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# SLAVE VOYAGES

## The Transatlantic Trade in Enslaved Africans

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## **Timeline: The Transatlantic Slave Trade**

### **1502**

First African slaves in the New World.

### **1640-1680**

Beginning of large-scale introduction of African slave labour for sugar production in the British Caribbean.

### **1791**

The Haitian Revolution begins as a slave uprising near Le Cap in the French West Indian colony of Saint Domingue, leading to the establishment of the independent nation of Haiti in 1804.

### **1793**

White refugees pour into U.S. ports, fleeing the insurrection in Saint Domingue.

### **1794**

The French National Convention emancipates all slaves in the French colonies.

March 22: The U.S. Congress passes legislation prohibiting the manufacture, fitting, equipping, loading or dispatching of any vessel to be employed in the slave trade.

### **1795**

Pinckney's Treaty establishes commercial relations between the U.S. and Spain.

### **1800**

May 10: The U.S. enacts stiff penalties for American citizens serving voluntarily on slavers trading between two foreign countries.

### **1804**

The Republic of Haiti, the second republic in the Northern Hemisphere, is declared on January 1 1804 by General Jean-Jacques Dessalines. Haiti, or *Ayiti* in Creole, was the name given to the island by the indigenous Taino-Arawak peoples, meaning "mountainous country."

### **1807**

The British Parliament bans the transatlantic slave trade.

Great Britain declares the West African country of Sierra Leone a crown colony.

U.S. passes legislation banning the slave trade, to take effect in 1808.

### **1810**

Britain negotiates an agreement with Portugal calling for the gradual abolition of the slave trade in the South Atlantic.

### **1815**

At the Congress of Vienna, the British pressure Spain, Portugal, France and the Netherlands into abolishing the slave trade, though Spain and Portugal are permitted a few years of continued slaving to replenish labour supplies.

### **1817**

September 23: Great Britain and Spain sign a treaty prohibiting the slave trade, Spain agreeing to end the slave trade north of the equator immediately, with that south of the equator ending in 1820. British naval vessels are given the right to search suspected slave ships. Nevertheless, loopholes in the treaty undercut its goals, and slavery continues until 1830. The slave economies of Cuba and Brazil expand rapidly.

In the *Le Louis* case, British courts establish the principle that British naval vessels cannot search foreign vessels suspected of slaving unless permitted to do so by their respective countries – a ruling that hampers British efforts to suppress the slave trade.

### **1819**

The U.S. and Spain renew their commercial agreements in the Adams-Onís Treaty.

The U.S. Congress passes legislation stiffening provisions against American participation in the slave trade.

Britain stations a naval squadron off the West-African coast to patrol the area against illegal slavers.

### **1820**

May 15: U.S. law equates slave trading with piracy, which is punishable by the death penalty.

The U.S. Navy dispatches four vessels to patrol the West-African coast for slavers. This campaign lasts for four years, before the cruisers are recalled and co-operation with the British broken off.

### **1824**

Britain and the U.S. negotiate a treaty condemning the slave trade as piracy and establishing joint procedures for its suppression. However, the U.S. Senate makes a series of amendments to the treaty, and the British refuse to sign.

### **1825**

The *Antelope* case: A U.S. patrol seizes a slave ship, the *Antelope*, sailing under a Venezuelan flag with a cargo of 281 Africans. The U.S. Supreme Court hears the case and issues a unanimous opinion declaring the slave trade to be a violation of natural law. However, the ruling only sets some of the 281 Africans free, holding that the U.S. cannot prescribe law for other nations and noting that the slave trade is legal in Spain, Portugal and Venezuela. As a result, the vessel is restored to its owners, along with those Africans designated by the court as Spanish property (numbering 39).

### **1831**

A large-scale slave revolt, led by Sam Sharpe, breaks out in Jamaica and is brutally suppressed.

### **1833**

Britain passes the Abolition of Slavery Act, to take effect in August 1834, providing for the emancipation of slaves in the British West Indies. Following their emancipation, a six-year period of apprenticeship is permitted for former slaves.

### **1835**

June 28: The Anglo-Spanish agreement on the slave trade is renewed, and enforcement is tightened. British cruisers are authorized to stop suspected Spanish slavers and bring them before mixed commissions in Sierra Leone and in Havana. Vessels carrying specified "articles of equipment," such as extra mess gear, lumber and foodstuffs, are declared *prima facie* to be slavers.

### **1837**

Britain invites the U.S. and France to create a joint international patrol to stop slaving. The U.S. declines to participate.

### **1838**

Most colonial assemblies in the British West Indies have introduced legislation dismantling the apprenticeship system for former slaves. Laws against vagrancy and squatting attempt to keep the social and labour system of the plantation economies intact, with varying results.

### **1839**

January: Nicholas Trist, U.S. Consul in Havana, recommends that the U.S. Administration dispatch a naval squadron to West Africa to patrol for slavers, warning that the British will police American vessels if the U.S. does not act.

June 12: The British navy brig *Buzzard* escorts two American slavers, the *Eagle* and the *Clara*, to New York, where they are to be tried for piracy. Two further slavers arrive several weeks later, together with a further pair later in the autumn of the same year.

The *Amistad* is seized off Long Island and taken to New London.

(Fall) U.S. federal officers arrest several ship owners in Baltimore accused by the British of being slave traders. Several schooners being built for the trade are also seized.

J.W.M. Turner's painting *The Slave Ship* (also known as *Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying – Typhoon coming on*) goes on display at the Royal Academy in London.

#### **1841**

Nicholas Trist is dismissed as U.S. Consul in Havana amid allegations that he connived at, or made no effort to suppress, the illegal sale of U.S. vessels to Spanish slave traders.

### **Timeline: The Emancipation Process, 1772-1888**

#### **1772**

In Britain, Lord Chief Justice Mansfield rules that English law does not support slavery, thus laying the basis for freeing England's 15,000 slaves.

#### **1774**

The English Society of Friends votes for the expulsion of any member engaged in the slave trade.

#### **1775**

Slavery abolished in Madeira.

#### **1776**

The Societies of Friends in England and in Pennsylvania in the U.S. require their members to free their slaves or face expulsion.

#### **1777**

The Constitution of the State of Vermont prohibits slavery.

