**Race to the Frozen North – the Matthew Henson story**

Our English work over the next few weeks is looking at the story of Matthew Henson.

Read through the introduction with an adult and discuss:

Matthew Henson was the first American to reach the North Pole. That was over a hundred years ago in 1909. The American government gave everyone who came home from that trip medals. They were heroes! Did I say everyone? Matthew did not get a medal like everyone else. He did not get a hero’s welcome. In fact, for many years some people didn’t even believe what he had done.

Oh, he’d lived a long life, and an exciting one. He’d travelled the world and spoke many different languages. Matthew could drive a team of dogs across the ice, hunt wolves and seals and make just about anything out of wood or metal.

But when he came home to the land where he was born, the only work he could find was as a messenger boy or by parking cars.

He died poor. Only his family and a few others knew about his adventures. But thirty years after he had died, people began to talk about him. They knew the stories were true and eventually he was reburied in a hero’s grave. They told his story and remembered his name. Nowadays you’ll find schools and colleges and even battleships named after him.

Why was he forgotten and ignored for so many years?

The reason was the colour of his skin…