

Dixie Brown

■ Biography

Date of birth: 27th June 1900

Place of birth: Castries, St Lucia

Date of arrival in Bristol: 1923

Dixie Brown was born in St Lucia in the Caribbean. Dixie was his boxing name, but when he was born he was called Anthony Charles. When he lived there, Black people were not allowed to vote.

Before coming to England Dixie helped to build the famous Panama Canal, which separates North and South America. Many other Caribbean islanders also travelled to Panama to work on building the canal.



Dixie Brown

Photo courtesy of Kathleen Lemain Mary Charles

Dixie arrived in Cardiff in 1919 and travelled around the fairgrounds in the West Country making a living as a bare-knuckle boxer. This sort of fighting is now illegal as it is considered too dangerous.

He met his wife Lily Sellick, who was Welsh and helped run a boarding house in Cardiff. He married her in 1922 and they moved to Bristol in 1923 and set up home in St. Jude's and St. Paul's. They had 9 children and thirty grandchildren altogether, and they were mixed race or multiple heritage.



Dixie at Lourdes circa 1938

Photo courtesy of Kathleen Lemain Mary Charles

In Bristol, Dixie Brown became a registered boxer using gloves. He is listed on the British pre-war boxing list as having fought 85 bouts in the 1920s to 1930s. It is thought that he could not take part in the better fights because of a colour bar.

Some time during the 1930s, he was tragically blinded in a fight. Dixie was a Roman Catholic and a popular character in Bristol so a collection was made for him to visit Lourdes. This is a Catholic shrine in France which some people believe can provide miracle cures. (Dixie is pictured next to the priest.)

Dixie's family moved from Philadelphia Street in St. Paul's to the newly built Knowle West housing estate.

During the Second World War Black American soldiers would visit his home, as he was a well known and a much admired character.

His grandson, Derek, used to take him to the local pub, the Venture Inn in Knowle West, where he had his own chair. He was well liked there.

Dixie Brown died in 1957. He is buried here in Bristol in the Catholic cemetery at Arnos Vale with his wife and one of his sons.



Dixie Brown and friends around 1930
Photo courtesy of Kathleen Lemain Mary Charles

Dixie is described by historian Madge Dresser as:

“ A family man who founded a virtual dynasty of Bristolians of mixed heritage, all of whom remember him with fondness. ”

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■ Teachers' Background Notes

(Based on an interview with Kathleen Lemain Mary Charles, his granddaughter, who remembers Dixie as Granfer).

The boxer, known as Dixie Brown, or Anthony Charles as he is named on his baptismal certificate, was born in St. Lucia, which is one of the Windward Islands of the Eastern Caribbean. He was Catholic, as are over half the people on the islands.

St. Lucia had originally belonged to the Arawak then the Carib people. These were American Indians from South America who originally lived on the island. The majority of the islanders are descendants of enslaved Africans brought there by Europeans. The French had occupied the island but the British had taken it from them in 1814.

Before coming to England, Dixie helped to build the famous Panama Canal. Many Caribbean islanders travelled to Panama to build the canal that cut America in two so that ships could get past America without having to sail all the way around. This canal provided an opportunity for people to earn money that they could not earn at home. He also had a sister, Lemain Charles, who lived in Panama.

Dixie arrived in Cardiff in 1919 and travelled around the fairgrounds in the West Country making a living as a bare-knuckle boxer. This must have been a hard existence because it is now illegal for boxers to fight without gloves, as it is considered too dangerous.

He met a woman called Lily Sellick, who was Welsh and helped to run a boarding house in Cardiff. They married in 1922 in Devon, and shortly afterwards they moved to Bristol in 1923. They had a large family and their children were mixed race or multiple heritage. Their first child was Hilda (Kathleen's mother) and they also had George, Norman, Phyllis, Louis, Henry, twins Dorothy and Sidney and the youngest, Josie.

It was in Bristol that Dixie Brown became a registered boxer using gloves. He is listed on the British pre-war boxing list as having fought 85 bouts and he was active in the 1920s and 30s. It is thought that his career was affected by his inability to take part in the better-paid fights because of a colour bar then operating.

