

# The Manchester Lit and Phil



Discussion for lively minds since 1781

---

e-programme edition 2  
30th March 2020

## Welcome to the second edition of the Manchester Lit & Phil e-programme!

We hope you enjoyed the first edition of our programme on 'Plagues and Pandemics'. This second edition will move us onto greener pastures: as Spring begins in earnest we will be looking at 'Plants that changed the world'.

From cotton to corn or tobacco, the cultivation of some plants significantly changed the course of human history. Plants are everywhere in human society: they are the food that we eat, in the canvasses we paint on, they structure landscapes and they might one day fuel vehicles. It's a fascinating and big topic to explore and we hope you enjoy our (small) selection of activities.

For anyone who wants to be part of a free-flowing discussion on this topic, we will meet again on the Forum to discuss this week's theme on Friday 3rd April from 10.30 a.m. to 12.30 a.m. But the forum is accessible outside of these hours too, and we really do encourage as many of you as possible to contribute.

All the activities we will list here are free and we do not own any of the materials.

Front cover image: credit Ren Ran

## Watch



Anna Arabindan-Kesson

**VISION AND VALUE: COTTON AND THE MATERIALITY OF RACE**

<https://courtauld.ac.uk/event/vision-and-value-cotton-and-the-materiality-of-race>

In this talk recorded in 2020, Anna Arabindan-Kesson, Assistant researcher at Princeton University, 'examines the visual relationship between the cotton trade and the representation of the black body in American culture, using historical case studies and contemporary art.

*Juxtaposing contemporary interventions with historical moments, it examines how cotton materially influenced the way black bodies were seen, and how black Americans saw themselves, as both enslaved and free Americans. It argues that tracing this relationship deepens our understanding of the intersections of vision, value and subjectivity in the production of racial identity in nineteenth-century America, and also today.'*  
Scroll down for the talk, the video is at the bottom of the page.

## Listen



Bizet

**CARMEN**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dFW7e4jccos>

In the 18th century, Spain built the Royal Tobacco factory in Seville, it was at the time the second largest building in Spain, second only to the royal residence El Escorial, showing the importance that the tobacco industry had taken.

It is in this building that Carmen and other women work as 'cigarrera' and Act I starts at its doors.

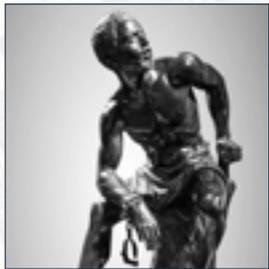
## Listen



Bridget Kendall, Cameron McNeil, Maricel Presilla and Juan Carlos Motamayor  
**THE BITTERSWEET TALE OF COCOA**  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p052sq27>

As per the BBC website: *'in South and Central America people have been enjoying the fruit of the cacao tree - the source of cocoa, chocolate and much else - for thousands of years. Ancient empires fought battles for the control of the best trees, cacao beans were used as currency, and being able to make a tasty cacao drink could even save your life. To trace the history of cacao in Latin America, Bridget Kendall is joined by archaeologist Cameron McNeil, chef and food historian Maricel Presilla and geneticist and cacao researcher Juan Carlos Motamayor.'*

## Read



Ta-Nehisi Coates  
**THE CASE FOR REPARATIONS**  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>

The World Economy was born out of the Slave Trade. Enslaved people were forced to work mostly as 'field-workers' with more than half of the enslaved African captives in the Americas working on sugar plantations.

Ta-Nehisi Coates is an American author and journalist. In this article written in 2014 for the Atlantic, he makes a case for reparations to be paid to the descendants of enslaved people in America and examines the discrimination against Black Americans. Coates testified at a House hearing on H.R. 40 in 2019. H.R. 40 is a bill that would establish a commission to study reparations. You can find more details about this bill here: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/40>

## Learn



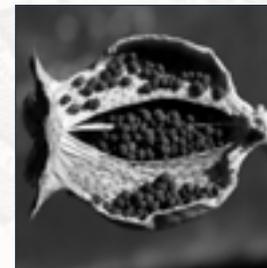
futurelearn.com  
**ROBERT OWEN AND NEW LANARK**  
<https://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/history/history-art/robert-owen-and-new-lanark/content-section-0?intro=1>

Whilst the industrial revolution had positive effects on the economy of Great Britain, socially it created many more issues and new laws needed to be passed in order to protect workers' rights.

In this course you will learn more about Robert Owen. In the early 1800s, Owen, a Welsh textile manufacturer, became wealthy as an investor and eventual manager of a large textile mill at New Lanark, Scotland. He is known for efforts to improve factory working conditions for his workers and promote experimental socialistic communities.

The course is open now and requires around 12 hours of study.

