



Surprises of Rastafari in Somerset

In-conversation with Professor Shawn Sobers

Context

As part of the **GLADE Centre** commitment to supporting teachers and schools better engage with themes and concepts surrounding multi faith dialogue, we invited Prof Shawn Sobers to a school-community session where he gave an engaging talk and started new conversations around **Rastafari and Somerset.**

In-conversation, he offered insights into a highly misunderstood culture, that has surprisingly strong links with Somerset and the South West.

This presentation is owned by Prof. Sobers and is a snapshot of his session. We include it here with his permission.



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November
2024

The surprises of Rastafari, the South West, and the opportunities in education

- What is the connection between Somerset and Ethiopia?
- Why do members of Rastafari view an Ethiopia Emperor as God?
- What do Rastafari believe, and why is it important to be taught in schools, across the curriculum, for all ages?

In this engaging talk, Professor Shawn Sobers from the University of the West of England, will discuss the core history, beliefs, and culture of Rastafari, using his own research and life experiences.

As a photographer, filmmaker and anthropologist, Professor Sobers has used his own creative practices as a way to explore this dynamic culture, and will share these examples, and offer insights to how the topic can be used in schools for all ages, in subject areas as broad as history, religious studies, geography, creative arts, sociology, citizenship, languages, and even the sciences.



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Why Shawn ?

<http://www.shawnsobers.com/about-2/>

<https://people.uwe.ac.uk/Person/ShawnSobers>



Image courtesy of
Shawn-Naphtali
Sobers

Sample feedback from attendees of the session:-

Quality of delivery = 100% rated as excellent

Content = 100% rated as excellent

Techniques/ resources used = 100% rated as excellent or good

Usefulness to my practice = 100% rated as excellent or good

What did you find most useful & why;

personal stories

very good delivery

information to inform teaching

history and culture

conversations

presentation

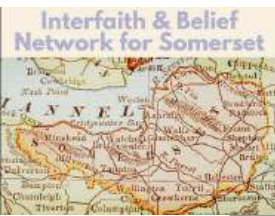
discussion

Something to do resulting from the session;

develop my own lessons

tell others about it

read up



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Baseline choice 1; before you start...

What do you already know about
Rastafari

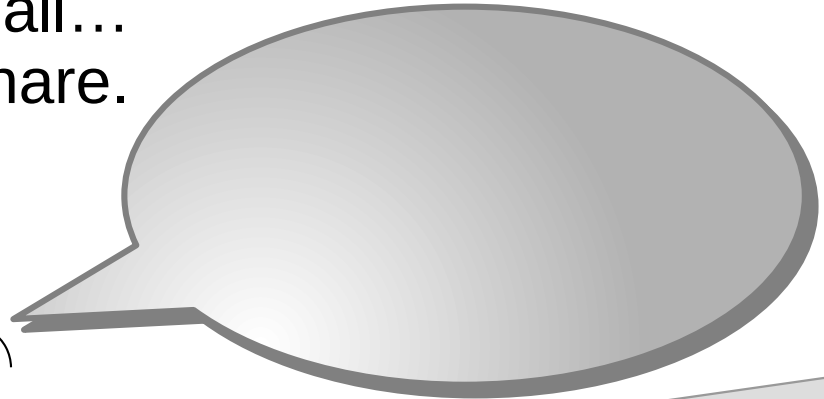
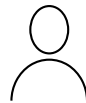
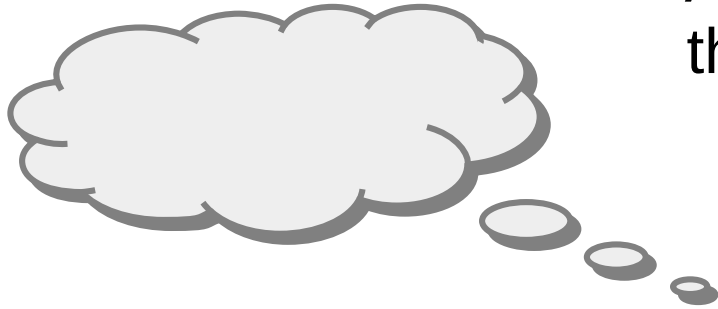
Rastafari connections to countries worldwide

Rastafari in the south west

some history

Anything at all...

think-pair-share.