#### **1780**

The Constitution of Massachusetts declares all men to be free and equal; a judicial decision in 1783 interprets this as meaning that slavery should be abolished.

Pennsylvania adopts a policy of gradual emancipation, freeing the children of all slaves born after 1 November 1780 on their 28<sup>th</sup> birthday.

**1784**

Rhode Island and Connecticut pass gradual emancipation laws.

**1787**

The “Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade” is set up in England.

**1791**

The Haitian Revolution begins.

**1794**

The French National Convention abolishes slavery in all French territories. This is repealed by Napoleon in 1802.

**1799**

New York State passes a gradual emancipation law.

**1800**

U.S. citizens barred from exporting slaves.

**1804**

Haiti declares independence from France, and slavery there is abolished.  
New Jersey adopts a policy of gradual emancipation.

**1805**

The Constitution of Haiti provides that any slave arriving in Haiti is automatically both free and a citizen of the country.

**1807**

England and the United States prohibit their citizens from engaging in the international slave trade.

**1813**

Gradual emancipation adopted in Argentina.

**1814**

Gradual emancipation begins in Colombia.

**1820**

Britain begins to use its naval power to suppress the slave trade.

**1823**

Slavery abolished in Chile.

**1824**



Slavery abolished in Central America.

**1829**

Slavery abolished in Mexico.

**1831**

Slavery abolished in Bolivia.

**1838**

Slavery abolished in all British colonies.

**1841**

The Quintuple Treaty is signed, under which England, France, Russia, Prussia and Austria agree to search vessels on the high seas in order to suppress the slave trade.

**1842**

Slavery abolished in Uruguay.

**1848**

Slavery abolished in all French and Danish colonies.

**1851**

Slavery abolished in Ecuador.

Slave trade ended in Brazil.

**1854**

Slavery abolished in Peru and Venezuela.

**1862**

Slave trade ended in Cuba.

**1863**

Slavery abolished in all Dutch colonies.

**1865**

Slavery abolished in the U.S. as a result of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution and the end of the Civil War.

**1871**

Gradual emancipation initiated in Brazil.

**1873**

Slavery abolished in Puerto Rico.

**1886**

Slavery abolished in Cuba.

**1888**

Slavery abolished in Brazil.

## **Introduction**

The transatlantic slave trade is now generally accepted to have been a crime against humanity, even in those countries on both sides of the Atlantic that actively participated in it. The French Government, for example, designated the trade as such in February 1999, and UNESCO has also endorsed this point of view, launching a “Slave Routes Project” in an effort to “break the silence” that the Organization believes still surrounds this tragedy. The objectives of the project are to encourage the production and popularization of scientific knowledge about the transatlantic slave trade and to promote inter-cultural peace and dialogue.

Though recent decades have seen an explosion in academic publications on the slave trade, comprehensive accounts of a general nature are still not readily available for educational purposes, contributing to the silence around the trade that the UNESCO project seeks to break. Students around the world still have a limited understanding of the tragedy that the slave trade represented, and the understanding that they do have of it is still too largely determined by their immediate cultural and political environments. Increasing the availability of teaching materials on the slave trade should, therefore, be an important part of the UNESCO project.

In West Africa, for example, students have reported difficulties in assessing how traditionally localized systems of exploiting the labour of, and of buying and selling, unfree persons historically gave way to, or developed into, the slave trade, which, by the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century had assumed a dominant commercial position in their societies. Similarly, European students continue to find it paradoxical that their countries, while domestically championing notions of human rights and of civil

liberties, at the same time promoted black chattel slavery on a global scale for a period of over 400 years.

In the Americas, a long-standing concern of the descendants of both the enslaved Africans and of the slave owners has been to come to terms both with the racial nature of the slave system and with the persistence of the institutional racism that emerged from it. More recently, there has been a growing interest in the nature of the participation of the African trading elites in supplying the slaves. These are all legitimate interests and concerns, and they are central to understanding the forces that have made up the modern world.

This book's focus, however, is on the slave trade itself, the beginnings of which are usually dated to 1502, when the first references to enslaved Africans appeared in Spanish colonial documents, and which ended in the 1860s. Though there is no attempt here to present a meaningful assessment of the trade in enslaved Africans that took place across the Sahara or in the Indian Ocean, the rise of the trade, should, however, be understood in the context of the westward movement of slave trading in Africa first competing with, and then replacing, the older, eastern slave trade. According to the historian Patrick Manning, while some six million slaves were sent eastwards from West Africa between 1500 and 1900, an estimated 10 million were shipped westwards to the Americas.

The text sets out the general history of the transatlantic slave trade, providing an interpretative overview of the literature. Such a broad approach may not satisfy the needs of every student, yet it is hoped that it will encourage students to reflect further on the issues at stake, as well as to read other, more specialized works of research. It should also be recognized that picking out the general patterns and trends in the

literature is not without difficulties of its own, and the text therefore reflects the author's interpretation of the relative importance of various historical contributions.

Historical writing on the slave trade is as old as the trade itself, and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century scholarship was concerned to engage early writings on it in order to reflect upon the debate over the trade that took place within European and American abolitionist movements. However, more recent scholarship has revised many of these earlier findings, though these revised views have not yet found their way into more general circulation in history textbooks, largely as a result of the worldwide neglect suffered by the transatlantic slave trade in history teaching.

Yet, explaining the exclusive enslavement of Africans in colonial America is still a major challenge, for chattel slavery had long been abolished as an institution in Western Europe when the slave trade began in the aftermath of Christopher Columbus's first voyage to the Caribbean in 1492. The historian David Eltis, for example, tells us that while just over 10% of England's population had been classified as slaves in 1086, slavery was not a feature of later 14<sup>th</sup>-century English society. Employers, he says, did not consider slavery to be a viable labour option in northwestern Europe at that time, though forms of slavery remained vital in Southern Europe where slavery was at the heart of on-going conflict between Christians and Muslims.

Nevertheless, despite the end of slavery as an institution in much of Europe, 40 years before Columbus's transatlantic voyages Europeans were increasingly resorting to slavery in the East-Atlantic islands of Madeira, the Azores, Cape Verde and the Canaries, which had been colonized by the Portuguese and the Spanish. The labour of enslaved Africans was used in colonizing these islands, and so, even as slavery as an institution was becoming increasingly rare in Europe itself, the

development of the slave trade, first in these islands, and then in the West Atlantic – the Caribbean and the Americas – was re-accepted as a part of the reality of colonial societies, Eltis concludes, giving the institution of slavery a “new scale and intensity.”