## Listen



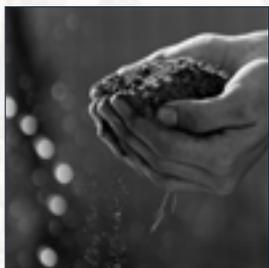
Melvyn Bragg and guests  
**THE OPIUM WARS**  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00776k9>

As per the BBC website: *'Melvyn Bragg discusses the Opium Wars, a series of conflicts in the 19th Century which had a profound effect on British Chinese relations for generations.'*

*The Chinese had banned opium in its various forms several times, citing concern for public morals, but private British traders continued to smuggle large quantities of opium into China from India.*

*With Yangwen Zheng, Lecturer in Modern Chinese History at the University of Manchester; Lars Laamann, Research Fellow in Chinese History at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London and Xun Zhou, Research Fellow in History at SOAS, University of London.'*

## Learn



futurelearn.com

FARM TO FORK: SUSTAINABLE FOOD PRODUCTION IN A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/sustainable-agriculture-in-a-changing-environment>

It is not the plants themselves that change our world but how we produce them too. In the current climate crisis we have to rethink how food is produced.

This free course *explores food and agriculture in the modern world. You will learn about the complexity of the global food supply chain, the vulnerability of the food industry to emerging threats and the solutions to stopping these threats. You will also consider the issues surrounding production of food of animal origin.*

You can enroll from today on. The course lasts 4 weeks.

## Read



Achan, J., Talisuna, A.O., Erhart, A. et al.

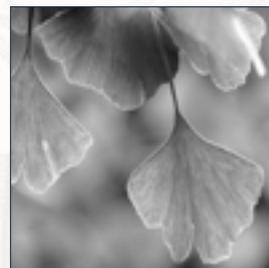
QUININE, AN OLD ANTI-MALARIAL DRUG IN A MODERN WORLD:

ITS ROLE IN THE TREATMENT OF MALARIA

<https://malariajournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1475-2875-10-144>

As historian Connor D. Clifford put it “it was quinine’s efficacy that gave colonists fresh opportunities to swarm into the Gold Coast, Nigeria and other parts of west Africa”. Before the introduction of quinine, Africa was known as the ‘white man’s grave’. In this article published in 2011 you will learn more about the historical role of quinine, consider its current usage and possible future use in the treatment of malaria.

## Do



zooniverse

FOSSIL ATMOSPHERES

<https://www.zooniverse.org/projects/laurasoul/fossil-atmospheres>

Plants change the world and the world changes the plants. This project from the Smithsonian Institution hopes to track changes in the Earth’s atmosphere by looking at the stomatal index of Ginkgo leaves. You can support this project by helping with the counting.

## Watch



Hortensia Jiménez Díaz

HOW MENDEL’S PEA PLANTS HELPED US UNDERSTAND GENETICS

<https://youtu.be/Mehz7tCxjSE>

Gregor Mendel is considered to be the founder of the modern science of genetics. His pea plant experiments conducted between 1856 and 1863 established many of the rules of heredity, now referred to as the laws of Mendelian inheritance. In her TED-talk Jiménez Díaz explains how peas played their part in Mendel’s groundbreaking observations.

Page 2: Bust picture, credit Meelimello, Flamenco, credit Werner Gmünder. Page 3: Cocoa, credit Taken, The Freedman, credit Joseph Harrison. Page 4: Mill, credit Sue 330, Opium poppy, credit Andy Faeth. Page 5: Hands with soil, credit Gabriel Jimenez, 19th-century illustration of Cinchona calisaya by Franz Eugen Köhler, United States public domain. Page 6: Ginkgo leaves, credit Marzena P., Peas, credit Mal-sawm Tunglut. Page 7: butterfly on leaf, credit Dusan Smetana.

# Take a walk



Staying at home doesn't have to mean forgoing exploring the world outside. You can take a virtual walk and explore two of the UK's botanic gardens here:

Oxford Botanic Garden

<http://www.chem.ox.ac.uk/oxfordtour/botanic-gardens/default.html>

Birmingham Botanic Garden

<https://www.birminghambotanicgardens.org.uk/venue/virtual-tour/>

## FORUM

If you would like to share your thoughts, interrogations or other activities on this week's theme in a live discussion with other members, we will meet online on Friday 3rd April from 10.30 a.m. to 12.30 a.m.

Please note: the forum is open and accessible outside of these hours too, and we really do encourage as many of you as possible to contribute!

To join the forum head to:

<https://the-manchester-lit-phil.mn.co/>

If there are any questions you would like to put forward for the forum session on Friday, please email them to [admin@manlitphil.ac.uk](mailto:admin@manlitphil.ac.uk)

[www.manlitphil.ac.uk](http://www.manlitphil.ac.uk) | [@manlitphil](https://twitter.com/manlitphil) | [admin@manlitphil.ac.uk](mailto:admin@manlitphil.ac.uk)