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Baseline choice 2; before you start...

Where do you stand on this line in relation to:-
know about Rastafari,
know of connections worldwide or to the south west,
have heard about some history,
Choose where you'd stand then...think-pair-share.
Do you need to move again?



**Not
confident**

**Very
confident**



Emperor Haile Selassie I and Somerset



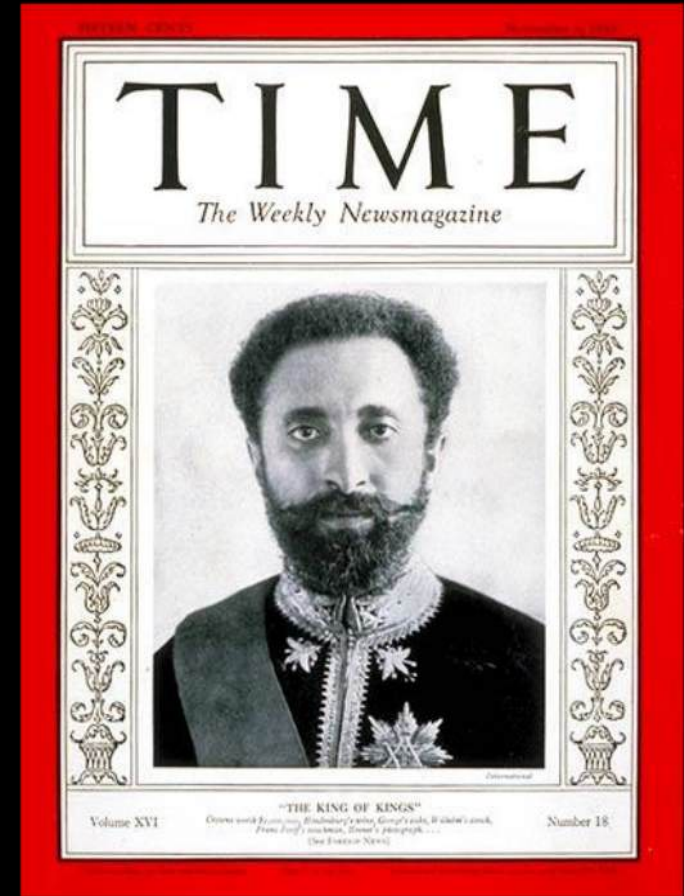
Professor Shawn Sobers
University of the West of England / Fairfield House



First, who was
Emperor
Haile Selassie 1st?



Cover of *Time* magazine
3 November 1930

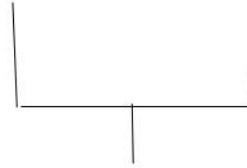




Lij Tafari Makonnen
Born 1892
Hararghe, Ethiopia

King Solomon

Queen Makeda (Queen of Sheba)



Menelik I - Emperor of Ethiopia, 950 BC

(with Ark of the Covenant)

225th descendent



Kebra Nagast
(Glory of the Kings)



Lij Tafari Makonnen
Born 1892
Hararghe, Ethiopia

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

King Solomon

Queen Makeda (Queen of Sheba)



Menelik I - Emperor of Ethiopia, 950 BC

(with Ark of the Covenant)

225th descendent

Empress Menen Asfaw
Empress of Ethiopia,
1930 - 1962



Ras Tafari Makonnen (Haile Selassie I)
Emperor of Ethiopia, 1930 - 1974



Ethiopia

- Beta Israel (House of Israel), Ethiopian Jews
- Ark of the Covenant
- Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (world's 2nd oldest established form of Christianity, after Armenian church).