For Africans caught up in it, the new slave trade was a significant departure from traditions of local and trans-Saharan slave trading in two main ways. Firstly, it resulted in their being indefinitely denied any right to life or to social identity, being legally classified as property, chattels, or as a part of real estate in colonial societies. Secondly, it became the basis for the global racial order that continues to have a profound impact on the modern world. Yet, the question remains why only Africans, and not Europeans or others, were used as slaves in the new European colonies.

The most common system used by European employers for their white labour in the early colonial American settlements was indenture. In the English colonies, such labourers were called indentured servants, and in the French colonies they were called *les engagés*, under an arrangement whereby workers sold their labour for specified periods of time. These systems, however, whether of indenture or of *engagement*, were not the same as chattel slavery, for such servants had rights and privileges that were guaranteed by law. In contrast, while in French and Spanish colonies slaves also had rights under the *Code Noir*, these were not respected in practice, and slaves enjoyed no rights or privileges at all under English law.

While there is some evidence to suggest that certain employers, eager to maximize their profits, wanted to increase their control over their indentured servants in order to make them *de facto* slaves, European cultural and political constraints were enough to preclude any such development, at least on a large scale. Furthermore, the historian Joseph Inikori has suggested that the emergence in Europe of cohesive and relatively strong states capable of maintaining internal law and order and of protecting

their subjects against capture and enslavement by external or internal aggressors acted to end the trade in Europeans just before the rise of the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans.

The enslavement of European workers was replaced with a system of serfdom, and later with various forms of labour bondage, which enabled people to enjoy some personal freedoms, such as the right to marry, to have a household and to own property, even if they were formally indentured as labourers. Systems of voluntary indenture also spread in Europe during the 15<sup>th</sup> century, these being contractual arrangements whereby workers agreed to serve an employer for a specified period. Some contracts were seasonal; others were for periods of up to ten years. Convicts and political prisoners were often also forcibly put to work by the state, as were persons judged to be vagrants or to be poor and undeserving of public support.

The 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries also saw the emergence of strong national sentiment in Europe that facilitated changing attitudes towards the working population. Increasingly, economic ideas about wealth creation within the nation placed an emphasis upon the stock of labour as a major economic resource. The general social and political tendency was to increase the liberties of productive workers and to consider them to be valuable citizens. Nationalist ideology also promoted the idea that all the inhabitants of a given country should possess a common vision with respect to their nation's seeking competitive advantage over other nations. When issues of race and colour became markers in determining attitudes towards other nations, European workers were encouraged to see their national and racial identity as offering a natural advantage in a competitive world over which they had the right to dominate.

Furthermore, Inikori suggests, at the same time as such developments in Europe were precluding the possibility of European workers being treated as slaves, widespread political fragmentation in West Africa at a time of expanding demand for slave labour in the Americas exposed the members of many weakly organized communities to capture and enslavement at acceptable costs to their captors. Had similar conditions existed in Europe at the time, he concludes, then it too would have supplied captives for enslavement in the Americas. It is significant, Inikori adds, that the governments of the relatively strong states in West Africa that took and sold captives to European traders effectively limited the enslavement of their own subjects in the transatlantic trade.

The significance of this interpretation is not to suggest that the American demand for slaves could not have been met by enslaving workers of European origin; rather, it is to suggest that the effectiveness of domestic opposition to white enslavement was a real inhibiting factor. At the same time, socio-political and economic conditions in Africa helped to promote the development of the transatlantic trade in African slaves and to sustain African political fragmentation as part of a vicious circle of continuing vulnerability to external exploitation.

Considerable research has been done in recent years on the supply-side aspects of the transatlantic slave trade. Work by historians such as Joseph Miller, Robin Law, Paul Lovejoy and Elisee Soumonni, among others, has led to a revised interpretation of the strategies used by the suppliers of enslaved Africans, as well as to a revised understanding of how African societies changed as a result of the trade. It has been shown, for example, that African suppliers were able to impose significant controls over certain aspects of the trade, as well as to impose constraints on European settlement.

This meant, among other things, that European colonial settlement had to take place elsewhere than in Africa, and the Americas emerged as the primary venue. It was in the Americas that the development of racial societies took on large-scale, unprecedented forms. However, racism was not the cause of the slave trade; rather, the new arrangements of colonial settlement in the Americas fostered institutional forms of racism, and these, in addition to reinforcing traditional notions of colour prejudice, promoted race as the main social marker in settler society.

The presence in colonial societies of a large population of oppressed and degraded people with distinct physical characteristics gave rise to the development of negative images of such people and of others sharing their physical characteristics. Many people in colonial societies came genuinely to believe that black skin signaled inferiority, intellectually and otherwise, and this notion became a part of popular belief, reinforcing the transatlantic trade. Racism, then, became not only a way of rationalizing slavery, but also a whole way of life, complete with its own psychological, social and economic support systems.

Historians have also devoted considerable attention to the task of quantifying the number of enslaved Africans exported as part of the transatlantic slave trade between 1500 and 1870. Many, however, have remained doubtful about the value of the available statistics on the trade, and thus have made no efforts at formal quantification. Yet, it has been estimated that between 10 and 15 million enslaved Africans were shipped across the Atlantic to the Americas between 1492 and 1870. Wherever the true figure stands in this range, the trade undoubtedly constitutes the largest forced human migration in recorded history, and the true extent of human suffering associated with this involuntary relocation of men, women and children may never be known. Their shipment, packed and stored beneath the decks of ships like



the commodity that they were considered to be, is one of the greatest horrors of modern times.

During the “Middle Passage,” as the transatlantic crossing was called, many Africans died as a result of punishment, hunger, disease, or trauma. Many others were thrown overboard if the slavers considered them sick and a threat to the health of others. Thus, the historian Joseph Miller in his analysis of the trade describes the Middle Passage as the “way of death”, noting that a contemporary saw the slave ships as “floating tombs” and the enslaved Africans within them as a “commodity that died with ease”. Furthermore, Miller tells us that the “perishability” of the Africans during the Middle Passage was one of its most striking features, a further feature being the frequent rebellion of the slaves themselves. However, few of these revolts were successful, and the slavers reacted to them by inflicting savage punishments.

