

Boosting Teacher Subject Knowledge and Confidence

The Empress

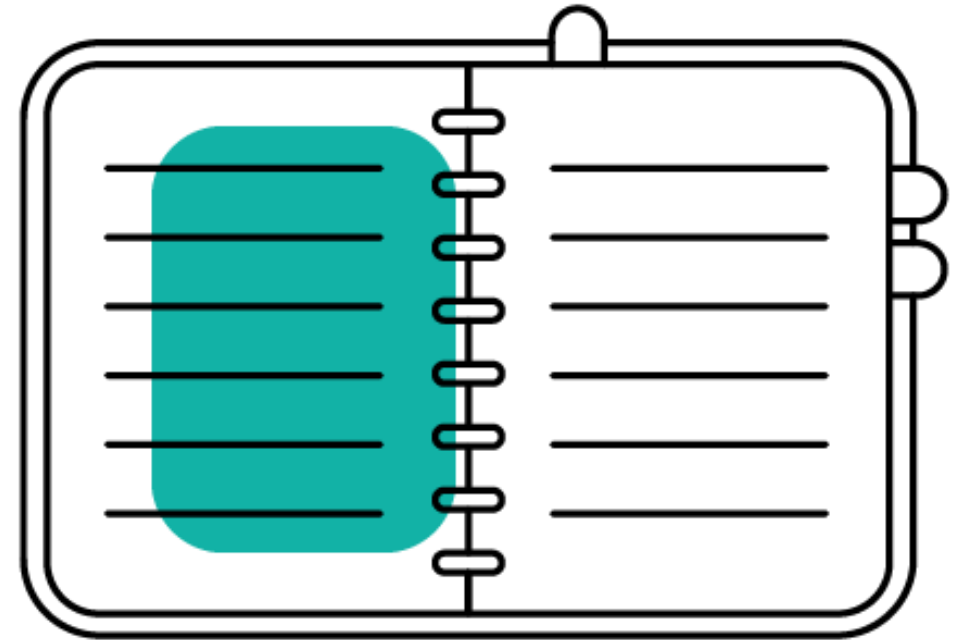
Dr Lesley Nelson-Addy




What we will cover today

In this session we will look at:

- Lit in Colour research findings (2021 & 2024)
- Examination report (2024)
- Concepts: migration, whiteness, resistance and representation
- Questions



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On a scale of 1–5 how
confident are you talking
about race, empire and
migration within
this play?

