could be added to the list of discomforts. Sleeping conditions were cramped and often there was no specified accommodation area for Lascars. For much of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, before evolution theories began to supersede former ideas about the character of man, there was a prevailing belief that Lascars originating in hot countries were less suited to temperate climates than their European counterparts. It was not unusual therefore, for one British seaman to be replaced on the return voyage by 2 or more Lascars, immediately creating an accommodation problem. Even as late as 1876, the India Act only allowed Lascars just over half the accommodation space of British crews.

Food

Whilst strength and stamina in all sailors were extremely important, an initial ignorance of dietary needs resulted in nutrition-related illnesses such as scurvy. Lascar sailors came from diverse geographical areas and religious backgrounds with diets unfamiliar to most European ship owners and captains. Whilst attempts were made on board ship to provide Lascars with familiar foods such as rice, dried fish and dried meat, this wasn't a balanced diet and resulted in health problems. As late as 1906, the Lascars' food was not included in legislation setting food standards for British sailors.

Life in Port

Traditionally, Lascars came from rural areas, unlike the mainly town based sailors recruited in Britain. Even in the 19th century, many of the major trading areas were quite rural. John Vine, captain of the S.S. Calcutta described the coast of Madras as “very low and woody”. Many Lascars worked on ships to supplement their income when the rural economy slumped and they usually had homes, families and livelihoods to return to. On berthing in Britain, the British seaman might seek work on other locally bound ships or return home, but the Lascars often found their return journey delayed for many weeks, waiting for work on a return voyage.

This was long before the Welfare State. Trading and finding crews for ships was big business where large amounts of money could be made and lost. Ship owners and captains were concerned primarily with arriving safely in port with their cargoes intact. The serangs and ghat serangs had a vested interest in recruiting Lascars, but made no adjustments to their pay to cover periods of unemployment. For all, the fate of the crews after arrival in port was of little concern.

At the beginning of the 19th century the London shipping trade began its shift up river from Gravesend. Since the Middle Ages, Gravesend had been the port of London where passengers and supplies were taken on board. However, it lacked quayside facilities for unloading cargoes and gradually dockside facilities opened upstream, including the West India Dock in 1802. Surrounded by warehouses, its import dock could accommodate at least 300 ships if the tide and weather were favourable. Shanty towns rapidly built up around the docks, with shops selling all kinds of ships’ supplies and food, taverns and cheap lodging houses. As the dock trade increased, so did the number of people migrating from the countryside to the East End of London looking for work.

The conditions facing the stranded Lascars in London were similar to those facing many contemporary Britons. Cheap lodging houses were plentiful, but pestilence and illness were rife, conditions dirty and cramped. If there was no work available for the day, then there was no money for food or a bed for the night. Lascars, like many others, depended on their own initiative to survive these conditions.

Steps to help the welfare of Lascars

Concern for the welfare of stranded Lascars led to public debate in the press. There were reports of Lascars inadequately clothed for the British climate begging in the wealthier areas of London. In 1861 Henry Mayhew described how Lascars were seeking a living playing drums and sitting for portrait painters.

By the end of the 18th century attempts were made by the East India Company to arrange accommodation for Lascars in local lodging houses. The

Company also opened accommodation barracks in Hackney. In 1815, legislation was passed bonding Lascars to their employers, making ship owners, masters and ultimately the East India Company, responsible for feeding, clothing and housing Lascars awaiting return passage from England. However, the Act was not always adhered to. In 1823 the bonding system was abandoned and replaced by what has become known as the “Lascar Act”, which made the East India Company responsible for the Lascars’ upkeep in England and for repatriating Asiatic seamen. This again met with partial success, in spite of the threat of fines, as some ship owners and masters were more law abiding than others.

By 1850, the Admiralty had taken over responsibility for the welfare of distressed Lascars. However, as costs incurred were passed onto the shipmasters, success was still dependent on the philanthropy of the people concerned.