In addition to those processed for shipment, even greater numbers of Africans in Africa itself experienced deformed lives on account of the ever-growing influence of the trade in their societies. Millions were indirectly affected, being physically displaced or relocated, or were socially dispossessed through the loss of kin and property. The recruitment of Africans for the transatlantic trade through kidnapping, warfare, *jihad*, pawning, judicial sentencing and so on also increased the importance of Atlantic-style chattel slavery within the African societies themselves, introducing a range of new and prestigious goods into African communities, the possession of which conferred high status on the local elites that were their principal consumers. In addition to consumer goods, notably textiles (especially from India) and iron bars, slaves were exchanged or sold for alcohol and firearms, which increased the military capabilities of the participating African elites.

Many African societies were transformed by these political and economic developments. Some older states were undermined and destroyed by them, and new ones were formed as local elites became the partners and clients of European slave traders. Thus, the changing political landscape of West Africa, from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, had as much to do with the development of the slave trade as it has with any other single factor. The city-state of Benin, for example, expanded as a result of its kings and nobles participating in the slave trade during the 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, by the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century beginning to fragment and decline under the political stress of popular resistance and as a result of the economic conflict generated by the new wealth. The people of Lagos revolted and broke away, and by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Yoruba State of Oyo, based at Katunga near the middle Niger River, was a more important trading state than was Benin itself. Oyo then overtook Lagos and Badagri, where important slave-trade networks had already been established. To the west of Oyo, the smaller states of Allada and Whydah (Ouidah), inhabited largely by the Fon and Adja people, also developed as slave producers. Meanwhile, 80 miles to the north, Dahomey was also asserting its interest in the trade, and by the early 18<sup>th</sup> century it had become an important slave-trading state, earning the area the tragic name of the "Slave Coast."

Over time, the transatlantic trade led to political conflict in Africa, and increasing warfare weakened the development potential of many states. Indeed, in many places the political survival of states, and the ability of their elites to maintain authority, depended on engagement in the trade. In all such instances, the great majority of the people were the victims of the commercial relationship that the elites had established with the European slavers. By contrast, some communities took

measures to protect themselves from the trade, developing resistance strategies against local and European slavers.

Yet, whatever the local effects of the trade may have been, it was responsible for the export from Africa not just of an enormous pool of involuntary, victimized labour, but also of a range of technical, scientific and cultural resources. Africans took with them to the Americas an array of agricultural and industrial capabilities, as well as artistic and social ideas that later contributed significantly to the identity of the West-Atlantic world. These “imported” ways of thinking and living, in fact, informed and shaped important aspects of what later became known as “American culture.” Through their struggles for freedom and justice, for example, enslaved Africans helped shape and strengthen the democratic impulse in America, but the tragic result of the trade for Africa was that the continent was drained of invaluable human resources, particularly of its young people. The magnitude of this loss is an aspect of the tragedy that remains difficult to assess, for in some ways Africa’s loss of human energy and imagination was America’s and Europe’s gain. Certainly, the transatlantic trade and the economic activity that it fueled contributed to the ability of Europe and the Americas to achieve higher levels of economic growth.

There is at present intense debate among historians on all the issues raised above, this debate having produced a particularly rich and engaged literature. It has been recognized that the various legacies of the transatlantic slave trade continue to shape social life within the wider Atlantic world, as well as beyond it. Writings on African diaspora issues, for example, focus on this theme, and even in countries that did not participate in the trade evidence of its legacy can be found.

Thus, in preparing this overview of the literature for use in schools, I have relied heavily on the work of many distinguished scholars from Europe, Africa and

the Americas, my intention having been to look at some of the more important and controversial themes and to mix descriptive narrative with analysis for easy reading and effective teaching. The emphasis is on bringing the places, personalities and processes that characterized the trade to the fore; both individuals and capital played an important role in the trade, and I hope that by highlighting both a sense of immediacy has been brought to the narrative, which is essentially an exercise in selection, description, interpretation and summary.

Lastly, I would like to thank those scholars whose works have shaped in part my own understanding of the trade, in particular Paul Lovejoy, Seymour Drescher, Joseph Inikori, Ronald Segal, Robin Blackburn, David Richardson, Robert Stein, Patrick Manning, Johannes Postma, Cheikh Anta Diop, Walter Rodney, Robert Smith, John Iliffe, A.G. Hopkins, Martin Bernal, Ivan van Sertima, Hugh Thomas, David Eltis, Joseph Miller, Barbara Solow, David Galenson, Herbert Klein, Stanley Engerman, Philip Curtin, J.D. Fage, Robin Law, Elisee Soumonni, Albert van Dantzig, Claude Meillassoux, Barbara Kopytoff, Martin Klein and James Walvin. None of these fine scholars, however, is responsible for any shortcomings in the present text that may have arisen from my engagement with their work. Whatever limitations this text may have, they are entirely of my own making.

## **Chapter 1: The Origins and Development of Slavery**

### **i) Non-Racial Slavery in Ancient Societies**

Various forms of slavery have existed in most societies from antiquity to modern times, a state of “unfreedom” defining the lives of those categorized as servants, serfs, apprentices, or slaves. In the ancient civilizations of Europe, Asia and Africa, for example, persons defined as slaves were part of a distinct social group, whose lives were routinely controlled by others. Such people in general performed arduous labour, particularly in agriculture, construction and mining, but also in households and the military, only a fortunate few working as managers, political administrators, or skilled artisans.

At the height of its prosperity in 400 BC, Classical Athens had more than 70,000 slaves. It has been estimated that during the first two centuries of the Roman Empire three out of every four persons living on the Italian peninsula were slaves, an estimated 21 million people. Slaves of varying races and colours and drawn from many cultures were sold in Athens and in Rome, Europe, the Mediterranean, North Africa and Asia constituting the sources of supply. Yet these slaves were multi-racial, with enslavement not being considered a condition that befitted a particular race or skin colour. Black Africans, for example, mostly from the Horn of Africa, were a minority part of this early European world, but, while many of them were slaves, many were also prominent free persons who made important contributions to society.