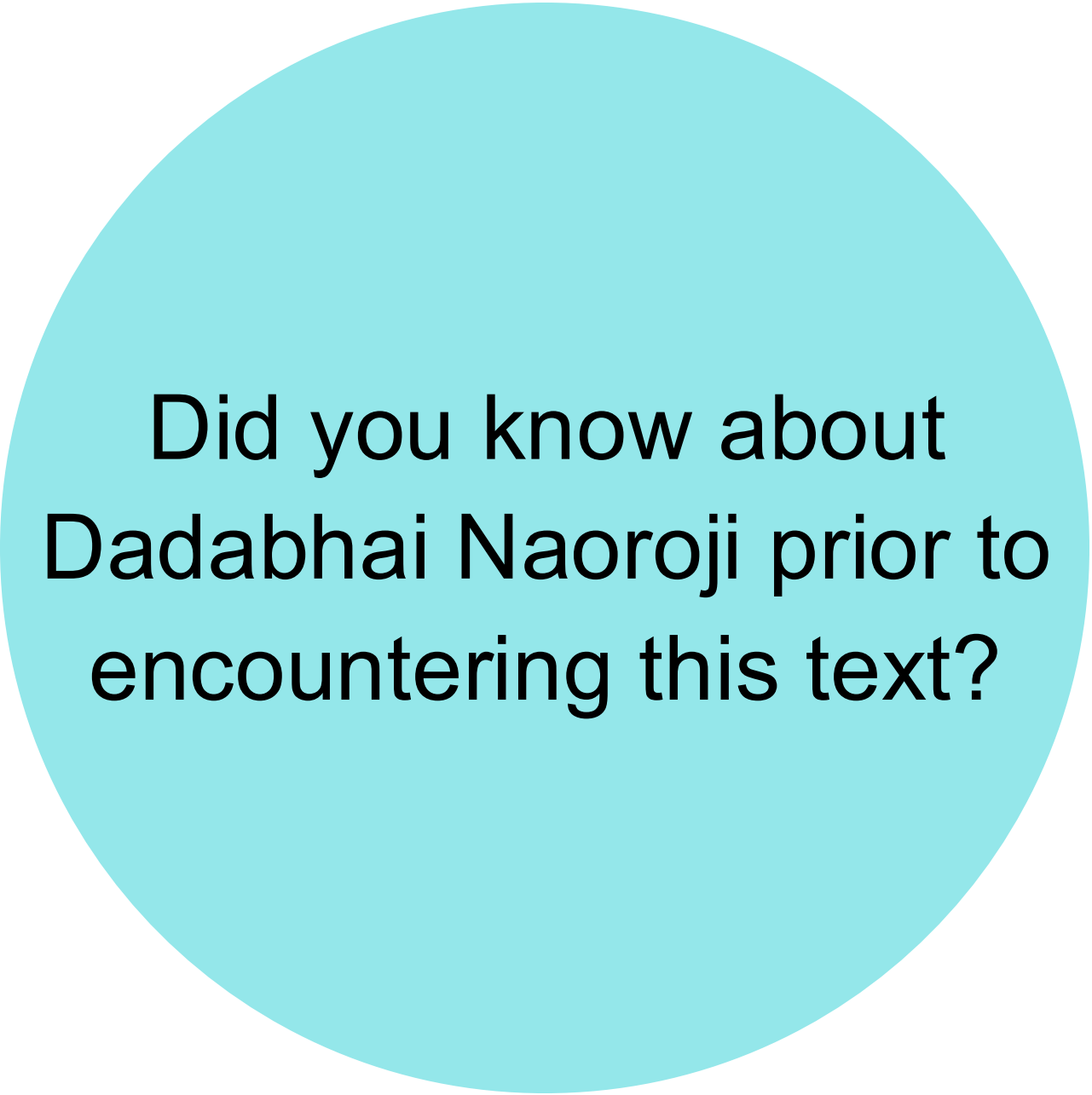
Pearson Edexcel x Lit in Colour

The Empress was studied by 2% of the June 2023 Pearson Edexcel cohort – students achieved across a full range of marks and presented notably ‘insightful’ comments: *‘the absence of Hari and his long physical journey could be representative of the long journey to success and freedom he (and India) had to make to achieve their ambition and success.’*

Through teaching the text, teachers’ racial literacy was being developed – *The Empress* has allowed students to have a conversation around their **own heritage** and has sparked conversation about life in the **modern world**.

‘Teaching needs to plan for explicit engagement with the race aspect of the texts which have been chosen’.

The 2024 exam questions were related to ‘ambition’ and ‘Hari’.

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Did you know about
Dadabhai Naoroji prior to
encountering this text?

Exploring Authorial Intent – **Untold stories**

“Migration and empire are not marginal events: they are central to our national story. As it stands, the story we are telling is incomplete”

Ayahs and Lascars

(Teaching Migration, Belonging and Empire in Secondary Schools, Kimberly McIntosh, Jason Todd and Nandini Das, 2019: 4)

