Olaudah Equiano

- Olaudah Equiano (c. 1745 – 31 March 1797), known in his lifetime as Gustavus Vassa was a prominent African in London, a freed slave who supported the British movement to end the slave trade.
- Equiano was an African writer whose experiences as a slave prompted him to become involved in the British abolition movement.
- He was born in the Eboe province, in the area that is now southern Nigeria.
- He was kidnapped with his sister at around the age of 11, sold by local slave traders and shipped across the Atlantic to Barbados and then Virginia.
- In Virginia he was sold to a Royal Navy officer, Lieutenant Michael Pascal, who renamed him 'Gustavus Vassa' after the 16th-century Swedish king. Equiano travelled the oceans with Pascal for eight years, during which time he was baptised and learned to read and write.
- Pascal then sold Equiano to a ship captain in London, who took him to Montserrat, where he was sold to the prominent merchant Robert King.
- While working as a deckhand, valet and barber for King, Equiano earned money by trading on the side. In only three years, he made enough money to buy his own freedom. Equiano then spent much of the next 20 years travelling the world, including trips to Turkey and the Arctic.