What was the Windrush?
The Windrush was a ship named: 

“HMT Empire Windrush”

HMT stands for ‘Her Majesty’s Transport’. This ship brought migrants from the Caribbean to the UK.

Why did this happen?
The ships brought workers to address labour (work) shortages in the UK. As the UK’s economy was expanding there were more industrial and agricultural jobs, so the UK government encouraged this migration. Many of these passengers had fought for the UK during the war.

Who was involved?
Those arriving in the UK between 1948 and 1971 from Caribbean countries have been labelled the ‘Windrush generation’. The ships brought migrants from the Caribbean, including from Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Bermuda, Cuba and other islands.

Why is Windrush famous?
More than half a million migrants went on to not only settle in the UK, but make a significant and lasting contribution to its infrastructure, economy and culture. But these migrants have suffered many prejudices, including illegal deportation and denial of their legal rights.

When did this happen?
The Windrush ship arrived at Tilbury Docks, Essex, on 22 June 1948. It was not the first ship to bring migrants from the Caribbean, but it was the most famous. Although thousands travelled on other ships and aeroplanes until 1978, all are labelled the ‘Windrush generation’.

Want more info? Sources: BBC: Windrush generation Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants
Where did the Windrush generation come from?

Empire Windrush's journey to Britain

Tampico, Mexico
66 passengers join (total on board: 859)

Kingston
May 27 1948
599 passengers join (total on board: 793)

Trinidad
May 20 1948
194 passengers on board

Bermuda
168 passengers join (total on board: 1,027)

Tilbury Docks, Essex
June 21 1948

Passengers allowed to disembark on June 22

Windrush passengers' last country of residence

Jamaica 541
Bermuda 139
Trinidad 74
British Guiana 44
Mexico 66
Gibraltar 5
Burma 5
Rest of UK 15

Plus:
Other Caribbean countries 9
Other non-Caribbean countries 8

Source: National Archives

Look at these two maps: why do you think these passengers came from the Caribbean?
Why did the passengers come from the Caribbean specifically?

It is helpful to consider colonialism when answering this question.

**Colonialism** = taking political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically.

Take a look at how many different countries held control over colonies in the Caribbean after the Second World War.
Why did the passengers come from the Caribbean specifically?

Now look at where the majority of Windrush passengers stated their last country of residence was ...

Windrush passengers' last country of residence

- Jamaica 541
- Bermuda 139
- Trinidad 74
- British Guiana 44
- Mexico 66
- Rest of UK 15
- England 119
- Gibraltar 5
- Burma 5

Plus:
- Other Caribbean countries 9
- Other non-Caribbean countries 8

Source: National Archives
Why did the passengers come from the Caribbean specifically?

So this *colonial rule* meant that, during this time, residents of these colonies were officially ‘British subjects’, which, before 1949, meant that you were from a country which was part of the British Empire.

Because those passengers travelling on the Windrush came from British colonies that had not achieved independence, they believed they were British citizens.

Want more info? Source: [Windrush generation: Who are they and why are they facing problems?](#)
What was the response to these passengers?

By 1958 over 125,000 migrants from the Caribbean had settled in Britain since the war.

When the passengers landed they didn't always get the friendly welcome they had hoped for. Many of them experienced racism and discrimination and often found it hard to get proper homes to live in and to make friends with British people.

It wasn't always easy for the new arrivals to get jobs. Some companies said they didn't want black people to work for them. Later many of their children were bullied at school because of the colour of their skin. Some of them suffered racial attacks and in later years there were riots in cities across Britain.

Want more info? Source: What is the Windrush Generation?
In 2017 it emerged that hundreds of Commonwealth citizens, many of whom were from the Windrush generation, had been **wrongly detained, deported and denied legal rights**.

There was widespread shock and outrage at the fact that so many Black Britons had had their lives devastated by Britain’s deeply flawed and discriminatory immigration system.

This quickly became known as ... **The Windrush Scandal**
The Windrush Scandal

During the past decade, some of the people who arrived in the UK as children with their parents have been wrongly told that they live here illegally. In 2010, landing cards belonging to Windrush migrants were destroyed by the Home Office.

In 2012 there was a change to immigration law and people were told they needed official documents to prove they could get things like free hospital treatment or benefits in this country. This led to some being sent to immigration detention centres and facing deportation.

On 21 August 2018, Home Secretary Sajid Javid announced that - after a review of 11,800 cases - 18 members of the Windrush generation who could have been wrongfully removed or detained would get a formal apology from the Government. He also said that anyone who had left the UK will also be helped to return.

Protesters calling for a halt to the deportation of the Windrush generation

Want more info? Sources: BBC: Windrush Generation? Newsround: What is the Windrush generation?
The Impact of the Windrush Generation on Britain

The Windrush generation made a huge contribution to the British economy and economic growth, not only in the immediate post-war period but also across decades of continuous employment.

As the demand for both skilled and unskilled labour continued to grow throughout the 1950s as the economy recovered, employers and managers in key sectors actively began to recruit in the Caribbean, rather than waiting for workers to arrive in the UK.

London Transport, for example, recruited more than 3,500 Barbadians in the ten years from 1956, paying workers’ fares to the UK and then recovering them through a deduction from their wages.

Sources: How Caribbean migrants rebuilt Britain
The Impact of the Windrush Generation on Britain

At a recent congregation at Westminster Abbey, Rev Canon Joel Edwards described how Windrush had ‘gifted’ Britain with leaders in politics, trade unions, business, sport and culture.

But while the Windrush generation are possibly the most famous group of migrants from the Caribbean, Windrush was not the beginning of multicultural Britain. Caribbean migrants arrived in Britain as early as the 1800s.

Some argue that the migrants who came in 1948 arrived to a changing multicultural scene that was already happening.

Sources: How the Windrush Generation transformed British arts and culture
In June 2018, the government announced an annual Windrush Day to encourage communities across the country to commemorate the Windrush story on Windrush Day and throughout the year.

The national celebration is backed by a £500,000 Windrush Day Grant Scheme overseen by a Windrush Day Advisory Panel of community representatives.
Windrush Documentary

This documentary offers an insight into the experience of one woman’s family, a family which belonged to the Windrush generation.

The film ‘From Slavery to Windrush’ helps us to see the numerous challenges faced by this family throughout their history.

She discovers why the Windrush scandal was about more than the politics of immigration.

Watch the Windrush documentary here
Visit [www.bcaexhibits.org](http://www.bcaexhibits.org) to find out more about the Windrush Generation past, present and future:

- The *Windrush: What’s Next? The struggle for justice* podcast series frames the 2018 ‘Windrush Scandal’ within a historical but forward-facing narrative, bringing together campaigners, people affected by the Windrush Scandal, race equality practitioners, cultural historians and lawyers.

- *Sounds of the ‘rush* – newly digitised excerpts from our Windrush oral history collections. Hear testimonies from iconic figures such as the activist Connie Mark, Windrush passenger Clifford Fullerton, and others covering themes from arrival, employment, social life, family and resistance.

- *Windrush Waves* was launched in 2020 to give young people aged 14–21 the opportunity to respond artistically to the story of the Windrush Generation. A selection of artwork in various media is displayed here, selected by artist Linett Kamala.