Dadabhai Naoroji, Abdul Karim, and Ghandi

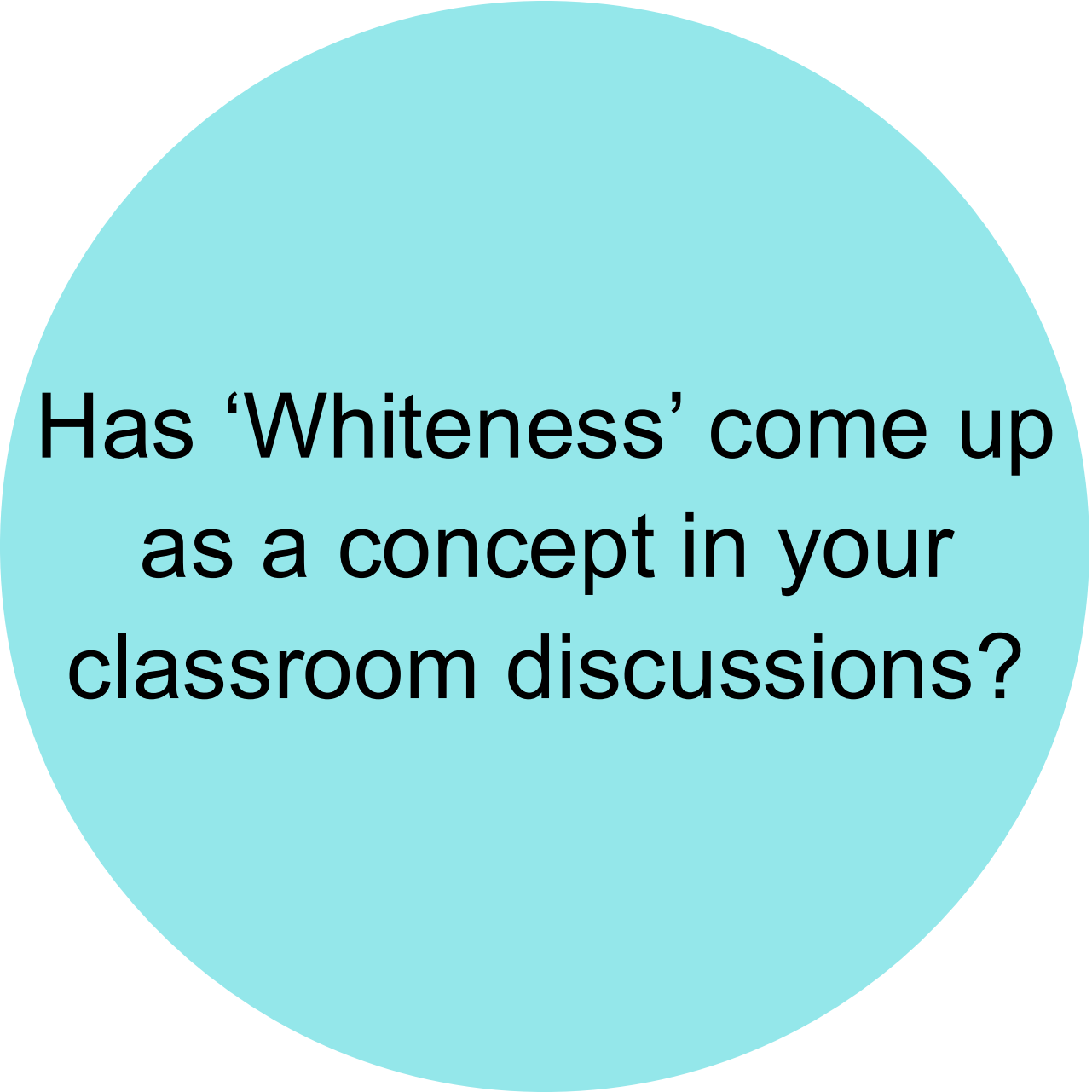
‘Imperialism is not something that can be erased with a few statues being torn down or a few institutions facing up to their dark pasts; it exists as a legacy in my very being and, more widely, explains nothing less than who we are as a nation.’

(Empireland, Sathnam Sanghera, 2021:14)

Who is *THE* Empress? – Questions to explore

Some potential questions you could explore with your students:

- How is Queen Victoria remembered around the world — through places, monuments, and institutions? What does this tell us about British power and legacy?
- Why might Queen Victoria be seen as “The Empress” — and what power does that title hold in the context of this play?
- In what ways does Rani claim power in this story — and why might we see her as the true Empress?
- Who gets to be remembered in history — and how does The Empress rewrite who holds power in the story of empire?

