

# West India Regiments

[www.bl.uk/west-india-regiment](http://www.bl.uk/west-india-regiment)

## Teachers' Pack

Curriculum subject: History

Key Stage: 3

**Rationale** The West India Regiments project explores how British-armed people of African descent served within the wider British army in the 18th and 19th centuries.

This pack provides a range of suggested activities to support teachers in using materials from the West India Regiments project website. Subjects explored include colonial history, empire, the slave trade, and military history. Each themed section begins with suggested introductory reading in the form of short articles from the website, followed by close analysis of digitised primary sources.

The pack is divided into 8 themed topics:

- [Section 1: Background to the West India Regiments](#)
- [Section 2: Creating the West India Regiments](#)
- [Section 3: Racial debates](#)
- [Section 4: Life of a soldier](#)
- [Section 5: Dominica mutiny](#)
- [Section 6: Internal policing \(defending British rule\)](#)
- [Section 7: Ashanti War](#)
- [Section 8: Changing image of the West India Regiments](#)

## **Section 1: Background to the West India Regiments**

### **1. Article: [An introduction to the Caribbean, empire and slavery](#)**

This short article provides useful context for the West India Regiment project and all of the sources relating to it. Ask students to read the article, and record key points: this could be done in a number of ways, perhaps using a coloured mind map.

### **2. Source: [A General Chart of the West India Islands](#)**

Provide a copy of the outline map below to each student. Project the map and encourage students to identify the following places/islands:

- St Kitts
- Barbados
- Montserrat
- Antigua
- Nevis
- Martinique
- Guadeloupe
- St Domingue (Haiti)
- Jamaica
- Cuba

As the places are identified, students can label their copy of the outline map. Other information could be added such as:

- Dates of settlements
- Location of sugar plantations

Students could then colour code parts of the map to indicate the difference between French and British colonies and also coastlines.



### **3. Source: [Prints depicting enslaved people producing sugar in Antigua, 1823](#)**

Ask students to label what they see in the prints. Draw their attention to the background as well as foreground in the second image, 'cutting the sugar cane'. You could create a word bank to support this activity.

Then ask the students to answer the following questions using the templates below.

- What are the strengths and limitations of the prints as evidence about working conditions on plantations in the West Indies in the 18th century?
- What evidence is there in the second print that suggests the working conditions have been made to seem better than they actually were? (That is, that the print provides an idealised picture)

Strengths as evidence about working conditions on plantations in the West Indies in the 18th century	Limitations as evidence about working conditions on plantations in the West Indies in the 18th century

Evidence that the print provides an idealised picture

**4. Source: *The History, Civil and Commercial of the West Indies, 1798***

Project the transcript of the racial classification document. After reading the document, ask students:

- Write a simplified definition of the words below

Key word	Simplified definition
<i>Sambo</i>	
Mulatto	
<i>Quadroon</i>	
<i>Mestize</i>	

- Why were people in the Caribbean given labels by British officials to indicate their racial background?
- Why were all people given a label (and not just black people)?

**5. Source: [The Maroons in Ambush on the Dromilly Estate](#)**

Provide the group with a definition of guerrilla warfare and have a short question and answer session on the advantages and disadvantages of guerrilla tactics used in warfare. Parallels might usefully be drawn with the use of guerrilla tactics in more modern theatres of war (most obviously, Vietnam).

Project the painting and get students to volunteer what they can see that equates to evidence of guerrilla tactics being used by the Maroons. Complete the exercise by getting students to write two short illustrated manuals on warfare tactics, one from the perspective of the British and one from the perspective of the Maroons. Ideas include:

- Methods for dealing with the tactics deployed by Maroon traitors (British manual)
- Guerrilla tactics to be used by Maroon soldiers to defeat the imperialists (Maroon manual)

**6. Source: [An account of the period of so-called 'apprenticeship', the transition between slavery to freedom](#)**

Project the transcript of the Madden text (NB: it may need editing with some notation and highlighting to bring out salient points). Read through and explain the meaning of the text. Ask students to answer the following questions.

- What was an apprentice?
- Why were apprenticeships introduced?
- What was involved in being an apprentice? How was that different from being an apprentice in Britain today?
- What happened if an apprentice ran away from their duties?
- 'Being an apprentice was the same as being a slave.' How far do you agree with this view? Use the template below to record your ideas.

Being an apprentice <b>was</b> the same as being a slave because...	Being an apprentice <b>was not</b> the same as being a slave because...

## Section 2: Creating the West India Regiments

### 1. Article: [Creating the West India Regiments](#)

After reading the article, students could break it into an illustrated story board using the template below. You could create a word bank and picture bank to support this activity.

<u>1. Black soldiers before 1795</u>	<u>2. The crisis of the 1790s</u>	<u>3. Army commanders demand action</u>	<u>4. The army purchases slaves for the regiments</u>
<u>5. Reducing the Regiments</u>			

Following on from this, ask students to answer the following questions:

### 10 key questions on creating the West India Regiments

1. Why, before 1795, were slave soldiers only given arms (weapons) in emergency situations?
2. What was the role of 'pioneers' in the British Army?
3. Why was there a 'crisis' in the French colony of St Domingue in the 1790s?
4. Which of the following was the biggest influence on the British Army's decision to recruit black troops to replace European soldiers in the West Indies?
  - The emergence of black generals in St Domingue
  - Yellow Fever

Explain your answer.

5. What were 'colonial legislatures'? (Think about the word 'legislature' – it is connected to the word legislate, that is to make laws)
6. Why did many colonial legislatures refuse to hand over slaves to the British Army?
7. For a slave, to what extent was being a soldier in the British Army better than working on a sugar plantation?
8. What evidence is there to suggest that the British took the recruitment of slaves into the Army as a serious business?
9. Why was there a reduction in the number of West India Regiments during and after 1802?
10. Why did black soldiers continue to have a presence in the West Indies despite a reduction in the number of West India Regiments?

### **Research task (homework)**

Get students to research the life of Toussaint L'Ouverture and to create a personal profile; they could use the template below as a guide.

#### **Personal Profile of Toussaint L'Ouverture**

- Date of birth
- Place of birth
- Family background
  
- Education
  
- Military career and achievements
  
- Personal qualities

Using the profile, students could then write a short obituary that celebrates the life of Toussaint L'Ouverture.

Students may find the following websites useful:

- [Black History Month](#)
- [The Famous People](#)
- [Black Past](#)

## **2. Source: [Illustrations of West India Regiment soldiers in uniform, 1812](#)**

Ask students to interpret these images of soldiers, for example by:

- Labelling the images (with a focus on parts of the uniform and equipment). Provide a word bank if appropriate.
- Completing the following tables:

**Similarities and differences between the uniforms of soldiers in the British Army and the East India Company Army**

Similarities	Differences

**Similarities and differences between the uniforms of soldiers in the East India Company Army**

Similarities	Differences

Follow this up by asking students to analyse and evaluate the images by answering the following questions:

1. French soldiers wore blue tunics (jackets). With this in mind how can you tell that the soldier in image A was a soldier in a West India Regiment?
2. How can you best explain the differences between image A and image B?
3. The soldiers in image B seem to be portrayed as being fitter and stronger than the soldier in image A. What evidence is there in image B to support this observation?
4. How far does image B prove that Sepoys in the East India Company army were better treated than those in the West India Regiments?
5. Black soldiers in the West India Regiments were provided with exactly the same uniforms as white soldiers serving in the British Army. Does that mean that they were treated in the same way? Explain your answer.

### **3. Source: Records of death rates among British Army troops in the West Indies**

After looking closely at the images, ask students to identify and explain what they perceive these documents to be about (some directed, guided questions may be helpful here). Follow this up by asking students to answer the following questions:

- Why, by the end of the 18th century, was the British army worried about the death rate among **all** troops in the West Indies?
- Why were death rates so high?
- Why was the death rate much lower for black soldiers (in the West India Regiments)?
- How did the British Army use the statistics on death rates to argue for further recruitment to the West India Regiments?
- **'There are lies, damned lies and statistics'**. What do you think this means? Is it possible that the statistics in the tables are 'lies'?