Early European jurists and philosophers developed legal notions of the slave as alienable property. Aristotle, for example, the Ancient Greek philosopher who wrote in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, stated that a slave was property and therefore did not have a soul. However, this view – that a person could be considered a “thing,” or a

species of “property” – was not the usual one, particularly as slavery was often a temporary condition that did not pass automatically to a slave’s children. Enslavement, in fact, was more like a relationship between people than between an owner and his property, and it meant different things in different places. In many societies, slaves had specific rights unless they were prisoners of war, among them being the right to life. Nevertheless, in general slaves were still despised as “outsiders,” and they were generally abused, such ancient societies generating religious and philosophical criticisms of slavery in which the status of the freeman was promoted.

Following the decline and eventual collapse of the Roman Empire, slavery remained an important institution throughout Europe. By the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, slaves were still considered valuable assets in the Mediterranean countries of Southern Europe, though the meaning of the term “slave” varied. However, one person’s right to another’s labour was becoming a separate matter from the right to own that person as property, and chattel slavery – the legal recognition of a person as property – rapidly declined during the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and it was not widely practiced thereafter in the increasingly powerful countries of Northern Europe. In these countries, the status of slave was increasingly considered one befitting only “outsiders” to kin, religion, race and nation, with the result that when the Europeans and the North-African Berbers, Christian and Muslim respectively, began to organize trading contacts with West Africa, this served to identify those already seen as outsiders as potential slaves.

Various forms of human bondage also existed in West-African societies at this time. The expansion of long-distance trade had promoted the use of slave labour in agriculture, and many of the early kings of Mali and Songhai, as well as of other

states, used Islam to justify their capture and enslavement of unbelievers. In the West-African state of Benin, for example, large numbers of slaves were used in agriculture, and these slaves, the private property of their owners, symbolized wealth and prosperity. The rulers of such African states also maintained large armies of slaves to protect their empires from attack, and the trading of horses for slaves that took place in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century in this region was part of a large military build-up along the Middle Niger and Senegal Rivers.

Yet, the precise nature of the slavery practiced at this time in such West-African societies continues to be the subject of debate, much of it relating to questions of definition. It has been held, for example, that the European counterparts of the vast majority of such African “slaves” would, properly speaking, have been *serfs*, who had a rather different status, and this begs the question of the many possible definitions of slavery in use in Europe and in Africa at this time. Furthermore, the word “slave” does not have a precise equivalent in many African languages. The Yoruba term, *eru*, for example, while often translated as “slave” does not denote the kind of chattel status familiar from the transatlantic slave trade. Indeed, recent research into African history has suggested that the term “slave” would only have been appropriate for newly acquired captives, who had not yet undergone the elaborate process of adoption and assimilation. The concept of a “slave”, then, is a complex one in West-African history, having very different meanings to that denoted by the chattel slaves of the later transatlantic slave trade.

Aside from these problems of definition, slavery as an institution in Africa was also widely used as a means by which outsiders could become assimilated into the local kinship system. It could also act as a mechanism by which certain persons were kept in a subordinate position for labour purposes for a defined period of time,

and as a social marker that indicated an absence of kin and a state of non-belonging. However, the emphasis in all such cases was upon the possibility of exiting from the state of slavery through gradual integration into family, household and kin structures. Indeed, in most cases, such African “slaves” were persons having specified rights and obligations, including the right to family, cultural identity and, ultimately, to freedom, and these rights were part of general customary understanding. Above all, enslavement was not confined to members of a single ethnicity or culture.

Nevertheless, despite these important differences in definition, it is true that the growth of slave markets in West Africa from the early 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards, in which Muslims and European Christians were the principal purchasers, weakened such traditional understandings of slavery, redefining it in the form it took in the transatlantic system. While traditional forms of slavery were generally less harsh, those trapped into lifelong slavery, or multiple sale, in the transatlantic trade could expect severe ill treatment. Furthermore, the impact of the transatlantic and trans-Saharan trades meant that there were growing restrictions on the number of people who could be assimilated into family and kin structures from without. The result was that the growth of the Atlantic trade effectively eroded traditional forms of domestic slavery, encouraging many African states to engage in slave raiding, wars and other forms of conflict in order to procure slaves for the new transatlantic trade. Such Africans, once imported as slaves into the colonial settlements, were forever defined as inferior to all whites, their racial subjugation and separation being violently enforced.

ii) **Race and Slavery: the Atlantic Context**



It is important to note that long before the existence of the transatlantic slave trade enslaved Africans were being sold across the Sahara to the Mediterranean, as well as by land and sea routes to Asia Minor. Yet, according to the historian Herbert Klein, this slave trade was only one of several important export trades from Africa to the rest of the world in this early period, with gold being a primary export commodity until well into the 17th century. However, slaves also fitted well into such traditional trading networks, and well before the development of the transatlantic trade both the internal and trans-Saharan slave trades were already growing in Africa.

Trade in slaves between West Africa and Europe expanded with increased Portuguese commercial contact at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Initially, the Europeans' primary interest had been gold, and, to a lesser extent, ivory, and such interests had the effect of integrating the African merchants, who were the producers of such export commodities as well as the consumers of new European imports, into the wider European trading systems well in advance of the development of the transatlantic slave trade.

Prince Henry the Navigator, for example, a Portuguese pioneer in sending commercial ships to Africa, was primarily interested in gold and engaged in slaving only as a secondary activity, rumours of substantial economic opportunities at Timbuktu on the Niger River having driven him to launch major military and trading expeditions in the area. Nevertheless, a major effect of such intervention was the opening up of the slave trade as an important European commercial activity, and a Portuguese commercial network rapidly developed in Guinea, slave trading there taking on new and enlarged dimensions. While the trade in gold in the region was well established by the 1440s, the trade in slaves was already not far behind along the Senegal River.