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Has 'Whiteness' come up
as a concept in your
classroom discussions?

Controlling the narrative – **Whiteness and power**

Erasure

Lady Sarah and 'Bertie'

'Lady Sarah Mr Karim. I have instructions from His Majesty the King. He wishes you to gather all correspondence from Her Majesty to you and you are to remain under escort until such time that we have ascertained that all letters have been collected. Under supervision by the Master of the House and witnessed by myself, the letters will be burned' (p.112).

Sexual violence and oppression

Lord Oakham

'He then pushes her gently down on the couch.

Rani *struggles and tries to push Lord Oakham off her, but he is persistent.*

Rani No. I am not...no... Please, stop.

Lord Oakham Or I could make your life here very uncomfortable.

Rani *recognises the threat in Lord Oakham's voice and reluctantly relents. They have sex'* (p.56).

Complicating the narrative

Class influences the hierarchy of power

Lascar Sally and Georgina

Rani What about the one before that?

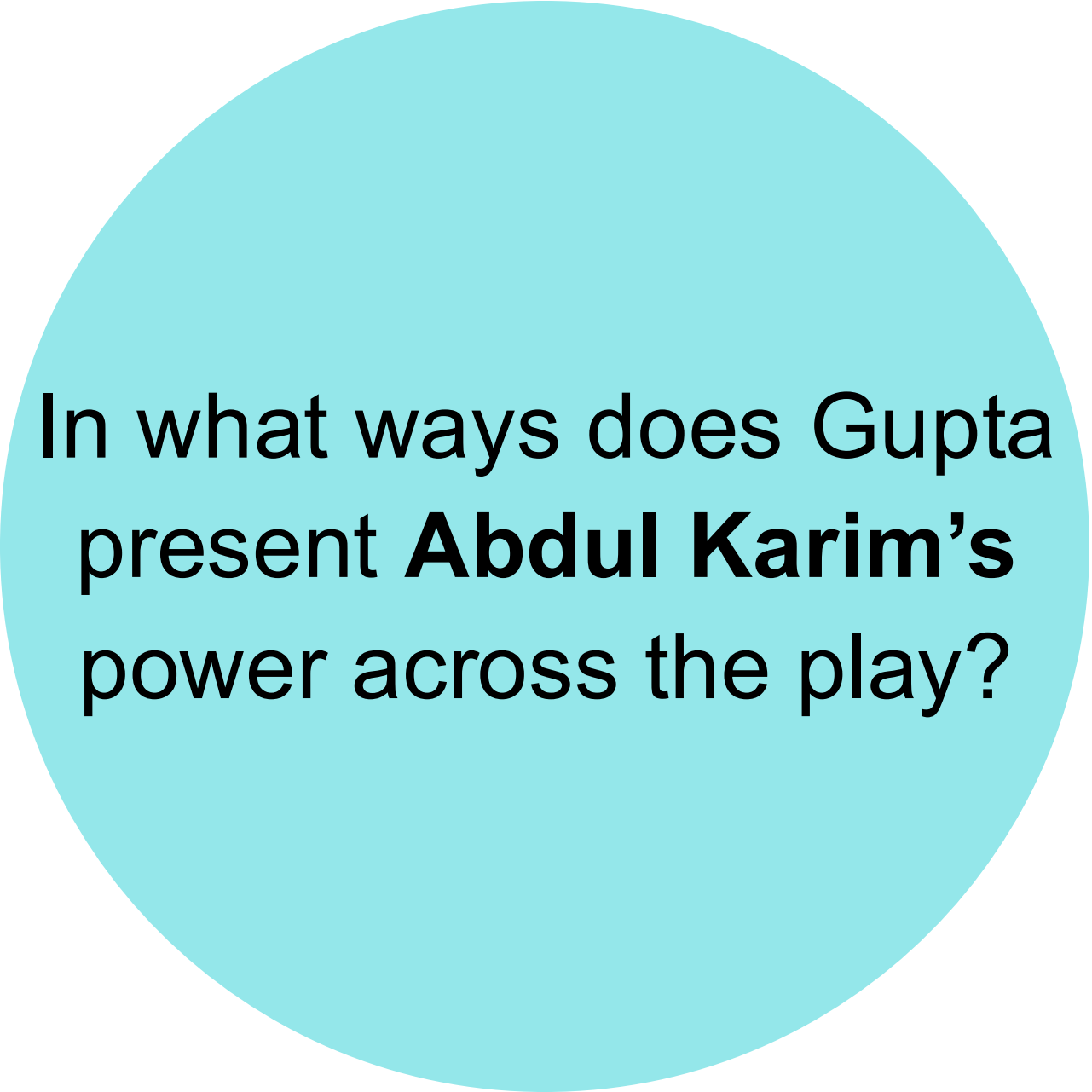
Georgina You're not suggesting...?

Rani *looks at Georgina fiercely. Georgina looks horrified as the penny drops* (p. 67).

South Asian characters conveying power

Dadabhai Naoroji

Dadabhai But I will be using my position to raise the level of debate in the Commons about the neglect of our mother country. You will all need to help me. It is time to prove Salisbury and his party that Indians are not inferior, that we have intellect and a democratic sentiment. Our hope is in self governance (p. 95).



In what ways does Gupta
present **Abdul Karim's**
power across the play?

Allyship, exoticisation, and empowerment


Lascar Sally

‘Poor love’s trembling like a leaf. Don’t be frightened child. No harm will come to you here. Come, we’ll get some nice warm broth inside you’ (p. 32).

‘I loved my Ganesh. Such a man! Did you see those muscles of his?’ (p. 71).

Firoza

‘My mother, my brothers, my husband. I was married at fourteen, a mother at fifteen, lost my baby to malaria when I was sixteen and my husband and family abused and blamed me. So I ran away from them all. A life of adventure beckoned me I looked after English families’ children on the voyage over here from our country and then I would go back again. If I counted up how many children I looked after, I would say it was about... two hundred’ (p. 78).

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What other strategies of
empowerment does Gupta
illustrate across the play?

Learning, Language and Love

Rani

Intertextuality – Coleridge *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

Profession – administration into teaching, without much hope for love because of shame.

Hari

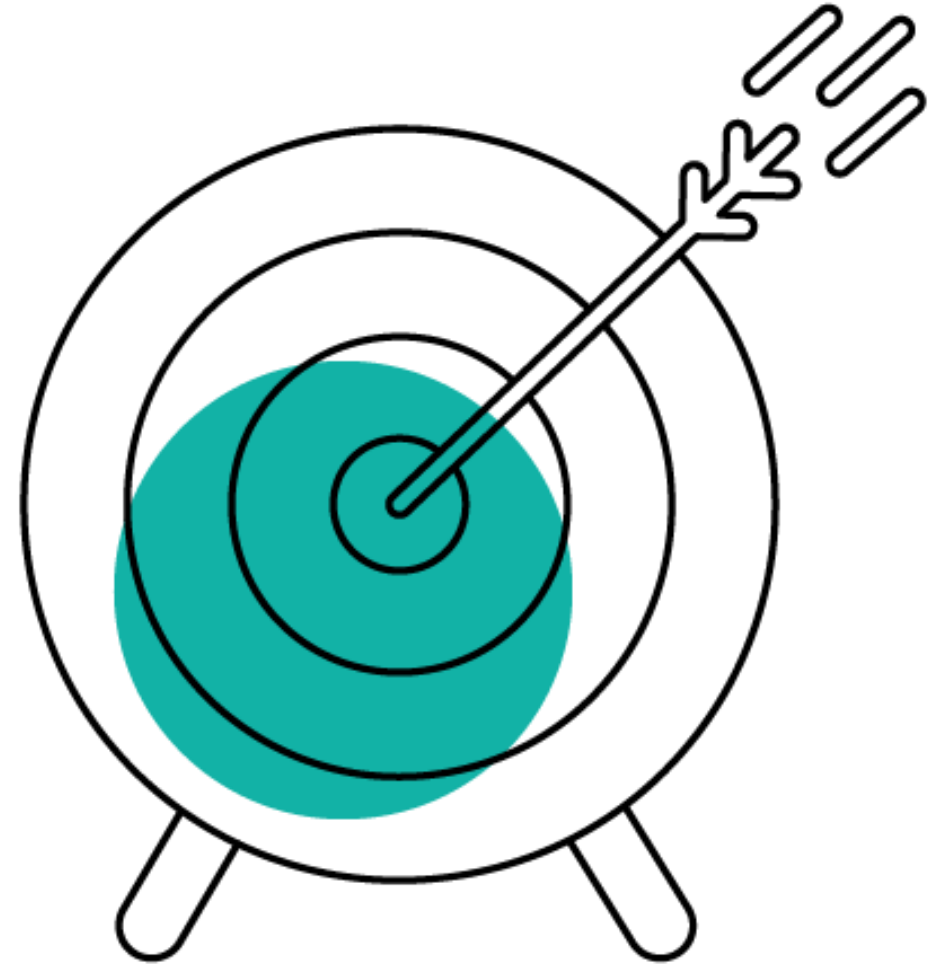
Resistance – Songs to political entreaties