### **4. Source: Orders in Council concerning the abolition slavery in the British Empire, 28 March 1810**

Ask students to read the following extract from the Orders in Council source and answer the questions that follow.

'The officer or commander in chief may take any number of such Negroes, as recruits for West Indian or African regiments, or to form new corps, or as pioneers, according to such instructions as he may from time to time receive. And in case all the Negroes capable of military service shall not be wanted as soldiers...the said officer shall receive into his Majesty's naval service any number of such Negroes that the service may want'

- What were the 'Orders in Council'?
- What were 'corps'?
- What were 'pioneers'?
- What happened to 'Negroes capable of military service' who did not become soldiers?

## Section 3: Racial debates

### 1. Article: [Why did people oppose the creation of the West India Regiments?](#)

After reading the article, introduce the topic of racial debates through a question and answer session. Give students a list of possible reasons (below) for why certain people opposed the formation of the West India Regiments. The list contains some invalid (false) reasons which students need to eliminate.

REASON	VALID OR INVALID? (TRUE OR FALSE?)	EXPLANATION OF DECISION BASED ON EVIDENCE
Planters did not like the idea of black people wearing military uniforms; they thought it was disrespectful		
Planters feared slaves would be encouraged to rebel		
Planters thought black soldiers would mutiny and take over the plantations		
Local officials in the Caribbean thought black people would be too lazy and unfit to fight as soldiers		
Local officials in the Caribbean and planters thought black people would be too undisciplined and stupid to be trusted with weapons		
White people in the Caribbean were jealous of black people becoming soldiers		
White people in general thought the formation of the West India Regiments would lead to black people taking control of the British Army		

Planters disliked the idea of black soldiers being under the control of the British Army		
White people in the Caribbean thought black soldiers were like children and would see keeping law and order as a game		
White people held unscientific views about the character of black people		

**2. Source: [Letter showing the opposition to the raising of the West India Regiments from the Barbados legislature, 1797](#)**

Provide students with an edited version of the transcript of the House of Assembly in Barbados. Ask them to work through the following tasks:

- Make a list of the reasons why officials in Barbados (the House of Assembly) opposed the formation of the West India Regiments
- Compare and contrast these reasons with those (valid/true) reasons listed in the first activity. How are they similar and/or different?
- Letters, like the one written by the House of Assembly, are usually referred to as **primary** sources (as opposed to **secondary** sources) by historians. What is a primary source? What is a secondary source?
- The letter written by the House of Assembly could also be classified as an **official** primary source (as opposed to one that is **non-official**). What is an official primary source?
- 'Official primary sources are more trustworthy than non-official primary sources as evidence about reasons for opposition to the West India Regiments'. How far do you agree with this view?

I agree with this view to an extent because...	I disagree with this view to an extent because...

- 'Primary sources are more useful and helpful than secondary sources as evidence about reasons for opposition to the West India Regiments.' How far do you agree with this view?

I agree with this view to an extent because...	I disagree with this view to an extent because...

### **[3. Source: Minutes recording opposition by the West India Committee to the formation of the West India Regiments, 1795](#)**

Explain what minutes are and who the West India Committee were. Provide students with an edited version of the transcript of the West India Committee Minutes. Ask them to work through the following tasks:

- Imagine that a meeting has been set up in London by British Army officials to talk about why, despite opposition from local officials in the Caribbean, the formation of the West India Regiments should continue. What reasons would be put forward? Write some minutes, as though you were the secretary at this meeting, which record these reasons.
- 'Minutes from meetings on the West India Regiments are first-hand, written accounts and are therefore very reliable as evidence of what people thought and decided about the recruitment of black soldiers.' How far do you agree with this view?

I agree with this view to an extent because...	I disagree with this view to an extent because...

### **[4. Source: The mutiny of the 2nd West India Regiment reported in the Savannah Republican and Evening Ledger, 23 July 1808](#)**

Explain to students the context of this newspaper article, and encourage them to read the article using the transcript. Ask them to work through the following tasks:

- Write a short newspaper article that **supports** the formation of the West India Regiments. Provide a title for the paper and article that clearly shows that it supports the recruitment of black soldiers. Design your article so that it looks like a paper from the time being studied (look at the original copy of the *Savannah Evening Ledger* for some ideas).
- Here are some facts about the Jamaican Mutiny:

- only a tenth of the Regiment mutinied

- most soldiers who mutinied were new recruits from Africa and were probably frightened and 'homesick'

- other members of the Regiment helped put an end to the mutiny

With these facts in mind, how and why did the *Savannah Evening Ledger* exaggerate the incident of the Jamaican Mutiny?

How did the <i>Savannah Evening Ledger</i> exaggerate the incident of the Jamaican Mutiny?	Why did the <i>Savannah Evening Ledger</i> exaggerate the incident of the Jamaican Mutiny?

### 5. Source: [Portrait of Toussaint L'Ouverture on horseback](#)

Studying the portrait of Toussaint L'Ouverture, ask students to record the features that they can observe. Explore the following questions:

- What does the painting tell you about the personality and character of Toussaint L'Ouverture?
- Do you think the artist admired Toussaint L'Ouverture?
- Is there any reason to believe that the artist has exaggerated the appearance of L'Ouverture?
- Compare the painting with the evidence you found about L'Ouverture from the previous homework research based activity in Section 2. Does it support or go against what you found out from your research?

It supports my homework research in the following ways...	It goes against my homework research in the following ways...

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## **Section 4: Life of a soldier**

### **1. Article: [The life of a soldier in the West India Regiments](#)**

Use the short article to introduce the topic of what it was like to be a black soldier in a West India Regiment.

Now, ask students to:

Imagine you are a soldier in a West India Regiment. Write a short diary entry that indicates what a typical day in your life, as a soldier, would have been like. Think about the following:

- Drilling
- Guard duty
- Conditions in communal barracks
- Wages
- Food
- Free time
- Discipline

### **2. Court martial records**

Explain to students the meaning of the term Court Martial and how this applied to the West India Regiments. Ask students the following questions:

- Why were there two different types of Court Martial Courts?
- Why were soldiers Court Martialled for:
  - theft
  - losing or selling equipment
  - disobedience
  - drunkenness
- Soldiers who were Court Martialled were not put into prison. Why not?

### **3. Source: [Report into the state of a colony for liberated slaves and retired West India Regiment soldiers in Sierra Leone, 1827](#)**

After students have read through the transcripts of disbanded case studies, explore this source using role play:

- Split the class into small groups. Assign the role of news reporter and interviewer to one student. The other members of the group are assigned roles as members of the disbanded 4th West India Regiment of 1819.
- The year is now 1827 and the reporter has been given the task of interviewing members of the group for a documentary for British television.
- Encourage students to feedback their experiences and findings from the role playing activity.

**4. Source: [Description of the daily routines of troops in the West Indies from Henderson's travel guide, Jamaica](#)**

Provide the students with the following extract from the travel guide and ask them to answer the questions that follow. An introduction to the guide may be needed with an explanation of why it was produced. You could create a word bank (including word definitions) to support this activity.

'The black troops insist that it is necessary that their women should be treated with respect, even deference, by their white brothers in arms. This, the white Tommy has not yet learned to do. Possibly the lesson is difficult owing to the infinite extent of the acquaintanceship with feminine Jamaica peculiar to the West Indian regiments. Every lady is a friend of some soldier's friend, if she is not his sister, aunt, wife, or mother. So trouble sometimes springs from this source. Then it is out belts and razors until the officers intervene. Shots have been fired, but this is unusual. And the result of the court-martial offers no encouragement to would-be marksmen.'

- What does this source tell you about the attitudes of:
  - white soldiers towards black women at the start of the 20th century?
  - black soldiers towards white soldiers at the start of the 20th century?
- Why did black soldiers insist that that 'their women should be treated with respect, even deference'? What does the use of the word 'their' tell you about the attitudes of black soldiers towards black women?
- How similar and/or different might these attitudes have been when the first West India Regiments were formed a hundred years earlier?
- 'The travel guide was written during the early 20th century and is therefore is not very useful as evidence about the attitudes of black soldiers towards black women and fellow white soldiers.' How far do you agree?

I agree because...	I do not fully agree because...

## Section 5: Dominica mutiny

### 1. Article: [Mutiny! The story of the 8th West India Regiment](#)

Ask students to read the article, and record key points: this could be done in a number of ways, perhaps using a coloured mind map.

### 2. Source: [Records from the Court of Inquiry investigation into the mutiny of the 8th West India Regiment, 1802](#)

Using their mind map and the Court of Inquiry transcript, ask students to work on the following tasks:

- List the reasons for the Dominica Mutiny. Go over your list and number the reasons in order of importance. Explain your judgements.  
The Court of Inquiry suggested that there were two main reasons for the mutiny: soldiers being overworked and the fear of soldiers that they were returning to a state of slavery. What do you find to be the most convincing reason of the two? Explain your answer.

### 3. Source: [Two letters about the mutiny of the 8th West India Regiment, 1802](#)

Provide students with transcripts of the two letters by Johnstone, Governor of Dominica. You could create a word bank to support the activity that follows. Ask students to:

- Compare and contrast the two letters, stressing that they were written by the same person and that they are primary sources. Also emphasise the need for students to reflect on the **tone** of the letters.

Similarities	Differences

- Explain the differences (with reference to provenance – what? who? where? **when?**); explain to students what provenance means and how it can help historians make judgements about the validity and reliability of sources.

#### **4. Source: Book expressing concerns about the loyalty of black soldiers in the West India Regiments**

Provide a 'translated' version of M'Callum's letter (annotated and with key words/terms underlined) and ask students how and why it can be considered to be portraying a negative and racist image of black soldiers.

Follow this up by getting students to write a letter in response to M'Callum explaining why they think his views are unjustified.

#### **5. Source: Plan of the Island of Dominica, 1776**

With your group, survey the map of Dominica. Ask students to identify the following:

- Rivers
- Mountains
- Parish and estate boundaries
- Prince Rupert's Head (and surrounding features)

Follow this up by getting students, in pairs, to:

- Describe what it must have been like to live and work on the island as a soldier in the 8th West India Regiment
- Discuss why Prince Rupert's Head was easy to defend (leave projection of this part of the map on the screen)
- Discuss the challenges of living and working in Prince Rupert's Head as a soldier in the 8th West India Regiment. What made it especially difficult in that part of the island compared with the rest?

#### **6. Source: Plan of Prince Rupert's Bay in the island of Dominica**

Ask students to study this diagram of Price Rupert's Head barracks and use it as evidence to explain why the Dominica Mutiny was a failure.

## **Section 6: Internal policing (defending British rule)**

This topic could be explored by using a Silent Discussion activity, which stretches students to read sources closely and to interrogate them by asking pointed questions. The whole activity should have the central focal point of how effectively West India Regiments were used for the purposes of internal policing.

1. Using the short article, [Defending British rule](#), and the label notes for each source introduce the topic of internal policing. You could highlight key facts and pose key questions. Give indication of how individual sources can be interrogated by using the 5 'Ws': What? When? Where? Who? and Why?. Give indication to students of how these types of questions can be developed.
2. Divide students into small groups and create 'workstations'. Provide each workstation with one of the 5 sources/transcripts and paper.
3. Then provide the students with the following instructions:
  - They are to work **in silence** to complete the following tasks. Silence can only be broken when groups move from one work station to another!
  - For the allocated source students should interrogate it and record questions on the A3 plain sheet in mind map form. Give them 2 minutes to do this. Aim for different questions.
  - After 2 minutes, give the groups another 2 minutes to answer, in brief, the questions they have posed by writing on separate but linked branches on the sheet.
  - After this, the groups can be rotated and the process repeated so that each work station builds a set of questions with answers for each of the sources in question.
  - Once a full rotation of interrogations has been completed, students can review all of the sheets. The teacher could question the whole group about their interrogations and help them modify and/or complete any questions and answers.

### **Homework task**

Follow up this activity by asking students to answer the following questions:

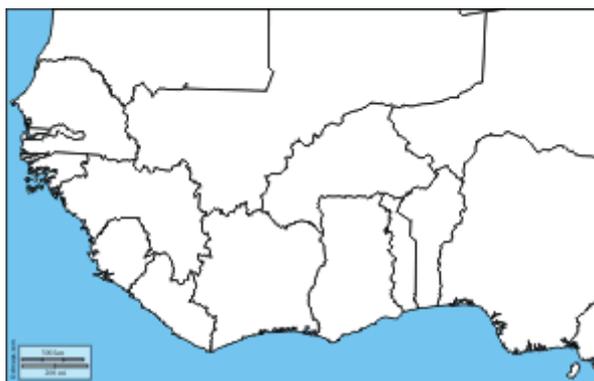
- What problems did the British face in trying to protect their authority in the Caribbean?
- How successful were the British in dealing with these problems?

## **Section 7: Ashanti War**

### **1. Article: [The West India Regiments in the Anglo-Ashanti War, 1873-74](#)**

Using the short article, introduce students to the topic of the role of the West India Regiments in West Africa. You may need to explain some of the article's more challenging ideas.

Following this, students could then use the article to produce a timeline on 'The Role West India Regiments in West Africa from 1812 to 1874'. This could be done alongside labelling and cross-referencing to an outline map of West Africa, like the one below.



### **2. All the sources featured in the article**

Building on the introductory activity, students should then be given a project brief that directs them to use these sources and their own knowledge to produce a mini-lesson plan (in pairs) about the Ashanti War. They should be told that the plan might be chosen to form the basis for a future lesson (that they will teach to the rest of the group!). The brief should include the following information and instructions:

- Provide a title
- List what the lesson is going to be about and make it clear what knowledge, understanding and skill the rest of the group should gain from the lesson
- The lesson should be structured around the origins, course and consequences of the war
- The plan should make reference to sources that can be used as evidence to support the main points in the lesson
- The plan should also indicate key questions that the rest of the group might be asked and activities that the group can engage in
- A main focus of the mini-lesson should be the role of the West India Regiments in West Africa

Teachers could play around with this idea of an 'active presentation' and instruct, for example, students to present their ideas based on their plans in the form of a short video or podcast.

## **Section 8: Changing image of the West India Regiments**

### **1. Article: [The changing image of the West India Regiments](#)**

Use the short introductory article to explore how the image of the West India Regiments changed over time from the early 19th century to the present (but especially from 1858 onwards). You could get students (in pairs) to create living graphs that plot these changes. The students should:

- Select what they think are the most important changes (maybe against the criteria of 'negative' and 'positive' role and image)
- Plot the changes on to a living graph template (see below-horizontal axis =change over time), stating not just what the change was but also why it occurred:

Positive value (change in image)



Negative value (change in image)

- Developments can be categorised and plotted high or low according to relevance (for example, public appeal and recognition, officer-soldier divisions, commercialisation of military figures/development-cigarette cards and toy soldiers)

### **2. Source: [Cigarette Cards depicting soldiers of the West India Regiments](#)**

Divide the class into small groups and provide each group with a laminated set of the cigarette cards. Ask the groups to sort the cards under as many different headings as they can come up with (they are likely to hit, primarily, on appearance, place and time). Ask them to record their findings before answering the following questions:

- Why were cigarette cards produced?
- Why did people collect cigarette cards?
- Why were West India Regiments considered to be worth commemorating on cigarette cards?
- What do the cigarette cards on West India Regiments tell us about when and where the regiments were in operation?
- What do the cigarette cards tell us about how the appearance of regiments changed over time and from place to place?

### 3. Source: Racist caricature in a children's alphabet book: 'Z is for Zouave'

Like other aspects of British imperial achievements, the West India Regiments were also commemorated in children's books.

After looking at the image titled 'Z is Zouave' and reading the accompanying label text, explain to students the provenance of the source and explain the meaning of Zouave. Ask the pupils to express their initial reaction to the image. Follow this up by asking pupils, in pairs, to answer the following questions:

- What class of soldier is depicted in the image? (How do you know?)
- **How** is the soldier depicted? (How are they made to appear?)
- Explain why some might view the image as being of a racist nature
- Why do you think it was considered suitable to include this image in a children's history book? (Think about when the book was published)
- 'The image was produced in a children's book and has, therefore, very little value as a source on the history of the West India Regiments.' How far do you agree?