His first home in Bristol was 14, Gloucester Lane in St. Jude's where his second son, Norman, was born. Around 1927, the family moved to Philadelphia Street in St. Paul's, which was remembered as a tough but close-knit community.

Some time during the 1930s, Dixie was tragically blinded in a fight. Dixie was a Roman Catholic and a popular character in Bristol so a collection was made for him to visit Lourdes in the hope that this would provide a cure. Lourdes is a Catholic shrine in France which some people believe can provide miracle cures. His granddaughter, Kathleen Lemain Mary Charles, has the postcard he sent to the family while there. He wrote on it, "I'm safely in the hands of the priests".

Eventually the family moved to Cossington Road, in the newly built Knowle West housing estate. After the street was bombed during the Second World War, the family moved to Illminster Avenue, also in Knowle West. During the Second World War, Black American soldiers would visit his home, as he was a well-known and much admired character. They had heard about him and so wanted to meet him.

Dixie's grandson Derek (Kathleen's brother and Hilda's son) used to take him to the local pub, the Venture Inn in Knowle West, where he had his own chair and it is said that he was well liked there.

He had nine children and thirty grandchildren and was very much part of a large and loving family, which probably made the soldiers feel at home. The family names are part of Dixie's legacy, as his daughter Hilda was asked by Dixie to give her daughter Kathleen the middle names of Lemain after Dixie's sister and Mary after the Virgin Mary, and Kathleen then also named one of her twins, Lemain.

Dixie Brown died in 1957 and his wife, Lily, died in 1982. He is buried in Bristol in the Catholic cemetery at Arnos Vale with his wife and one of his sons, Sydney, who died in 1950. After his death, he was once again in the public eye when an article in the newspaper Bristol Observer in 1987 described him as having been found begging outside the Hippodrome at the end of his life. His family wrote a letter of protest to the newspaper to say this was not true. The paper withdrew the statement.

He is described by historian Madge Dresser as:
"A family man who founded a virtual dynasty of Bristolians of mixed heritage, all of whom remember him with fondness."

website: www.englishspastforeveryone.org.uk

Dixie Brown

■ Suggested Activities

These are suggested activities based on Dixie Brown's biography. The activities in bold print have a detailed lesson plan on following pages.

Foundation Stage/ KS1 Activities	KS2 Activities	KS3 Activities
<p>Travel Talk about different ways of travelling: to school, to nearby areas and further afield. Travelling abroad – use pupils' personal experiences.</p>	<p>Panama Canal Use model (e.g. play dough or bread) to demonstrate the reason why the Panama Canal was built and the solution. Research Panama Canal and make a Powerpoint presentation.</p>	<p>Migration Brainstorm reasons for migration. Work in small groups and use information from brainstorm to discuss difficulties faced by migrants. Dramatise what it feels like to be an outsider. Use The Journey Pack* (Geog, PSHE).</p>
<p>Transport Collect pictures/models of different types of transport. Sort into groups. Survey who has been on different forms of transport. Stories/songs about transport. Set up travel area in setting. e.g. airport, bus station. See separate lesson plans for FS and KS1.</p>	<p>Travel Talk about why and how people travel – include migration and refugee issues. Refugee Council* Collect examples of documents needed for travelling. Modes of transport. Survey of who has travelled where and how. The suitcase – collect items from different countries and use as evidence to discuss why people travel.</p>	<p>Sports Ethnic groups and sports. Make a chart of popular sports and countries in which they are famous. Discussion: Why are some ethnic groups more involved in some sports than others? Give reasons. Research: Profile of Black boxers for display. e.g. Precious MacKenzie, Muhammad Ali, Lennox Lewis (PE, PSHE).</p>
<p>Holidays Interview someone who has been on holiday e.g. school staff, parent, older pupil. Collect postcards. Map work. Draw pictures of what you would take on a Summer/Winter holiday in a suitcase.</p>	<p>Bristol Archives Visit Bristol Record Office* by bus or train. Use documents and photographs on Dixie Brown to build up a profile of him. Make a class book with that information.</p>	<p>The inhabitants of St. Lucia Research original inhabitants of St Lucia – i.e. Arawaks and Caribs. Look at other peoples who came from across the world i.e. France, Britain and Africa. (Hist, Geog).</p>

*See the resource list for details

Dixie Brown

■ Lesson Plan: Transport (K&U, CLL, PSED, MD)

FS

2:1

Learning objectives

- To know that different types of transport are suitable for different journeys.
- To ask relevant questions.
- To use appropriate language to share opinions and explain views.