During the 19th Century Britain was a predominantly Christian country and Christianity influenced all aspects of society. A missionary zeal amongst certain sections of the Church, combined with a growing social conscience, led to the Church Missionary Society taking up the cause of the stranded Lascars. In the 1850’s they opened the Strangers home for Asiatics, Africans and South Sea Islanders in the West India Dock Road, with an official opening ceremony performed by Prince Albert. The facilities were luxurious compared with conditions in many of the surrounding lodging houses, but the relatively high charge for accommodation and the evangelical philosophy of the owners deterred some Lascars from using it.

Similar accommodation was made available at the other British ports frequented by Lascars but the problems created by enforced delays in Britain did not disappear. In 1871, the Board of Trade appointed Lascar Transfer Officers to supervise the whereabouts of Lascars to prevent desertion by them whilst awaiting a return passage. It was not until the second half of the 20th century that legislation gave Lascars similar employment rights to their British counterparts, including the right to continuous employment. As a result, the stranded Lascars accommodation problem and repatriation ceased to be an issue.

The slow route to equal employment rights.

Throughout the history of the East India Trade, legislation was gradually put in place to improve the working and living conditions of both British seamen and Lascars. However, the Lascars were always slower to benefit for a number of reasons. It was in the interests of the Serangs and Ghat Serangs to maintain their control over the Lascars, so that they could negotiate the best possible deal for themselves. Ship owners and captains were ultimately interested in their ships and cargoes arriving safely in port, in the most economical way. Using local labour at cheaper rates achieved this. Finally, the increasing employment of Lascars on British ships made British sailors concerned about the security of their own jobs and made equality of employment rights a sensitive subject.

Because they were only paid local rates and lacked employment rights it was cheaper to employ Lascars than to employ British sailors. By 1660 this concern manifested itself in the Navigation Acts, which ruled that 75% of the crews of ships importing goods from Asia should be British. Much later, in 1802, these same concerns resulted in the passing of an Act of Parliament forbidding Lascars to be employed on ships sailing west of the Cape of Good Hope, an attempt to restrict their employment to routes between India and China.

However, such regulations had limited success as Lascars became indispensable, particularly with crew shortages in times of war and during the Australian gold rush. The 1823 "Lascar Act" lifted the restriction on the number of Lascar sailors legitimately employed on British ships in wartime, by legislating that they could be counted as "British Seamen" at such times. The benefits were, however, one sided, as they were to lose this right when war was over and they could be replaced by returning British seamen.

The restriction on the number of Lascars employed on British ships was finally lifted in 1849 when the 1660 Navigation acts were repealed. However, British seamen's concern that the employment of Lascars threatened their own job security continued to be felt. In the 19th century, the growth of trade unions fighting for employee's rights led to the 1911 dock strike by the National Union of Seamen. However, Lascars were still considered by many as a threat to British job security and benefited less than the British seamen from subsequent legislation. It was the Lascars themselves, fighting through their own trade unions, that eventually secured them equal rights of employment with their British counterparts under the 1958 Indian Merchant Shipping Act. After more than 350 years of inequality, legislation ensured the Lascars limited working hours, rights of continuous employment and unemployment pay.

For over 350 years Lascars played a valuable role, helping to crew British ships in times of peace and war and ensuring that goods from India and beyond arrived safely in London and other British ports. With the relocation of the the London docks to the port of Tilbury, Lascars' links with London and in particular with the West India Dock were severed, but their lives and fight for recognition can be traced through remaining documents, photographs and personal memories.