However, even in this early period it was no easy matter to obtain the slaves. Many Wolof kings along the Senegal River initially opposed slave trading with Europeans and were not willing to facilitate it, with the result that kidnapping became a widespread method of securing the necessary numbers of captives. Raiding villages and taking their inhabitants captive expanded in the area in order to supply the Portuguese slavers, some African traders seeing in the new trade a ready market that could be controlled and exploited for profit. Such practices spread wherever Europeans made contact with African merchants along the West-African coast. Many African communities resisted the new trade, but the superior organization of the Europeans sometimes made this difficult, and though the Wolofs killed Vallarte, a Danish member of Prince Henry's inner circle, in a battle off Goreé island in an attempt to repel the Portuguese in 1448, the raids continued, to some extent building upon a tradition of village raiding and kidnapping already established by the Tuaregs, who themselves enslaved black Africans for the Mediterranean trade.

As the slave trade developed, European thinking on slavery also developed. The Europeans, dwelling on the African peoples' different physical appearance and unfamiliar cultural characteristics, concluded that they were an inferior race of outsiders and deserved ill treatment. By virtue of their being non-European, it was thought that the black African peoples could be legitimately enslaved, an idea that went with the Europeans' belief that in trading in Africa they were actually also "discovering", and where possible "claiming," new lands and their inhabitants. Such views, articulated at the time by leading European theologians, philosophers and scientists, were shared by the Catholic Church, which supported the ill treatment meted out to the African communities by sanctioning both European wars of conquest and the transatlantic slave trade itself. The Vatican pronounced that the enslavement

of black Africans was allowed under the canon law of “just war,” because such peoples were pagans and should therefore be converted to Christianity, if necessary by force. In this way, Papal policy at the time supported the commercial activities of the European slave traders.

Nevertheless, kidnapping as a means of gaining slaves was both time-consuming and expensive, and the European traders preferred to purchase slaves wherever possible. However, this too had complications, since political resistance on the part of local communities had to be addressed. This was overcome, as the African rulers concerned, who had initially opposed the Portuguese, gradually began to see the benefits that the trade could bring them, since they could use it to dispose of unwanted prisoners of war, criminals and kinless persons in exchange for European goods. Though this gradual growth in co-operation on the part of the African rulers undoubtedly contributed to growth in the trade, the principal development leading to its expansion was the development of sugar plantations in the Madeiras, Cape Verde, Sao Thome, and the Canaries in the middle of 15<sup>th</sup> century. Sugar and slavery developed together: of the 130,000 slaves exported from West Africa between 1451 and 1550, 90% were sent to these islands and only 10% to the New World. By the end of the century, the Portuguese had extended their trading network along the coast into Dahomey and Togo, with Cape Verde becoming a major centre for the slave trade.

Other developments affecting the development of the transatlantic trade included the establishment of the Elmina Fort on the Gold Coast, which facilitated the trade in gold and the export of slaves. Similarly, in the Gulf of Benin, the Portuguese found African kings and nobles ready to sell persons they considered to be disposable, such as prisoners of war and convicted criminals, and at the same time other European

nations, such as the Spanish, were increasingly following the Portuguese lead in developing slave trades of their own. Even before Columbus's voyage to America the Spanish had discovered that African slaves could be used to supplement "unfree" workers at home, and in Africa they supplemented existing trade in gold, ivory and textiles with trade in humans. Several voyages were launched from Seville to Guinea with the express purpose of procuring slaves. All this activity led to rivalry between the European nations for control of the trade, and the Treaty of Tordesillas gave the West-African coast entirely to the Portuguese, leading to conflict between the two Iberian nations over the right to buy and sell slaves during the last quarter of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The Spanish government reacted to the inability of its merchants to supply Spanish American colonies with slaves by issuing an *Asiento*, or contract, to non-Spanish slavers to deliver slaves to the Spanish New World.

By the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Portugal had constructed trading posts on the Gold Coast at Accra, Shama, Elmina and Axim. From these, the Portuguese were able to dominate the early transatlantic trade, effectively keeping out the Spanish. Arrangements were sometimes made for African kings and nobles to visit Portugal in order to facilitate commerce and their conversion to Christianity, a paramount chief of Ughton in Benin visiting the Portuguese capital Lisbon in the 1440s, for example. On his return, the Chief encouraged the establishment of a Portuguese trading station on the coast to promote trade in palm oil and gold. Later, this trade developed into slaving, as the Europeans came to consider this the key to profitable commodity trading in West Africa.

Before his voyage to the Caribbean, Columbus had been familiar with the development of "sugar and black slavery" in the Canaries, and he was already part of the growing European merchant class then giving new shape to Atlantic commerce.

He was also familiar with the slave markets of Spain and Portugal, and black Africans, both free and enslaved, made up a part of his maritime crew. His visit to the Caribbean, then, had the effect of extending Atlantic slavery beyond the East Atlantic, since, in practical terms Columbus's voyages opened up the Americas to the transatlantic slave trade, making it a major business for merchants both in Europe and in Africa. In 1504, the Spanish Crown, which had initially been doubtful about the trade, gave permission for the systematic importation of African slaves into the Caribbean. The island of Puerto Rico was captured from the native Arawak and Carib Indians in 1508 by a Spanish army that contained a strong African contingent, and Diego Velazquez similarly used African slaves as soldiers when he captured Cuba in 1512.

Such incursions had disastrous effects on the native populations of the Caribbean islands. Unsuccessful military resistance to Spanish colonization, plus the vulnerability of the Arawaks and Caribs to European diseases and the impact of famine caused by crop destruction and community dislocation, resulted in genocidal losses among the native populations. Within ten years of Columbus's first contact with the indigenous population on Hispaniola, which was the Spanish base in the region (present-day Haiti and the Dominican Republic), this population had been almost completely wiped out. This catastrophe created the conditions for the importation of enslaved Africans into the Caribbean during the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

## **Summary**

Slavery as a social and economic institution existed in most ancient societies. That it survived into modernity in many parts of the world attests to its flexibility and adaptability in a variety of circumstances over time. However, the word "slavery" did

not mean the same thing in all circumstances; instead, it expressed a variety of relationships, and this was in itself an important part of the institution's ability to adapt to multiple circumstances.

White slavery ended in Europe during the Middle Ages, but the same period saw a growing use of slave labour among Africans in Africa, and this in turn led to the increasing use of enslaved Africans in the Mediterranean and in Europe. This meant that while the white labour used in the European colonization of the East-Atlantic islands and the Americas was not enslaved, even if it was bonded in various ways, the black African labour used was slave labour. And this development was driven by the westward expansion of large-scale sugar plantations to the Caribbean.