Marcus Mosiah Garvey
1887 – 1940

*“Look to Africa, when a
black king shall be
crowned, for the day of
deliverance is at hand.”*

1920

*“Africa for the Africans, at
home and abroad.”*

2nd November 1930, Addis Ababa

Coronation of Emperor Haile Selassie I
and Empress Menen Asfaw.

72 world nations sent dignitaries to
attend.

Britain sent Prince Henry, Duke of
Gloucester. (Son of King George V and
Queen Mary)



“Princes shall come out of Egypt;
Ethiopia shall soon stretch out
her hands unto God.”

Psalms 68:31

“And he hath on his vesture and
on his thigh a name written, KING
OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”

Revelation 19:16

Watch...short film, 4m 52s

The coronation of Emperor Haile Selassie I on 2 November 1930

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R_HhhOWEJoY&t=184s

This link navigates to a short film on youtube. Narration in Dutch and subtitled in English.

NB. There is no stated classification, ie. the process of giving age ratings and content advice to films and other audiovisual content to help children and families choose what's right for them and avoid what's not.



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(via Jerusalem)



Watch... film, 45m 22s



Documentary

This documentary explores the life and times of former Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie I and the period he spent living in the city of Bath in England, during the Italian invasion of his country. The film interviews his former staff and new friends he met, with the backdrop of WW2 and the Emperor's fight for his country's freedom. Rarely seen archive material present... [Read all](#)

Director [Shawn Naphtali Sobers](#)

Star [Benjamin Zephaniah](#)

Footsteps of the Emperor, 1999 (Director; Shawn Sobers)

To watch the full film of Footsteps of the Emperor
<https://shawnsobers.com/footsteps-of-the-emperor-film/>

NB. There is no stated classification, ie. the process of giving age ratings and content advice to films and other audiovisual content to help children and families choose what's right for them and avoid what's not.



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Before going forward, need to look back, for context.....



Battle of Adwa, 1896

Oil painting, 1940s
British Museum



Ethiopia,
12th November 1935



Arriving at Bath Spa station, August 1936



Fairfield House, Bath
1936, 1954, 2018

The Emperor purchased it with his own money.



Friends of Fairfield House



Fairfield House

H.I.M EMPEROR HAILE SELASSIE I
H.I.M EMPRESS MENEN ASFAW

and

children, grandchildren, advisors and
Ethiopian Orthodox Priests,
lived here at Fairfield House
from 1936 to 1943.

Fairfield was gifted to the city
in 1958.

UWE AHRC BANES

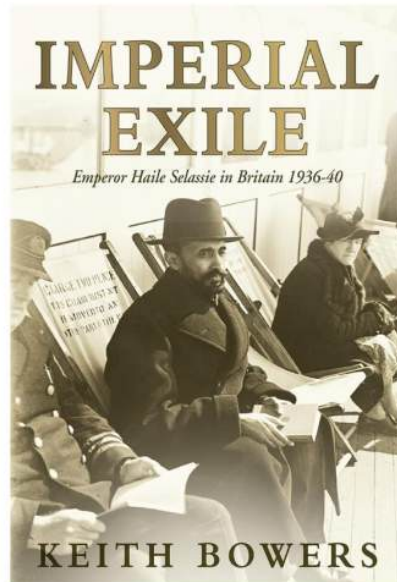
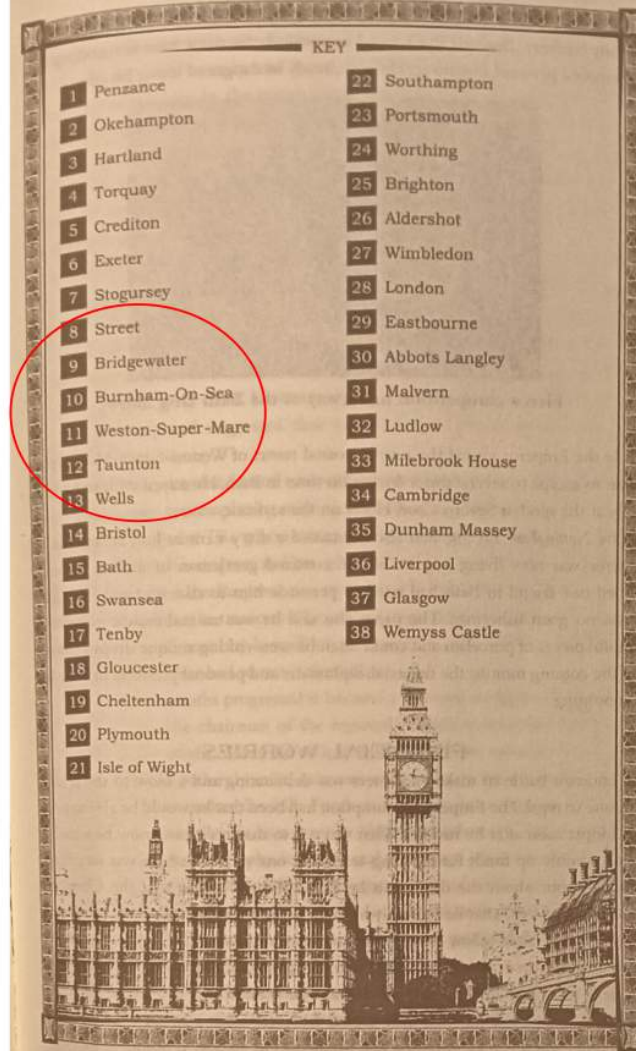
WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL

HAILE
SELASSIE

1892 - 1975

Emperor of Ethiopia
enjoyed visiting The Pool
whilst in exile in Bath
1936 - 1940

WESTON-SUPER-MARE CIVIC SOCIETY



Taunton

'Speech Day 1937 at King's College, Taunton attended by Emperor Haile Selassie whose son and grandson were at the school. The prizes were presented by Lord Sankey, former Lord Chancellor, who can be seen inspecting the Guard of Honour on Front Square. The dignitaries processed into the Chapel where the Bishop of Taunton led the service. Afterwards Haile Selassie planted a tree with the help of the school scouts. The day concluded with a demonstration of diving and swimming in the school pool.'

25th June 1937

Prince Sahle Selassie (youngest son), and Prince Zera Yacob Amha Selassie (14-year-old Duke of Harrar, eldest grandson) both attended King's College, Taunton

Watch... short filmclip, 32s

Haile Selassie At A Speech Day Kings College, Taunton 1937 British Movietone

To watch the filmclip; Haile Selassie walks along with clergy. Opening of new chapel door. Planting tree. Shot of grandson of the Negus. Haile Selassie with other personalities.

This link navigates to an external youtube site

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ooLNH59rBR8>

NB. There is no stated classification to this film, ie. the process of giving age ratings and content advice to films and other audiovisual content to help children and families choose what's right for them and avoid what's not.



www.fairfieldhousebath.co.uk



PLUG & QUESTION!

Fairfield House is available to book for school visits. £££???

- Historical tour of the house
- Museum
- Activities
- Meet members of community
- Good Food!



Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Prof. Shawn Sobers and the contributors of copyright material included within his presentation for permission to reproduce their material, which is credited where used.

Every effort has been made to trace the copyright holders and we apologise in advance for any unintentional omissions. We would be pleased to insert the appropriate acknowledgement in a subsequent edition of this material.

**Items for handling from Ethiopia and Ethiopian diaspora at;
<https://glade.org/resources/global-resource-loans/country-collections/>**

For information on aligned workshops, talks, booklists and for loans of items contact lynn@glade.org



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