Lascars and Britain

A Chronology

Middle Ages	Europeans trading with Asia travelled via the Mediterranean sea, then overland to the "Persian Gulf" where they could continue their journey by ship.
1487	Portuguese sailors opened up a direct sea route to India, via the Cape of Good Hope, helped by the skill and knowledge of local seamen.
1600 (31 st December)	Queen Elizabeth granted a group of London merchants the right to trade with the East Indies (India, Sumatra, Java and other islands in the Eastern Archipelago). This was the birth of the East India Company. Local labour began to be used on ships returning to Britain.
1609	A Charter granted by King James I gave London Merchants the exclusive right to the East India trade.
1660	<p>A Charter granted by King Charles II gave the East India Company civil and criminal jurisdiction over settlements in India. This also gave the Company the legal right to make war on non-Christian nations.</p> <p>Navigation Acts ruled that 75% of the crews of ships importing goods from Asia should be British. However, this also meant that up to a quarter of the crew could be Lascar sailors. The Acts indicate that by this decade Lascars were frequently employed on the East India Company ships sailing to Britain.</p>
1662	Bombay became British, as part of Catherine of Braganza's marriage settlement with King Charles II. Bombay was to become a major trading port with Britain.
1677	The East India Company was granted a Charter giving it the power to mint money in Bombay. This could be used as currency all over the East Indies.
1686	The East India Company established a trading post at the village of Kalikuta (Calcutta) on the Hooghli River. Calcutta, like Madras and Bombay, became a major trading port with Britain
1757	<p>Robert Clive (Clive of India) helped secure Calcutta for the British. at the battle of Plassey in Bengal. Many Lascars were Bengali.</p> <p>The East India Company's increasing power abroad contrasted with the decreasing power of the Moghul Emperor.</p>
1784	The India Act was implemented: The East India Company came under the control of the British Government, with a British Governor General taking responsibility for India.
1789	French Revolution.

	<p>War with France resulted in more British seamen being pressed into service by the Navy. The East India Company replaced them with Lascar seamen.</p>
1795	<p>Concern for the welfare of Lascars stranded in Britain awaiting passage home on ships led to public debate in the press.</p> <p>The East India Company arranged some accommodation for Lascars in local lodging houses and opened accommodation barracks in the Kingsland Road, Hackney.</p>
1802 (31 st August)	<p>West India Dock opened. The import dock could accommodate at least 300 ships and was half a mile long. Warehouses to store the unloaded goods surrounded its quays.</p> <p>The London shipping trade began its shift from Gravesend to London.</p> <p>An Act of Parliament was passed, forbidding Lascars being employed on ships sailing west of the Cape of Good Hope. This was intended to protect the jobs of British seamen who cost more to employ than Lascars.</p>
1803	<p>Napoleonic Wars.</p> <p>As more and more British ships were diverted to help support the naval vessels in the war with France, British merchants began to charter non-British ships, crewed totally by Lascars, to carry their goods.</p>
1805	London Dock opened
1806 (4 th August)	East India Dock, Blackwall opened.
1807	Commercial (late Greenland) Dock opened
1815	<p>Peace with France enabled British seamen to return to merchant shipping. While this displaced some Lascars, an increase in trade created more work.</p> <p>The East India Company's trading charter was renewed for 21 years. The Company retained the exclusive right to the valuable tea trade with China but agreed to the use of "outports" for trade to the East Indies.</p> <p>Using a bonding system the "East India Trade Act" made ship owners and masters responsible for feeding, clothing and housing Lascars awaiting return passage from England. Regulations stipulated the minimum amount of food and clothing that should be provided.</p> <p>Another clause in the Act made the East India Company ultimately responsible, if the ship owners and masters failed</p>

	in their duty. The Act had limited success.
1823	<p>The bonding system was abandoned.</p> <p>The Merchant Shipping Act or “Lascar Act” made the East India Company responsible for repatriation of Asiatic seamen. A ship owner was responsible for keeping a record of every Lascar employed on his ship. In practice, ships’ captains often recorded the number of Lascars employed, rather than recording a list of individual names.</p> <p>The Merchant Shipping Act also made the East India Company legally responsible for Lascars’ upkeep in England. This was only partially successful.</p> <p>Lascars could only be counted as “British” Seamen in periods of war when the Navy employed merchant seamen and there was a shortage of manpower for the merchant ships.</p>
1828 (25 th October)	St. Katherine’s Dock opened.
1835	<p>The East India Company Charter expired ending years of exclusive trade rights to Asia and China. Trade was now open to fierce competition.</p> <p>With the ending of the East India Company’s monopoly on trade, the Lascars conditions in London worsened. Whilst more Lascars were employed on the increasing number of ships taking advantage of Free Trade, facilities for them did not keep up with the demand. A home for Lascars at St. George’s in the East closed. Many men chose to live in dockside sheds rather than sleep on the streets.</p>
1849	The Navigation Acts of 1660 were repealed. Lascars could now be considered as British Seamen in peacetime as well as in war.
1850	An Act of Parliament made the Admiralty responsible for the welfare of distressed Lascars but any costs incurred were to be passed on to the relevant ship’s master.
1853	An Act of Parliament allowed Lascars to work on ships trading with Australia, because of the shortage of European seamen caused by the Gold Rush.
1855	Continuing public concern for the welfare of Lascars stranded in port awaiting a passage home, led to the opening of The Strangers Home for Asiatics, Africans and South Sea Islanders. This was founded by the Church Missionary Society. Lascars made a daily payment to use the facilities and have a bed for the night.
1858	<p>The East India Company’s Charter, which had given it administrative rights in India, was not renewed.</p> <p>The Government of India Act transferred the East India</p>

	<p>Company's power and territories to the British Government.</p> <p>As trade from abroad increased, so did the number of ships employing Lascars. More and more ports became temporary home to Lascars, including Southampton, Cardiff, Manchester, Liverpool and Glasgow.</p>
1871	The Board of Trade appointed Lascar Transfer Officers to prevent desertion by Lascars in Britain.
1876	The India Act allowed Lascars just over half the accommodation space enjoyed by European Sailors.
1877	Queen Victoria became Empress of India.
1906	<p>European Crews had their accommodation space allowance increased. However Lascars were not included in the statutory food scale standards.</p> <p>All seamen, except Lascars, were expected to understand enough English to follow orders.</p>
1914	<p>World War I begins.</p> <p>The Merchant Navy employed more Lascars to replace British sailors who joined the Royal Navy. However, Merchant Navy ships were just as vulnerable to enemy action, and many Lascars were injured, killed or taken prisoner.</p> <p>Because they were usually recruited locally, Lascars were paid at the rate agreed by the recruiting port and not at British rates. Even in wartime they were paid less than their British counterparts doing similar work.</p>
1933	Lascars were granted the same standard of accommodation as British Seamen.
1939	<p>World War II begins.</p> <p>By 1939, nearly a quarter of Merchant Navy crews were Lascars from India, China, East Africa and Malaya. During the war many were also employed on naval vessels, including troop carriers. However, they were still only paid at local rates and still had fewer employment rights than British seamen.</p>
1958	<p>Under the Indian Merchant Shipping Act, Lascars' hours of work were limited.</p> <p>They were given rights of continuous employment.</p> <p>They were also granted unemployment pay.</p>
1963	The "Lascar Act" of 1823 was repealed. The Repatriation of Lascars ceased to be an issue.

KS3 Worksheets: The Lascars' Hidden History

There is only a small amount of information on Lascars in the Museum. However, amongst the exhibits and displays about the growth of trade between Britain and the East, it is possible to find clues about the Lascars' experiences. This worksheet looks at the growth of the East India trade and tries to find the 'hidden' Lascars.

The section headings on these sheets refer to display boards or exhibits.

Read the display boards then answer the questions.

Starts with 2 worksheets each, then go back to your teacher for more if you finish.

You will need to use the *Thames Highway* gallery on the top floor and move around until you reach *Sailortown*. You will not need to use any other galleries.

New Horizons and The Port Reformed

Here are some statements about trade and the port of London in Tudor times. Some are true and some are false.

For each statement, decide if it is true or false, and then write the reason for your answer.

1) Europeans first sailed to India in the 16th century. True/ False,

because.....

2) Vasco da Gama sailed from Portugal to India without stopping. True/ False,

because.....

3) European ships improved during the 15th and 16th centuries. True/ False,

because.....

4) In 1550, only 1 or 2 deep-sea ships arrived in London per week. True/False,

because.....

5) The Tudor monarchs raised money by taxing ships' cargoes. True/ False,

because.....

6) From 1559, there were specific places for unloading cargoes from overseas. True/ False,

because.....

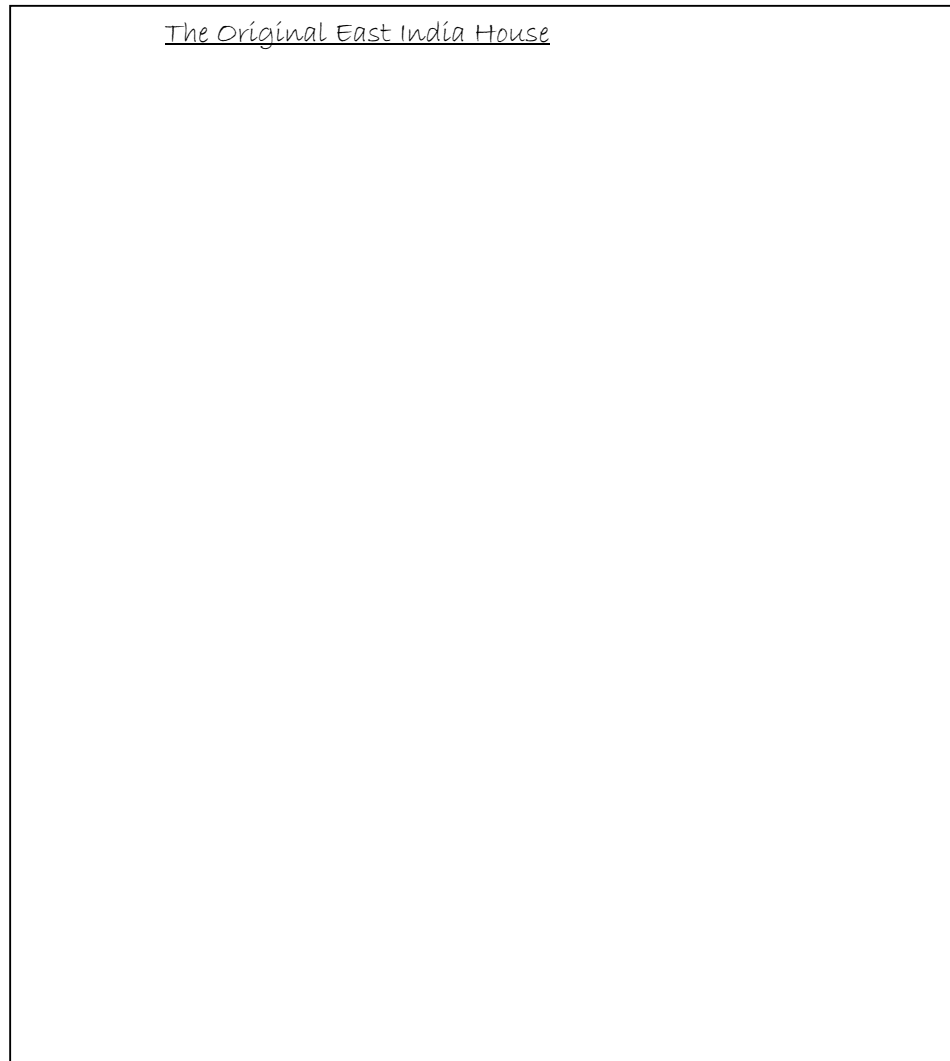
Merchant Companies

The East India Company interested in trading with India and the East Indies. They wanted to import spices and other luxury goods. They had royal approval for this trade.

The East India Company needed to employ local sailors to help them sail safely into the Indian harbours. The company also had to take on Lascar sailors to replace any crew who had died or deserted the ship.

- 1) Look at the print of the original East India Company House. The building is designed to impress people and show how powerful the Company is.

Make a sketch of the East India House and label it to show 3 ways in which it impresses passers-by.



Ship Shape

In the 18th century, improvements were made to the design of deep-sea ships.
List 3 of these improvements: -

-
-
-

Look at the picture of the East Indiaman at Blackwall in 1750. Imagine you are a Lascar working on deck, helping unload the cargo. Describe how the goods are taken from your ship to the shore.

.....
.....
.....
.....

The Legal Quays (show case)

Look at the model of the dockside crane.

How is the crane powered?

What is missing from the inside of the wheel?

Riverside Housing

Who lived by the River?.....

Imagine you are a Lascar arriving in Wapping.

Think of 3 words to describe your first impressions of the area: -

-
-
-

Look at the bottom picture on the board.

Can you spot the toilets for the houses?

Think of 2 bad things about these toilets.

1)

2)

Riverside Communities

This board has the first mention of Lascars in the whole gallery. Lascars waiting for homebound ships were part of the riverside community.

Many Lascars fell ill soon after arriving in London. Can you think why?

.....

Who were the Lascars' neighbours in the riverside communities? Write at least 4 answers in each box below: -

Lascars' Riverside Neighbours	
Where the neighbours came from: -	The neighbours' jobs: -

The Ratcliffe Fire of 1794

The Ratcliffe fire of 1794 destroyed businesses, homes and lodging houses for seamen. Lascars were among the people caught up in this disaster.

How did the fire start?.....

Name 3 of the flammable items that helped the fire take hold: -

-
-
-

How did the East India Company help victims of the fire?

.....

The Falmouth (display case and interactive screen)

Look at the model of the Falmouth. Like other East Indiamen, she would have taken on Lascars to replace crew lost on the way to India.

In the showcase there are some papers belonging to the Falmouth's steward from 1750 -1779, Thomas Bartlett.

On paper 3, Thomas lists the things he has bought in London to sell to people in India and China. He writes that he has "7 double gross of large buttons". One gross of buttons would be 144, so how many buttons has he got altogether?

.....large buttons.

Look further down Thomas Bartlett's list and see how many pocketknives he is hoping to sell.

.....pocket knives.

Look at list number 4. These are items bought in China to sell in London.

How many dishes did Thomas Bartlett buy?.....

How many bowls?.....

Look at the cut away side of the model of the Falmouth and locate the gun compartments.

Why do you think merchant ships had to be armed?

.....

Ordinary seamen, including Lascars, slept around the guns. Imagine you are a Lascar on the Falmouth. Write 2 sentences to describe your sleeping quarters. Perhaps you could make a comparison with the captain's quarters.

.....
.....
.....

Look at the height of the masts compared with the seamen. Lascars and ordinary seamen worked on deck and up the masts. Imagine how you would feel about this work in rough weather.

.....

Work in pairs or threes and use the interactive screen to find the answers to the following questions: -

- 1) What is the Falmouth taking to India?.....
- 2) What happens if you are taken ill before the ship leaves Gravesend?.....
- 3) Why did ships sail together rather than alone?.....
- 4) Who are some of the people who keep the ship seaworthy?.....
- 5) What are the Roaring Forties?.....
- 6) By the time your ship reaches East Africa, what are some of the health problems on board?.....
- 7) Which Indian port does Falmouth call at?.....
- 8) Why did the captain take on Lascars at Madras?.....
- 9) Who was Thomas Falmouth?.....
- 10) What did Falmouth carry from India to China?.....
- 11) Which Chinese port are you sailing to?.....
- 12) Which English goods do the Chinese want to buy?.....
- 13) What cargoes does the Falmouth take on in China?.....
- 14) If you found a Royal Navy ship in port, why would you be especially pleased to have some Lascars in your crew?.....


The interactive display makes the return journey to London. Try to pose 3 questions about the return journey from a Lascar's point of view. You will need to think of a right and a wrong answer for people to make a choice. You will also have to explain the right answer so that they learn from their mistakes.

Plan out one question below:-

<p>You are...</p> <p>Do you</p> <p>a).....</p> <p>or</p> <p>b).....</p> <p>(a/b)You are right because.....</p> <p>(a/b)Not a good idea because.....</p>
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Execution Dock and the Rhinebeck Panorama and Sailortown

Imagine you are a young Lascar arriving in 19th century London for the first time. Take a careful look at the museum areas listed above and think what your reactions to London might be. Use the space below for your notes.



Your brother in India is thinking of becoming a Lascar. Would you encourage or discourage him?

Use the box below to note down some reasons for this point of view.



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