## **Educational Framework**

### **A. CONCEPTS**

- Race;
- Labour;
- Non-racial slavery;
- Chattel slavery;
- Discrimination and prejudice;
- Justice and injustice.

### **B. CONTENT**

1. Early forms of slavery in Ancient Athens and Rome – a multi-racial labour force drawn from Europe, the Mediterranean, North Africa and Asia;
2. Slavery as an institution in Africa and its relationship to the kinship System;

3. The Portuguese commercial network;
4. The development of sugar plantations in the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century;
5. The development of sugar plantations and slavery.

## **C. OBJECTIVES**

### **Knowledge**

Students should be able to:

- a. describe the history and development of slavery in its various forms in ancient societies;
- b. assess the role of the Portuguese in the origin and development of the transatlantic slave trade;
- c. examine the relationship between the development of the Caribbean sugar plantations and the expansion of the slave trade.

### **Attitudes**

Students will be encouraged to:

- a. recognize and value human dignity;
- b. recognize and value human rights;
- c. empathize with the victims of contemporary slavery.

### **Skills**

Students will develop the ability to:

- a. work together in groups;
- b. detect and reject invalid arguments in support of a claim or position;
- c. resolve conflicts peacefully.

## **D. TEACHING STRATEGIES**

- Debates;
- Group discussion;

- Role plays;
- Dramatization;
- Discussion of their own experiences of discrimination, whether discriminated against or discriminator.

## **E STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

- Read various texts and discuss varying definitions of slavery in different societies;
- Research contemporary forms of slavery;
- Analyze newspaper articles on current infringements of human rights, for example, of workers' rights;
- Identify situations at school where instances of discrimination, intolerance, or disrespect have been shown, and bring these to the attention of peers, teachers and the school community;
- Write a play on any of the above situations, writing position statements for each of the characters or groups involved in the drama. Ensure that each student taking part has sufficient knowledge of the situation, such that he or she is able to draw appropriate conclusions.

## **F. EVALUATION**

### **1. Debates**

- a. "Be it resolved that enslavement is not a condition befitting any one race or colour."
- b. "Be it resolved that contemporary forms of slavery are as dehumanizing as ancient forms of slavery."

### **2. Group Work**

Divide the class into groups of four to six pupils. Select a topic from a list of possible topics on the various forms of slavery in ancient times and up to the development of the transatlantic slave trade. Critically examine arguments for or against these forms of slavery.



### 3. **Presentation of a Portfolio**

This student portfolio can be based on the part played by the sugar industry in the expansion of the transatlantic slave trade and in modern forms of slavery. The results of the students' research can then be communicated to the class.

### **G. RESOURCE MATERIALS**

- Newspaper articles.

## **Chapter 2: West Africa before the Transatlantic Slave Trade**

The study of the origin and development of the transatlantic slave trade as a gradual rather than a sudden process requires that it be both examined comparatively and located historically. Systems of slavery, including the disposal of slaves by sale and exchange, existed in many societies long before the transatlantic trade, and these systems, though they exhibited significant variations over space and time, had certain common features. In explaining the timing and development of the transatlantic trade, two general trends should be borne in mind. The first of these is that forces determining the success or failure of slavery in Africa and in Europe at the end of the mediaeval period were pushing in different directions. This is a fair representation of the state of affairs when the Portuguese established trade contact along the Senegambia coast of Africa in the 1440s. The second is the westward expansion of the sugar industry.

While slavery had been reduced to a minor, and almost exclusively domestic, labour arrangement at this time in mainland Christian Europe, in West Africa, although the large-scale commercial use of slaves was limited, their availability and employment was widespread and growing in importance. In addition, since the 8<sup>th</sup> century the Muslim Mediterranean world had served as a cultural and commercial crossroads between Europe and Africa, and the spread of Muslim trading networks to include southern Europe, West Africa and India in the centuries that followed promoted the development of a West-African market in slaves, which grew in size and importance up until the 15<sup>th</sup> century. However, at the same time the capture of Islamic Spain by northern European Christians had the effect of reducing the scope and importance of slavery in the Mediterranean, since Spain had been a major slave market for Muslim merchants.

The second trend, the westward movement of the sugar industry, meant that the culture of “sugar and slavery” that was already a feature of the East-Atlantic world now required larger quantities of West-African slave labour. During the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, white slave labour had been used in the sugar industry established by Christian merchants in the Middle East, and particularly in Palestine and Syria. When this industry fell into Turkish hands at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, this triggered the westward movement of the “sugar and slavery” culture.

The industry first took root on the islands of Cyprus and Crete, before moving on to Sicily, and, by the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century it had expanded into mainland Europe in the Portuguese Atlantic province of the Algarve. Black slaves worked alongside white at this time, the white slaves having been mostly imported from eastern and southern Europe. Over time, the westward march of “sugar and slavery” continued, soon reaching the East-Atlantic islands of the Azores, Madeira, Cape Verde and Sao Tome. Here, the sugar industry also used white slaves, but already black African slaves predominated, and for this reason the 1440s were seminal years in the early development of black Atlantic slavery.

A market system in African slaves already existed at this time, though it was one dominated by Muslim traders. The Portuguese, who had pioneered European commercial and military incursions along the West-African coast, sought to break this Muslim domination and to secure an effective niche for themselves by purchasing increasing numbers of slaves from Muslim suppliers, engaging in kidnapping and raids to secure slaves and themselves making direct contact with African suppliers. Portuguese merchants disposed of slaves in three main areas: firstly, in the slave markets of southern and western Europe; secondly, in the East-Atlantic “sugar islands”, and thirdly in other African societies, where they were exchanged for “other

commodities,” notably gold.

Recent research on the early development of the transatlantic slave trade has focussed on living conditions and institutions in West Africa prior to the 1440s, with the objective of examining the nature of the region’s contact with the outside world at this period and assessing its development achievements in areas such as material production, commerce, institution building and public governance. This approach has enabled scholars to present detailed analyses of the relationship between the developing transatlantic slave trade and local forms of internal slave trading, in this way offering a more accurate interpretation of conditions in West Africa on the eve of the trade.