Profession – not just of career, but of his love through letters.

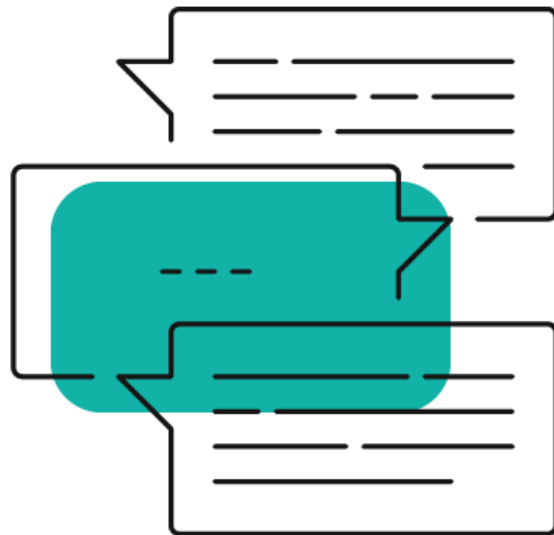
Accent

Discussing race, empire and migration in *The Empress*

1. How Gupta explores **migration**
2. How Gupta exposes the power and influence of **Whiteness**
3. How Gupta offers a layered presentation of **allyship** and **empowerment**



Questions



Pearson Edexcel – We want to hear from you

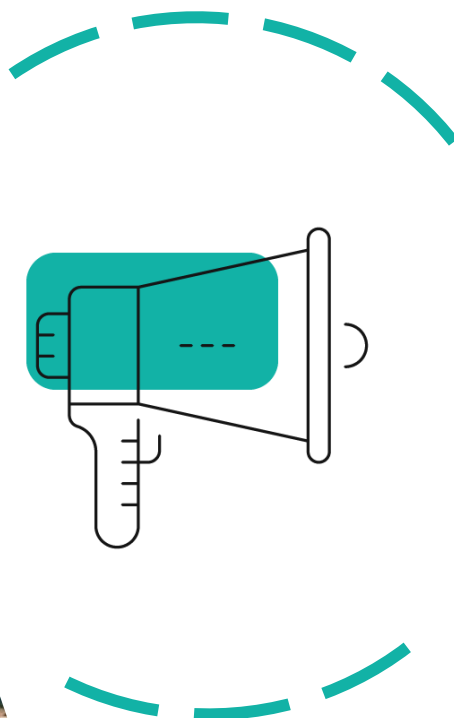
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Your Feedback Matters

Following this event, you will receive an invitation to share your thoughts about the session. Your feedback is invaluable to us, as it helps us tailor our professional development materials to better meet your needs. Please don't hesitate to let us know what you'd like to see more of and what areas you think could be improved.



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