



Booker Prize's Link to Slavery

Why in News?

The **Booker Prize**, one of the most prestigious awards in the literary world, has recently come under criticism for the historical links to **slavery** of its original sponsor, Booker Group.

- It's claimed that during the **early 1800s, George and Josias Booker**, the founders of the company, reportedly **enslaved close to 200 individuals**.

What are the Key Facts About the Booker Prize?

- The prize was established in **1969** by **Tom Maschler** and **Graham C. Greene**.
- The Booker Prize is **awarded annually** to the author of the best eligible work of long-form fiction, written **originally in English** by an author of **any nationality**, and **published in the UK and/or Ireland**.
 - **The International Booker Prize** is a separate award for **translated works** into English.
- The winner of the Booker Prize receives a cash award of **50,000 Pounds**. Additionally, each of the shortlisted authors is awarded 2,500 Pounds.
 - Irish author **Paul Lynch** has won the [2023 Booker Prize for his novel 'Prophet Song'](#).

How Booker is Linked to Slavery and Indentured Labour?

- **Britain** gained control of **Guyana** through the **Treaty of Paris in 1815**.
 - **Guyana** is a country in **South America** bordered by Suriname to the east, Brazil to the south, and Venezuela to the west.
 - Its economy was driven by the **sugar and cotton industries**, with **African slaves** providing labour in plantations.
 - The use of **African slaves** in British Guyana reflects the history of slavery in the region during the 19th century.
- The **Booker Brothers Josias & George** were involved in the exploitative slave-based economy of British Guyana. In a cotton plantation, **they enslaved nearly 200 people**.
- After **slavery was abolished** in Guyana in **1834** and African slaves were emancipated, the **Booker brothers received compensation for 52 emancipated slaves, totalling 2,884 Pounds** (equivalent to 378,000 Pounds in 2020).
 - Bookers convinced the British government to finance voyages to collect replacement sugar workers from India.
 - This led to the **exploitation of Indian workers who faced debt and unemployment** due to the East India Company's policies and were sent to Guyana by the East India Company.
- **The indentured labour system** lasted till about the 1920s, leading to a significant migration of labourers from India to Guyana.
 - **People of Indian origin** are now the **single largest ethnic group in Guyana** due to the scale of migration.



UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Which one of the following pairs is correctly matched? (2013)

Geographical Feature	Region
(a) Abyssinian Plateau	Arabia
(b) Atlas Mountains	North-Western Africa
(c) Guiana Highlands	South-Western Africa
(d) Okavango Basin	Patagonia

Ans: (b)

Q. In which one of the following groups are all four countries members of G20? (2020)

- (a) Argentina, Mexico, South Africa and Turkey
- (b) Australia, Canada, Malaysia and New Zealand
- (c) Brazil, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Vietnam
- (d) Indonesia, Japan, Singapore and South Korea

Ans: (a)