Key words/phrases	Resources	Organisation/Grouping
Transport Names	Biography and picture of Dixie Brown	Small groups
Destinations	Models/pictures of different transport	Whole class
Luggage	Visitors to talk about travel	
Question words		

Suggested activities

- Show pupils the picture of Dixie Brown and talk about it. Tell them the story of his life, responding to questions and generating discussion.
- Look at pictures of different forms of transport. Pupils to talk about and compare what they can see and investigate. How does this relate to their real life experiences?
- Invite visitors to the setting, ask them to talk about their experiences and ask them relevant questions about their travels. Take photographs and record questions and answers.
- Ask pupils which sorts of transport they have travelled on – include the unusual, donkey, camel, horse and cart. Display - this could be in the form of a picture graph.

Opportunities for child initiated experiences

- Role play – travel area (travel agent, bus station, airport etc. include lots of chairs so pupils can make the different forms of transport).
- Writing area – provide lots of examples of tickets, leaflets, timetables etc, from a wide range of countries and languages.
- Small World including sand and water – different types of transport, animals, large floor maps etc.
- Junk modelling and construction – models of transport.

Recall – what and how they have been learning

Learning outcomes/Success criteria

- Pupils will have experienced the language relevant to travel, sharing opinions and explaining views.
- Pupils can express views.
- Pupils can give reasons.

Parent/Carer involvement

Talk to parents/carers about their experiences of travel.

*See the resource list for details

Dixie Brown

■ Lesson Plan: Transport (Geography/PSHE & Citizenship)

Learning objectives

- To know that different kinds of transport are suitable for different journeys.
- To share opinions and explain views.
- To use appropriate language to share opinions and explain views.

Key words/phrases	Resources	Organisation/Grouping
Transport Names	Biography/pictures	Whole class
Destinations	Models/pictures of transport	Groups
Luggage		
Travel documents		

Suggested activities

- Tell story of Dixie Brown and show picture. Discuss how he might have travelled from the Caribbean to England.
- Sort pictures of transport into groups e.g. land, sea, air.
- Play a matching game in which destination and appropriate transport are matched e.g. which transport would you take to Weston-Super-Mare?
- Survey of who has been on different forms of transport. Include the unusual, donkey, camel, horse and cart. Make big picture graph of result.
- Set up a play 'travel' area in the classroom e.g. travel agent, bus station, airport, the dockside. Pupils to talk about destinations they would like to travel to, documents needed, what luggage to take.

Plenary

- Which transport was most/least popular? Give reasons why.
- Discuss how he might have travelled from the Caribbean to Bristol now.

Learning outcomes/Success criteria

- Pupils can express views.
- Pupils can give reasons.
- Pupils know about the life of Dixie Brown and his contribution to Bristol.

Assessment opportunities

Oral skills.

Homework task or Parent/Carer involvement

Talk with family members about favourite forms of transport.

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■ Lesson Plan: Travel (Geography/PSHE & Citizenship)

KS2

2:1

Dixie Brown Lesson Plan

Learning objectives

- To think about the lives of people living in other places.
- To analyse evidence and draw conclusions.

Key words/phrases	Resources	Organisation/Grouping
Ticket	Biography of Dixie Brown/pictures	Whole class
Passport	Travel documents	Small groups
Visas	Pictures/models of transport	
Inoculation	Suitcase/collection of items	

Suggested activities

- Read biography of Dixie Brown and show picture. Discuss how he might have travelled to England. Bring out Dixie's travel to England. Why did he travel? Would he travel differently today? Give reasons.
- Collect and display copies of travel documents used locally, nationally and internationally. Label in dual language if possible.
- Talk about different ways of travelling now and in the past: air, land, sea. Include animal transport.
- Survey of who has travelled on what transport. World map to show places to which pupils have travelled. Make a class graph. Who has travelled the furthest distance?
- The suitcase activity. Have items in a suitcase that represent different countries. Discuss what you would take if you were leaving home for a long time. Organise pupils in groups and give each group items from different countries. Pupils to use evidence to build up a profile of an individual and draw conclusions as to why this person would leave home to live in another country. Use profiles to discuss why people migrate.

Plenary

- Share profiles from suitcase activity.
- Discuss what Dixie Brown might have had in his suitcase.

Learning outcomes/Success criteria

- Pupils can give reasons why people travelled.
- Pupils can use given evidence to draw conclusions.
- Pupils know about the life of Dixie Brown and his contribution to Bristol.

Assessment opportunities

Analytical skills.

Homework task or Parent/Carer involvement

What would be in your family's suitcase?

*See the resource list for details

Black Bristolians

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Dixie Brown

■ Lesson Plan: Migration (Geography/PSHE & Citizenship)

Learning objectives

- To explore and discuss causes and effects of migration.
- To use vocabulary associated with migration correctly.
- To use drama to communicate empathy with others.
- To know how Black people have contributed to the diversity in our society.

Key words/phrases	Resources	Organisation/Grouping
Migration	Biography/Pictures	Whole class
Immigration	Vocabulary and definitions*	Groups
Emigration	Who's Who (sheets)*	
Refugee		
Asylum seeker		
Economic		

Suggested activities

- Read Dixie Brown's biography.
- Discuss why Dixie Brown would have chosen to migrate to Panama and Britain.
- Brainstorm reasons for people migration as a whole class.
- Ensure correct understanding of vocabulary. Match vocabulary to definitions.
- In groups discuss difficulties faced by migrants now and in the past.
- Develop a drama showing how it might feel to be an outsider in a place of work/school/community and how we can make newcomers welcome.
- Present to the class.

Plenary

- Present drama. Discuss issues.

Learning outcomes/Success criteria

- Pupils can empathise with different groups of migrants and the difficulties they might have.
- Pupils understand some causes and effects of migration.
- Pupils know about the life of Dixie Brown and his contribution to Bristol.

Assessment opportunities

Use of vocabulary.
Collaborative skills.

Homework task or Parent/Carer involvement

Interview family member, neighbour or friend who has migrated to Bristol.

*See the resource list for details

Dixie Brown

■ Resources

- The Journey Pack of resources – books, CD, poster, map, teachers’ handbook etc about the journey of Caribbean people to UK. Published by Primary Colours.
- Bristol Record Office, ‘B’ Bond Warehouse, Smeaton Road, Bristol, BS1 6XN
Tel: 0117 922 4224
Fax: 0117 922 4236
Email: bro@bristol.gov.uk
- For vocabulary and definitions relating to Refugees and Asylum Seekers turn to the next page.

Contact details

Name: Kathleen Charles, (Dixie Brown’s granddaughter).

Tel: Contact via Cabot School: 0117 377 2630

Willing to be contacted by teachers for further questions? Yes

Willing to come into school to talk to pupils? Yes

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■ Resources: Who's Who?

Match these labels to the definitions below.

Refugee

Economic migrant

Failed asylum seeker

Illegal immigrant

Asylum seeker

European migrant

- 1 Someone who is fleeing persecution in their homeland, has arrived in another country, made themselves known to the authorities and exercised the legal right to apply for asylum.
- 3 Someone whose asylum application has been successful and who is allowed to stay in another country having proved they would face persecution back home.
- 3 Someone whose asylum application has been turned down and is awaiting return to their country. If it is not safe for refused asylum seekers to return, they may have to stay for the time being.
- 4 Someone who has arrived in another country, intentionally not made themselves known to the authorities and has no legal basis for being there.
- 5 Someone who has moved to another country to work.
- 6 Someone who is a member of a country that belongs to the European Economic Area. They have the right to live in the UK so long as they are studying, or working or have enough money to support themselves.