An important benefit of this approach is that it allows the economic and social conditions of West Africa and Western Europe at this time to be compared, illuminating the circumstances surrounding the rise of the transatlantic trade. A further benefit has been the special focus it has allowed on the disintegration of the large West-African states at this time, and the resulting vulnerability of large numbers of persons to slave raiding. Indeed, the historian John Thornton, among others, has urged that studies of the transatlantic slave trade should begin with the study of the rapidly changing political conditions in West Africa at this time. Such study, he says, would facilitate a better understanding of two important processes: firstly, how the mass acquisition and sale of enslaved persons came under the control of the African elites; and secondly, why administrative and judicial institutions in Africa increasingly co-operated in providing large numbers of Africans for the transatlantic trade.

In answer to these questions, another historian, Jean Suret-Canale, has suggested that the decline of many powerful states in the region during the 15<sup>th</sup> and

16<sup>th</sup> centuries meant that their ruling elites pursued their own survival by engaging in the transatlantic trade as clients of European merchants. The fact that various forms of local slavery were already widespread, and that organized opposition to the expansion of the slave trade was weak, meant that carrying out raids and warfare with the purpose of capturing slaves for European traders was a lucrative occupation for the elites. However, Suret-Canale is careful to emphasize that the transatlantic slave trade was not the result of internal African development; rather, it was always a specific response to European needs and intervention.

This chapter, then, will show that the transatlantic slave trade began within the context of three important circumstances in West Africa. The first of these was the fragmentation of large, indigenous political states, particularly those with large armies such as Ghana, Mali and Songhai. The second was the growing importance of the region as a source for slaves for the caravan traffic across the Sahara into the Mediterranean and Levant. And the third was the endemic conflict between the small coastal states in the region, together with their willingness to co-operate with European traders in exchanging slaves for arms.

An analysis of the rise and fall of powerful states in West Africa before and after the advent of the transatlantic slave trade indicates the extent to which the region had long been a vital part of the North-African commercial world, and how this had in turn affected commerce in Europe. Ghana, the first of these states to rise to power, was located about 100 miles north of the present state of the same name. Known as the “land of gold”, Ghana had already been a growing empire in the region when the Romans left North Africa in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, the Empire’s gold being largely mined in sub-regions, known as Wangara and Bambuk, outside of its political boundaries. During the period from about 950 to 1450 AD, Arab writers provide

much detail about the gold trade and about West-African relations to international developments.

The Soninke rulers of Ghana bought gold from Wangara in exchange for salt, textiles and copper, selling it on to Arab merchants. However, though they therefore acted as “middlemen” in the gold trade, they were also able to impose taxes on it and protect the Wangara region from outside attack. At this time, the slave trade was only a minor activity in the region, and it was not an important source of revenue for the Soninke, even if the buying and selling of gold and slaves went hand-in-hand within the context of the trans-Saharan caravan routes.

However, Almoravid Muslim attacks on Ghana in 1042, together with the fall of the Ghanaian capital, Kumbi Saheh, in 1076-77 and the Empire’s final collapse in 1203, led to political fragmentation in the region and a subsequent increase in both slavery and the slave trade. Nevertheless, the Muslim Mandingo Empire of Mali, which rose from the ruins of Ghana in the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century and included the two gold-mining regions of Wangara and Bambuk, did not yet significantly depend on the slave trade. Though the trade had increased in scale, slaves were not a major source of wealth for the rulers of Mali, whose focus was still on gold and territorial expansion.

During the rule of Mansa Musa – the grandson of Sundiata, the first ruler of Mali – who came to the throne in 1307, the Malian Empire captured the imagination of the Mediterranean and European world. The extensive Arab literature on Mali was made widely available in Europe, and compelling images of wealth and of the education available at the university in Timbuktu emerge from these texts. Mansa Musa’s pilgrimage to Mecca in 1324 was fabled for the impact his gold-laden caravan had as it passed through Walata and Tuat on its way to Cairo, and by the time that he died in 1332 Mali was a wealthy, commercially dynamic and well-organized state

having a reputation for culture and learning. Unfortunately, Maghan, Mansa Mali's son, lacked his father's political skills, and the Malian state soon began to disintegrate, bringing political chaos and heightened vulnerability to slave-raiding in its wake. Songhai, which had been a tributary state of Mali for a short period between 1325 and 1335, broke away and asserted its independence, and when Sonny Ali, a famous Songhai king, came to the throne in about 1464, he set about dismantling what was left of the Mali empire, conquering the capital Timbuktu in 1468. When the Portuguese arrived in the region in the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century, the Malian kings were still trying to hold the state together, at first soliciting Portuguese aid in their endeavour.

The rise to power of Askia Mohamed after the death of Sonny Ali meant the re-organization of Songhai as a major economic force in the region. Askia Mohamed is credited with the modernization of the country's economy, the creation of an efficient administration and the rebuilding of Timbuktu, Benné, and Walata as centres of learning. According to the historian Margaret Shinnie, "gold continued to flow northwards, together with slaves, ivory, ebony and ostrich feathers, and in exchange came manufactured goods of copper and iron, brassware, sword blades from Spain and Germany, cloth, and of coarse salt". By 1515, Askia had created one of the largest and wealthiest empires in Africa, stretching from the southern borders of Algeria to forest lands in the south and to the Atlantic in the west, even if the Moroccans, on the Empire's north-western borders, were doing their best to resist its growing wealth and influence. By 1590, as the Europeans penetrated deeper into the inland African states, Songhai was collapsing under Moroccan military pressure, and it was the failure of such African political units to join forces, fighting each other even as European incursions grew in scope, that, according to the historian Paul Lovejoy, facilitated the development of the slave trade.

At its peak, the Songhai Empire had been larger than many European states of the same period, and, when it was ruled by Sonny Ali between 1468 and 1492, it covered about one million square kilometres, therefore being larger than France. The Arab literature describing the Songhai Empire suggests that while the Malians took slaves in the process of waging war and annexing territory, the capture of slaves for sale to European traders was not an important goal of such wars. Nowhere is it stated that either Sonny Ali or Askia Mohammed saw slaving as a significant economic consideration. However, Thornton has suggested that in this regard the Songhai Empire might have been the exception rather than the rule, pointing out that most Africans would have been living in medium to small-sized states when the Portuguese arrived and that these states were located in densely populated regions of the continent. