



Connecting Dialogues

Annual Review

focus on

Commonwealth Debates



Tide~ Elephant Times

Issue 2.5 June 2022



Welcome to ET 2.5

This year [five issues of the ET](#) magazine have featured **Commonwealth Themes**.

We are seeking feedback from teachers who have experience of using the 2022 Games as an opportunity to support learning about the Commonwealth, its history and its future.

Please support - [see quick form](#)

Contents:

Introduction	1
Connecting Dialogues initiative	5
Commonwealth Debates	11

The Elephant Times

The **Elephant Times [ET]** magazine is a Tide~ network initiative

Website: www.tidegloballearning.net

It is edited by Jeff Serf & Scott Sinclair.

We have taken on this voluntary role as Tide~ Trustees.

Dorit Braun, Darius Jackson, Andrew Simons & Clive Harber have also contributed to ET editing.

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To make proposals for future ET articles

please email us: elephant.times@tidegloballearning.net

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Introduction

Thank you to all involved in contributing to the Elephant Times, and to the Trustees and others that have taken on lead roles, all of whom have given significant voluntary time, creativity, and expertise to the work of Tide~. Your work represents the first steps in building a new **sustainable self-generating Tide~ core**.

This response to organisational realities and the move from seeing funding as the key issue to working more on thinking and strategy has proved to have many advantages. We need to build on that work by engaging new teachers to take lead roles.

The **Elephant Times** sits at the heart of plans for a revitalised network ... with space for new conversations amongst education professionals in response to global realities.

[Click on contents to go to page](#)

[To return to Contents - click on this band](#)



The Pandemic - many hardships - a time to rethink society's priorities?

The Pandemic itself is a global issue. It highlights core development themes, and international justice matters, not least about access to vaccines.

Global realities are another matter. They have always presented both opportunities and difficulties for Tide's work. They are the stimulus and the motivation. However, at a time when many young people have, as result of Covid, had to adjust to a new awareness of uncertainty, teachers are confronted by new challenges in enabling learners to make sense of what is going on in the world.

The Pandemic has been an amplifier to many existing issues. There is much to review from a teaching perspective. The death of George Floyd stimulated the need for fresh thinking about race and racism. COP26 highlighted the need for new thinking about climate change and its implications for education.

We are addressing these matters in **the context of a more divided society**: less consensus, for example about the priorities of international development aid; confusion about responding to climate change; and the use of 'culture war' as tool of political division.

The war in Ukraine brings into focus much that overwhelms, but also the need to reassess core values relating to all these educational matters and the role of schools in sustaining liberal democracy while also engaging a world of accelerating change.

Finally, with understandable media focus on Ukraine, we need to take care that our agenda does not overlook other global realities, for example other wars that continue and crises such as the drought in the Horn of Africa.

Connecting Dialogues initiative

“Do not be afraid of complexity.

Be afraid of people who promise an easy short cut to simplicity.”

*‘How to stay sane in an age of division’
Elif Shafak*

Connecting Dialogues seeks your support:

- ❑ to grow a new network of educators that engages with dialogue about global issues from a teacher perspective;
- ❑ to contribute to approaches that improve learner opportunities [at all ages] to develop dialogue skills and capacity to deal with complex global realities.

Covid-19 continued to present practical challenges too, but it also provided opportunities for groups to reflect on Tide~ legacy and begin to shape new priorities. This led to proposals for the ‘**Connecting Dialogues**’ initiative.

The process was stimulated by *debates that focused on: Elif Shafak’s ‘**How to stay sane in age of division**’; the lessons of the Pandemic, Black Lives Matter and COP26; as well as reviewing Tide’s past work.

* See [Rohini Corfield on Decoding Diversity in ET4](#) and [the Conversation in ET5](#)

[‘Connecting Dialogues Learning - to engage with global realities’](#) was published as a result.

“ The potential for doom and gloom has increased, the pandemic highlights how this can impact on mental health and well-being ... and on outlook. As some climate change posters say - “what is the point of learning if there is no future?”.

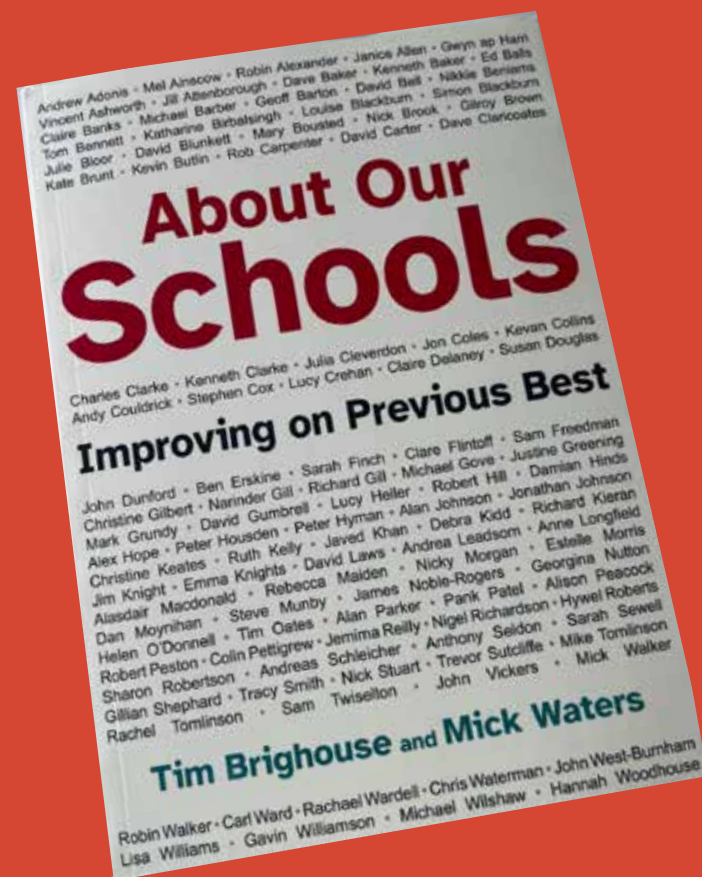
Professionally we have choices. We need to consider the need for optimism and a positive outlook without just putting a “green wash” or a “white wash” on the realities. We need to engage with what Elif Shafak calls **creative pessimism**. ”

[‘How to stay sane in an age of division’ - p87]

“ A key challenge is: **how we avoid new ‘tick box’ approaches that present certainty and offer little learning but seem to engage with the issues?**

Many issues are complex and involve different viewpoints. Young people have an entitlement to engage with the complexity of contested ideas. ”

Education - a development issue?



A time for new conversations

A book on education policy since 1975 does not sound that exciting but in **'About Our Schools'** Tim Brighouse and Mick Waters engage an impressive list of contributors, offer much insight, some humour and a reminder that there is a need for new conversations about schools -- and their role in building a positive future. This is the kind of inspiration ET seeks.

Can we contribute to building new consensus about the purpose of schools in a world of accelerating change?

It is proposed that responses to the book and articles about how schools are engaging with such debates will be the focus for a Zoom workshop in September and then an Elephant Times.

Should such conversations about schools be at the heart of reviving global learning?

Bill Scott in ET4 advocates that organisations concerned about change agendas should engage with the education debate rather than seeing schools as a way to sell their 'agenda'.

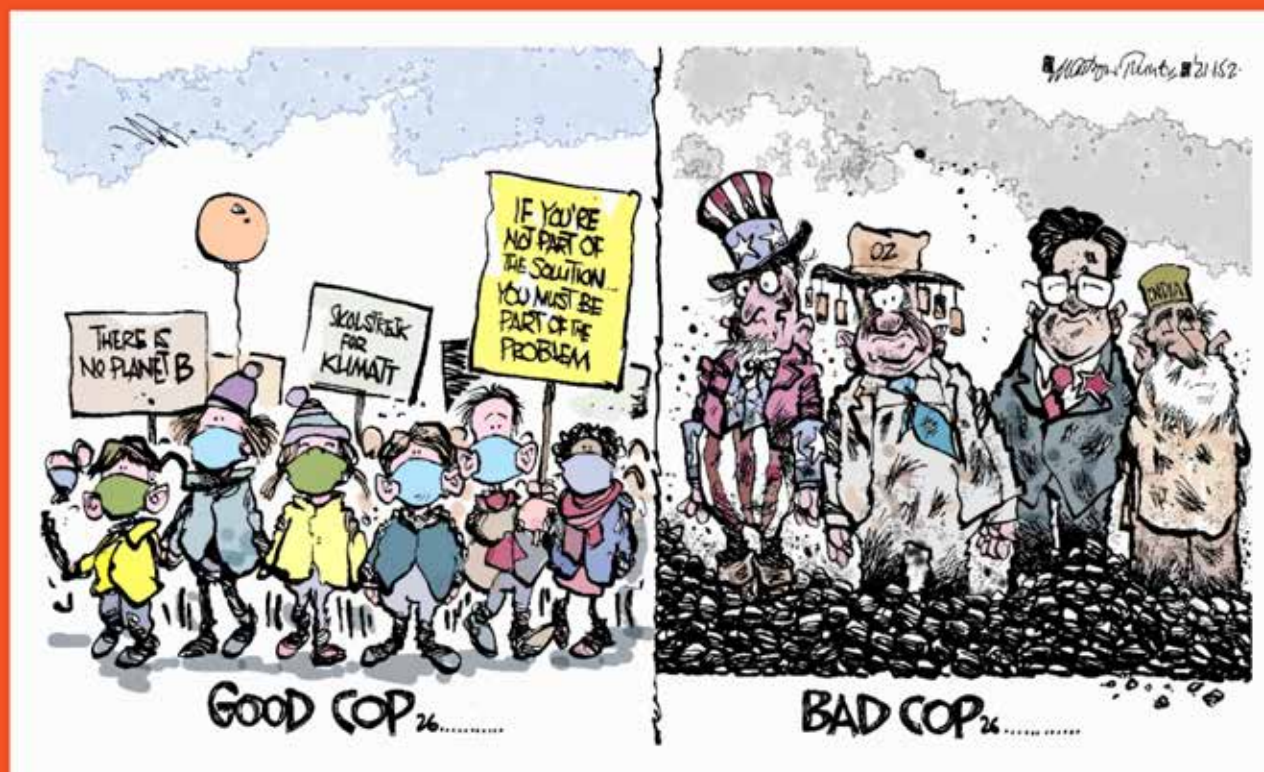
These ideas reflect the **Connecting Dialogues** proposal to review the educational implications of climate change.

“ The challenge for schools and for teachers is no longer just about the need for an awareness of climate change, and the concepts of sustainable development, and for the school itself to reduce its carbon footprint.

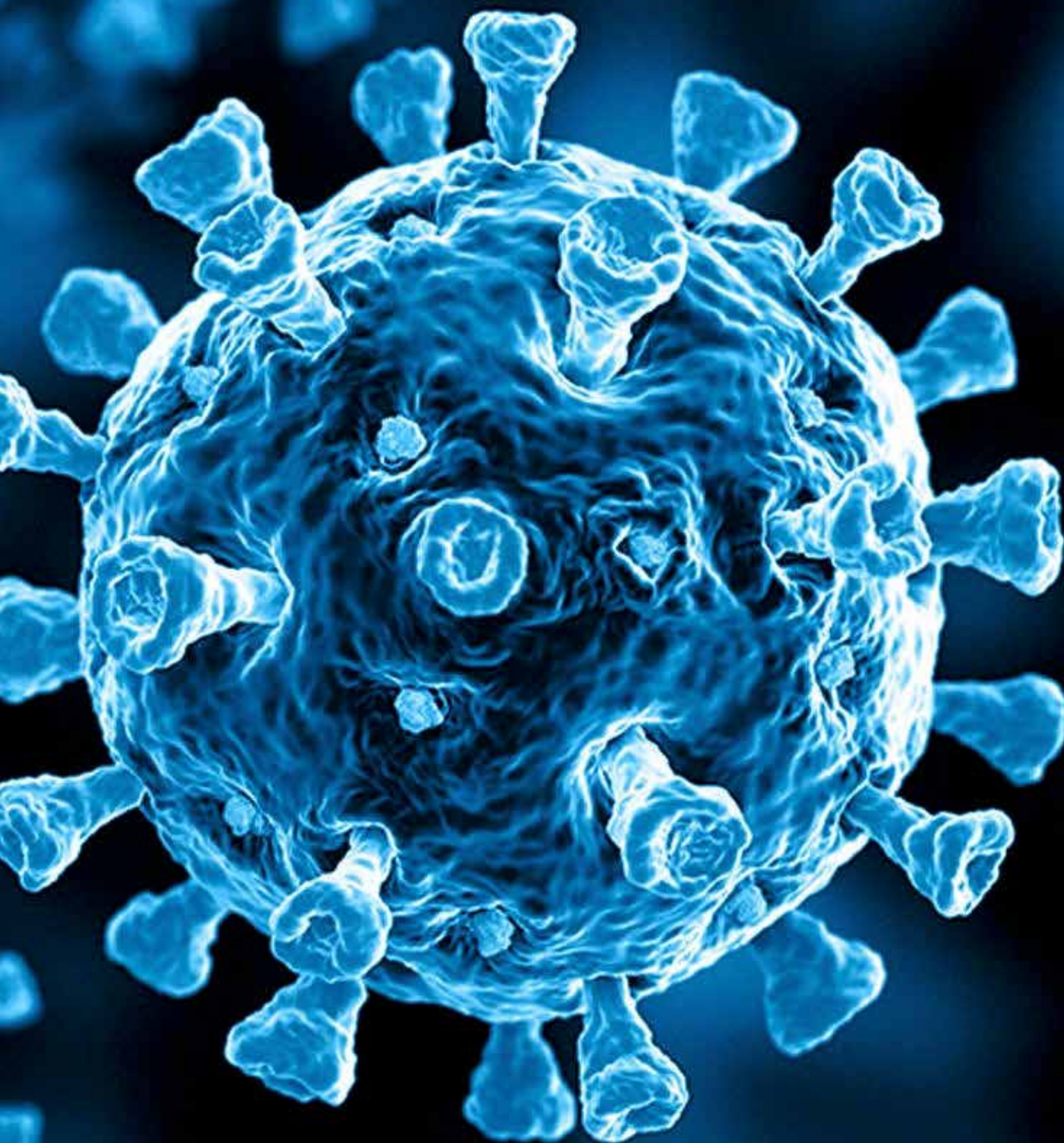
It is about rethinking education so that it meets the needs of learners growing up in a complex and uncertain global context: - where every job will be a “green job” - where there will be a need for well-informed creativity about change at every level from the individual to the international. ”

The question to ask is:

How goes it? One Year on from COP26.



More than ever before it is now obvious that uncertainty is a constant: the only thing that is certain is that there will be uncertainty.



Our interconnectedness with the rest of the world is now beyond dispute.

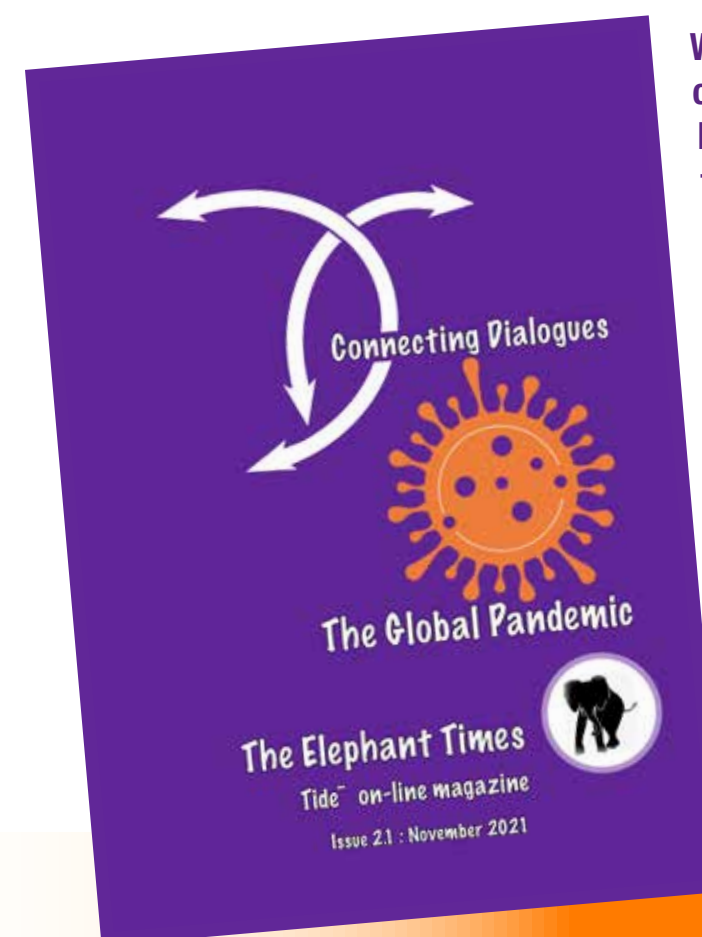
The Pandemic - a global issue

The Pandemic was, and is, a key part of the reality we are in. The importance of talking about it is highlighted by Dorit Braun in ET 2 - and Rita Chowdhury and Colm Regan in the first ET.

There is concern that we are slipping away from what felt like a big opportunity to think afresh, for example, about education. Perhaps “**an age of ambition and collective partnership**” that ‘About Our Schools’ aspires to can help sustain the opportunity.

There is also a need to **share resources and teaching ideas about the Pandemic as a global issue**. It would be good to hear from teachers about what you have found useful ... and to have ET articles about effective approaches..

Let's Talk about Covid set the scene in [ET 2.1](#) to address three Pandemic themes:



What can we learn from studying the course of past pandemics - about their spread, how people reacted, how the disease was treated and the impact on society? Time-line activities highlight patterns that have been repeated over thousands of years.

How can we facilitate discussions about present events, most importantly about ‘Vaccines - as a Global Matter’?

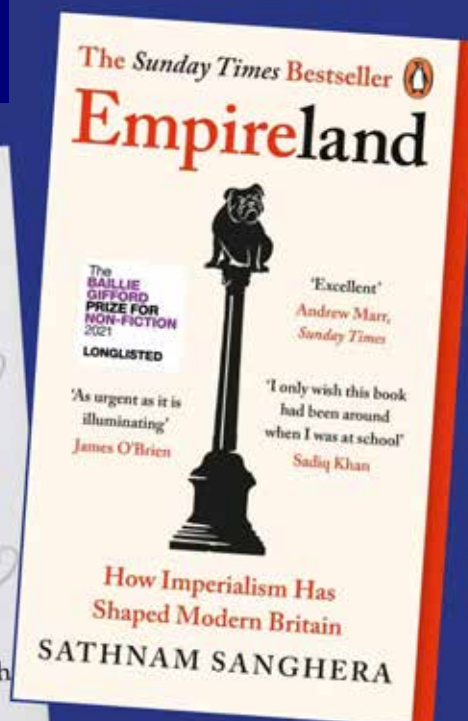
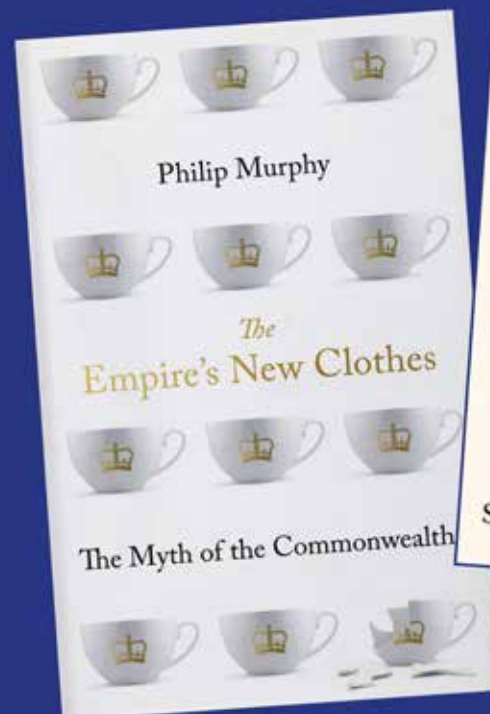
What would we like our post-Covid world to look like? The ‘Implications’ article introduces such priorities for the future.

Here the global and local truly intertwine.

Commonwealth Debates



New Zealand - a new flag



The **Commonwealth Games in Birmingham** has potential as a stimulus to learning about the Commonwealth, its history - and its future. It is an opportunity for curriculum innovation.

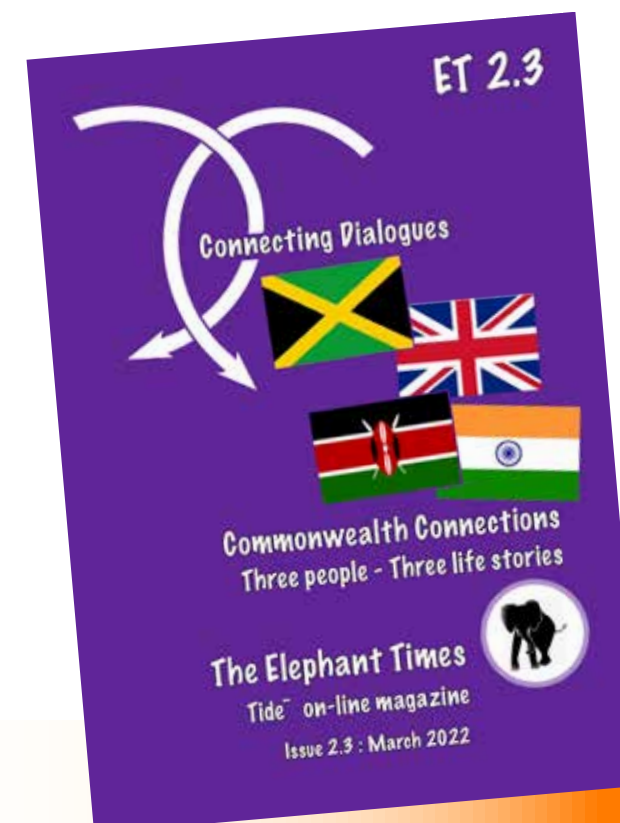
Tide~ is seeking feedback from teachers about this experience.

We plan to develop a publication to share ideas and information about resources with other teachers. Also articles about the challenges involved in teaching about what are sometimes complex, contested and controversial matters.

Please support - [see quick form](#)

Inspired by Sathnam Sanghera's '**Empireland**' and Philip Murphy's '**The Empire's New Clothes**' there are challenges for all curriculum areas, in particular for History. However, awareness about the past, its impact on current dispositions and visions of the future has a crucial role in the learning needs of all - not just those doing an in-depth study of history.

In ET 2.2 [Dorit Braun; Simon Huson; Darius Jackson; Audrey Osler; University of Worcester group](#) reflect on 'Empireland'.



In ET 2.3 [Rohini Corfield, Vipin Chauhan & Phyllis Thompson](#) build on these ideas by reflecting on their personal experiences coming to England as children.

They wrote individually and then discussed the implications for building Awareness.



The Queen at CHOGM in London 2018



Removing statue of “racist” Gandhi - Accra Ghana 2018

The statue was removed from the university campus after a petition saying Gandhi was a racist. This related to his comments about Indians being infinitely superior to black people, when he was a young lawyer in South Africa. **A stimulus to open up the complexity of the debate?**

Commonwealth Debates? There are debates about the issues and debates about teaching approach.

Page 14 profiles some contrasting views about how the Commonwealth is seen

Which 3 would you choose to discuss? What would you add?
A key one for us is:

“The priority is not what we teach about Commonwealth - it is our own awareness as educators - our understanding of the links between the Empire and today.”

Both Sathnam Sanghera & Philip Murphy suggest a **move away from collective amnesia**, to engage with realities of the past but in a way that enables positive thinking about the future.

We propose that an approach is needed that enables learners to engage with the significance of the legacy of Empire and its implications today, without defaulting to either a simplistic “it was bad” or “it was good” stance. Neither are much about learning. 500 years of history was more complex than that.

The Queen’s platinum jubilee, the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting [CHOGM] in June and The Games will all bring the future of the Commonwealth into public awareness.

This is mainstream debate about Britain’s future, about the role of monarchy, about social issues such as racism within our society, and action beyond removing statues. **It is about young people’s entitlement, wherever they are in the Commonwealth, to engage with that future.**

A Common Future is the theme of CHOGM, to be held in Rwanda. This has echoes of ‘Our Common Future’, known as The Brundtland Report, published in 1987. This was inspirational for DEC/ Tide~ at that time. It is relevant to revisit those ideas. In this video [Prof Dan Banik](#) talks about that relevance.

Different Views ...

The Commonwealth is just a footnote to the history of Empire. It has no long-term relevance.

The advantage of a Commonwealth focus is that it engages the past but also looks to the future. A positive future as a network of equal nations.

Coming to terms with history is important. But our ancestors need not define us. We need the collective skills to make new choices.

This is challenging stuff. Commonwealth Awareness cannot just be a new brand of orthodoxy. It has to be about learning entitlement.

The priority is not what we teach about Commonwealth - it is our own awareness as educators - our understanding of the links between the Empire and today.

Many events from our history leave us with a depressing view of our country. It is best to ignore these things -- to move on!

It is better to make the most of celebrating the sport and culture, rather than engaging with Commonwealth politics.

There will be different views. This should be expected, even encouraged. Young people deserve the opportunity to question - and to debate.

Commonwealth Awareness is too soft an idea. There is need to take sides and face up to guilt.

It is vital to be aware of how race has been [and is] used. But defining everything by race [or location eg "south"] does little to understand the reality.

Everyone seems surprised that so much of our base wealth as a country goes back to Empire and to things like the slave trade. For many that was already common knowledge.

The Commonwealth is a great opportunity for post-Brexit "Global Britain" and the building of new international links.

This is sensitive stuff. It touches on the emotions, on self identity, pride and a sense of belonging. To disregard this would be to mimic the worst of colonial models.

How do you see it?



In **'The Empire's New Clothes'** Philip Murphy offers a thorough overview of the Commonwealth, and asks if it can ...

"escape from the shadow of the British Empire to become an organisation based on shared values, rather than a shared history."

He brings it up to date with post-Brexit debate, some of which assumes a notion of Britain with a new lead role, in trade and selective immigration control. That 'make Britain great again' idea grates with others.

Six Flags symbolise some issues. **How do we debate them?**

[1/2] Moving On? Barbados recently became a Republic. The Queen is no longer Head of State. The recent royal visit highlighted similar debates in Jamaica. The Jamaican prime minister publicly said that his country would be "moving on".

"I know that this tour has brought into even sharper focus questions about the past and the future." [Duke of Cambridge]

There is value and learning in debating those questions.

[3/4] The basis to move forward positively. It is the 75th Anniversary of Partition. [Kavita Puri](#) stresses the need to enable people to tell their stories ...

"If colonialism and immigration are to be understood, there is a need to embrace such oral histories or we will never know the truth about Partition, nor have the basis to move forward positively."

Also see [Partition Education Group](#)

[5/6] First Nation Peoples. What can we learn from the debates that led up to the \$40-billion child welfare deal with Canada's First Nation people? In this Guardian article [Tara Sutton](#) asks **"Why did it take the discovery of the children's remains for Canada to finally believe that it committed genocide?"**

Similar questions arise in Australia - see pages 20 - 23.



How do we know - if we don't remember?

Smethwick in 2018. The unveiling of 'The Lion of the Great War' commemorating Sikh soldiers in World War 1.

Express & Star November 2018

The potential for Commonwealth Awareness is considerable.

The article - **How do we know if we don't remember?** uses recruitment posters and war memorials as a stimulus to discussing the **3 million World War 1 soldiers from the Empire.**

How do we know? became the theme for ET 2.4.

A focus on **Badminton** provides the opportunity within PE to consider the role Empire has played in shaping modern sport and challenges our assumptions about the origins of sports currently played in Britain.

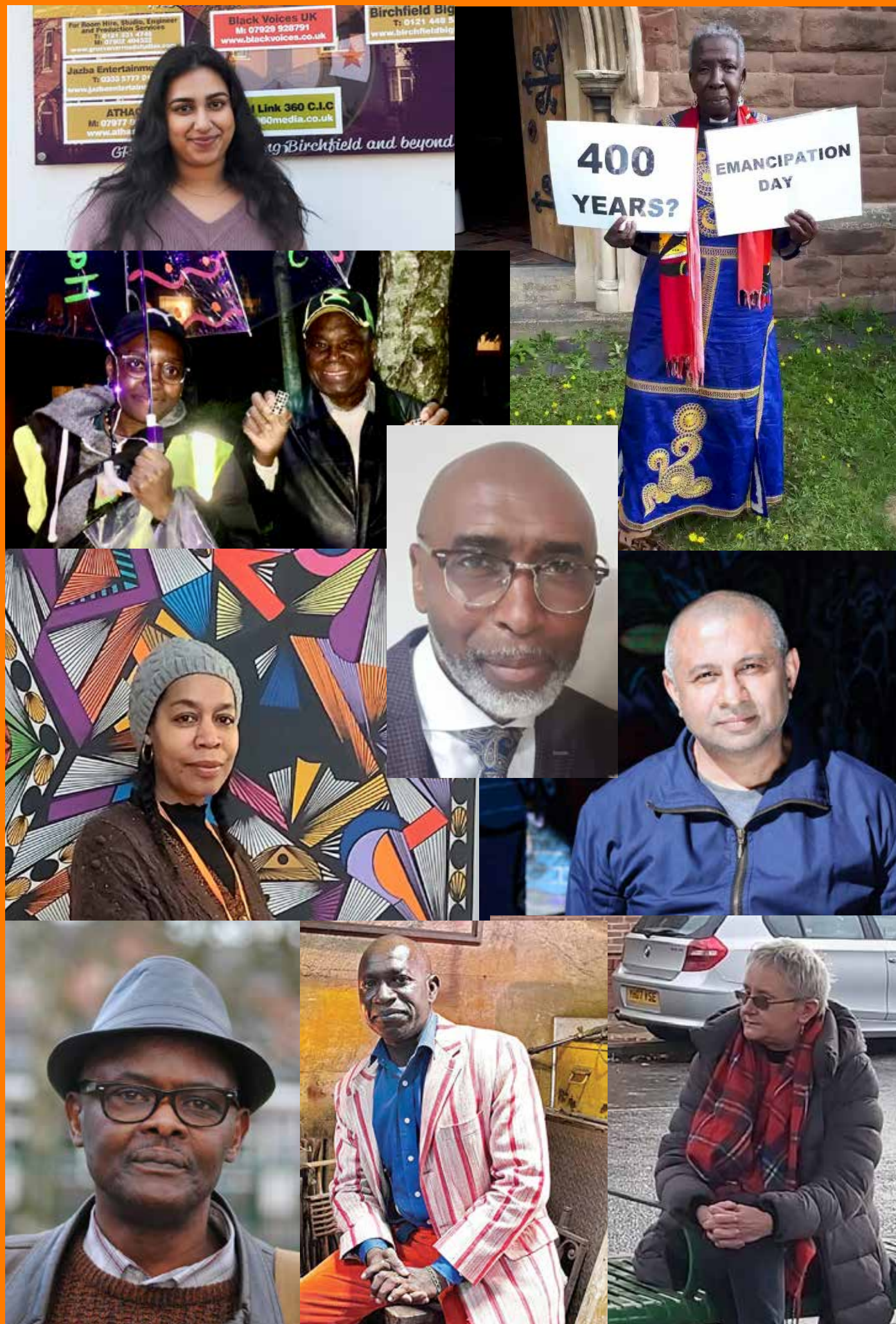
How do we know unless we connect - here and there - now and then? **Non-Violent Action: A Force for Change** - is a web resource that offers a variety of stimulus addressing such dimensions. Helen Griffin reflects on the process of putting it together. From a Commonwealth perspective she highlights the thousands of ordinary people behind lead figures such as Gandhi and also the importance of including other movements such as Pashtun Muslim Non-Violent Army or Khudai Khudmatgar, which is less well known and challenges prevailing views of Islam.

The endless amount of information about the Commonwealth has the potential to get in the way of increasing understanding. An article proposes that we see this as an opportunity for learner-generated enquiry and offers an activity to do this.

How do we know - if we don't seek questions to ask?

The death of George Floyd moved people from different backgrounds, across the world, to raise concerns about racism. Yet even a symbolic gesture like 'taking the knee' became the focus for division. An article about 'Euros 2021' asks:

- ◇ How do we generate open discussion about these matters?
- ◇ How do we avoid trivialising the issues - as part of a 'culture war'?



How do we know if we do not ask? was the core idea of an ET developed in partnership with a community project in Birchfield - an area neighbouring the main venue of The Games.

- ❑ People involved in the project are asked about their Commonwealth connections and how they see The Games.
- ❑ Five people, who are well known in Birchfield, are asked about their connections to the Commonwealth and their aspirations for change.

There is also an activity using a shorter version of the interviews, for use in schools, **to explore ideas about change.**

We hope this ET generates local conversations in schools and in the community, and that it is a stimulus to others further afield.

We also hope that it will encourage others to develop a resource about views in their own community.



Thank you to all those involved - in particular to Andrew Simons and **Birchfield Big Local.**

Vanley Burke, who was interviewed, has a dynamic [exhibition at Soho House](#) as part of Birmingham 2022. A few of his photos are a stimulus in this ET.

[Click on cover to go to ET](#)

Australia - 3 Myths ...

Myth 1: Captain James Cook discovered Australia in 1770.

Is this true? His statues are splattered with red paint every Australia Day.

What about the Dutch – and New Holland? What about the French?

What about the people that had been living here for 60,000 years?

Myth 2: Australia was “Nobody’s land”.

This was justified in international law at the time - discovery and occupation allowed Britain to claim ownership. Aborigines were seen as nomads and did not “use” the land, and therefore did not “own it”.

The myth of ‘nobody’s land’ was overturned by the Mabo decision of the High Court of Australia in 1992. This led to a push for land rights which has not yet been fully resolved.

Recently there have been many inquiries into “stolen children”, uneven incarceration rates, and a greater acceptance of the wrongs done to them, including an Apology to the Stolen Children in Parliament. Activists are still working on constitutional rights to a “Voice to Parliament”.

Myth 3: The shadow of the “convict stain”.

Australia was one of the earliest colonies settled by Britain. It was used as a convict destination after the loss of the American colonies.

For their descendants, there was a stigma, and people denied their convict past, playing down the crimes as misdemeanours – as many of them were. Many were professional people and political prisoners. They went on to be nation builders.

About 20% Australians have some convict ancestry (70% of Tasmanians). It is now something of a celebration to find a convict in one’s ancestry.



Joy Schultz responded to ET 2.2 from Brisbane, Australia.

Audrey Osler’s reflection on ‘Empireland’ [ET 2.2] resonates with me. It is true **“the empire’s legacy is with us today”**. She also mentions that at school the history she learned was British history. This was much the same for me in Australia.

As a fifth generation Australian and an ardent republican, I think that Australia will remain in the Commonwealth when we inevitably replace the British monarch with our own Head of State. Such is the admiration for the Queen, this will not happen for now.

This partly reflects my upbringing as a British subject from birth until 1984, and the continuing cultural, social and sporting ties that we have with Commonwealth countries and as part of the Anglo-sphere.

A re-writing of Australian history accounting for Myths, such as the three I outline here, has **kept legacy of Empire very firmly in the national consciousness of Australians**.

[See full article & more on the myths.](#)



Black lives matter & always should have - so wrote Phil Glendenning in ET 3, describing the Australian experience.

When the First Fleet arrived in Sydney Cove in January 1788, Australia had a population of up to a million indigenous people whose presence stretched back for over 60,000 years. By 1900 that number had dropped to less than 100,000, prompting the Australian Human Rights Commission to describe what had happened to the Aboriginal people since colonisation as genocide

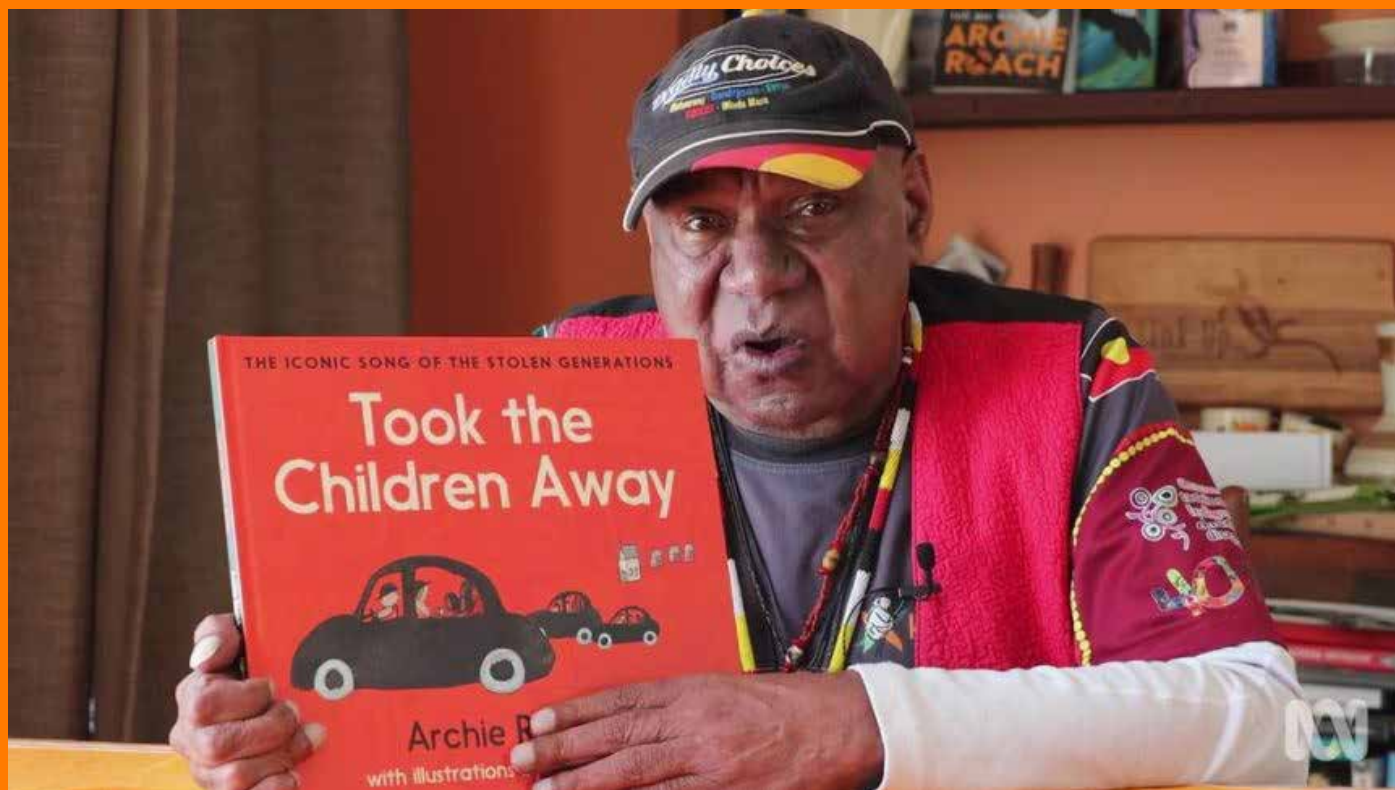
[See full article & list of resources.](#)

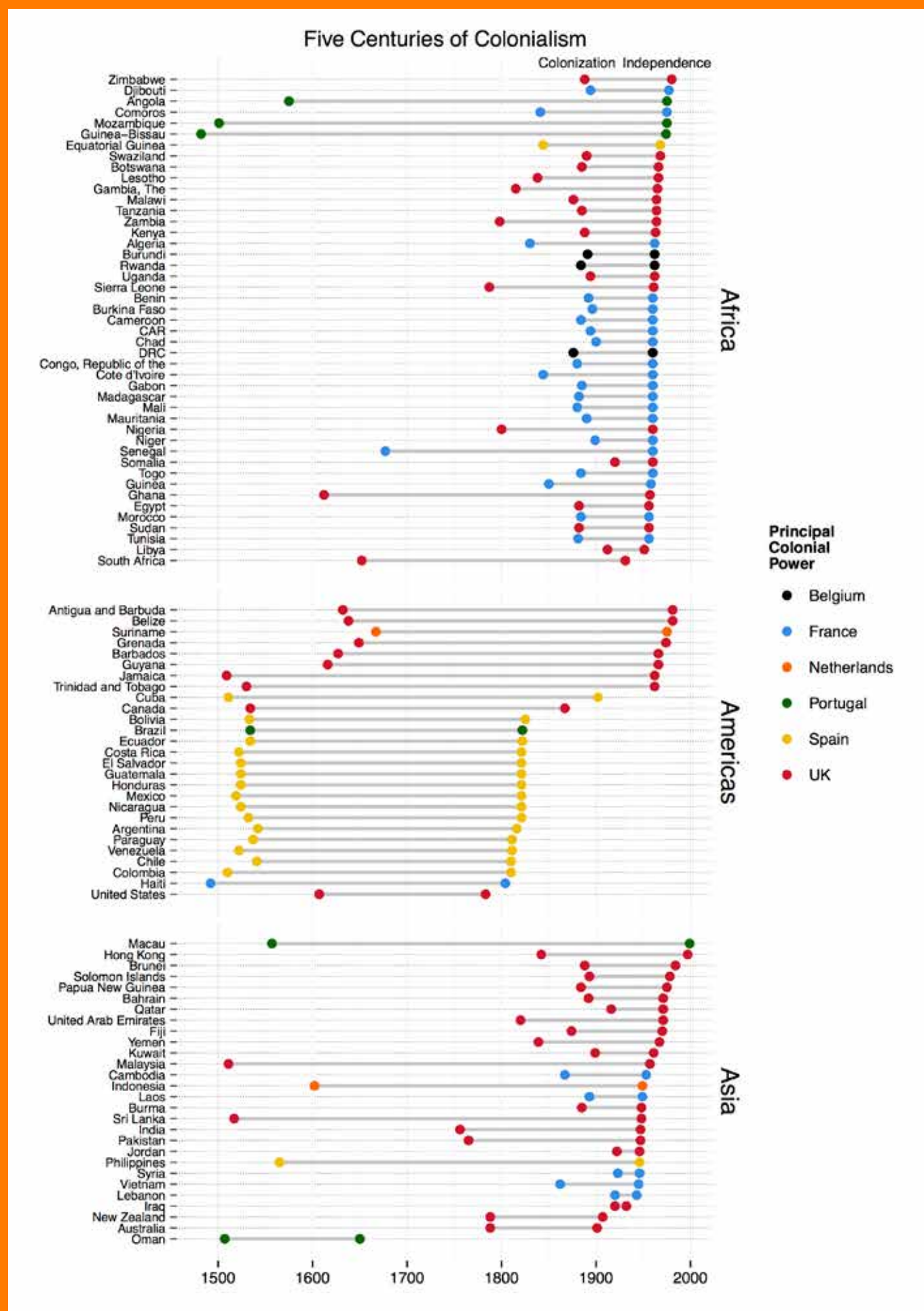
Phil included a list of useful resources. We focus on one in particular - **Took the Children Away**

In this video [Archie Roach tells the story](#): 'Took the Children Away'. It is his story. It is about the stolen generation, the children taken from their parents. [He also sings.](#) Archie's gentle manner and lively singing is an inspiration.

[How one heartbreaking song galvanised a nation](#) from The Guardian offers the story of making the song.

Together this is a very lively resource that can stimulate a positive discussion about a scandalous issue.





Visualising colonialism

Christine Watson, University of Worcester, responds to ET 2.4. Maths, too, has a role in building Commonwealth Awareness.

The construction, interpretation and criticism of statistical diagrams is a broad mathematical topic that demands to be set in real contexts. Considering the impact of colonialism on the world is a rich source of both raw and organised data. To help students get an informed perspective on colonialism, diagrams and charts can be explored in mathematics or – ideally – as part of a joint project with the humanities team

[Two maps of Africa in 1880 and 1913](#) – make a good starting point for some cross-curricular work.

Using a style of chart that is unfamiliar is an opportunity to build problem solving and reasoning skills. For example, Kevin Davis' [Geovisualist Blog](#) uses a dumbbell chart (a variation on a dot plot) to explore the duration of colonisation by European countries. The raw data is also listed.

The chart shows the dates of colonisation and independence of 100 nations. They are organized into areas and sorted by date of independence. Colour represents the principal colonial power.

There are many interesting patterns visible in the chart. For example, Spain's rapid conquest of Central and South America, and then rapid loss of its colonies in the 1820s. The scramble for Africa in the late 19th century stands out well, as does the rapid decolonization phase of the late 1950s through early 1970s.

There are numerous other charts for this sort of activity. **Gapminder** an excellent source of charts, raw data, and interesting questions. For example, [Bubble Charts](#) provide the opportunity to choose countries and compare a variety of data over time. Interesting questions arise from a comparison of UK data and that from a selection of Commonwealth Countries.

I recently enjoyed a walking tour of Manchester city centre. There was steady rain and a biting wind, but the tour guide was interesting, engaging and knowledgeable.



I was struck by the guide's strong sense of civic pride. And by how a part of this pride was about the stories of industrialisation, the fight for suffrage, and for workers' rights that we associate with Manchester. As well as how it is so intimately connected with other places and how he brought our attention to this. I had not expected that aspect. It was of course everywhere ...

The amazing **Victorian warehouses** built to store imported cotton and cotton cloth ready for export.

A monument to **Vimto**, made in Manchester, invented in Manchester, exported globally, using spices imported from all over the world.

A statue of **Abraham Lincoln**, given in gratitude that the city merchants agreed not to import cotton from the Confederate States during the American Civil War. Manchester supported the Union. Liverpool supported the Confederates and this may be the source (or a source) of the traditional rivalry between the two cities.



Our guide did not romanticise the global nature of the city.

Manchester's boom period was associated with slavery because slaves picked the cotton that made Manchester's wealth.

Every place has global connections.

What are yours?

Dorit Braun from the ET Edit Group

Birmingham - what connections would you feature?



There are buildings, street names and many industries that could be the focus to introducing our global connections. What would you choose and why? What are the dilemmas?

Could the debates that led to the Boulton, Watt & Murdoch 'Golden Boys' sculpture being reinstalled with a plaque explaining slavery links be a good starting point?



Inspiration might be found in Forward Together - a sculpture that involves 25 people representing a diverse Birmingham pulling together to "raise our society out of the shade". [See the video](#) about making the sculpture.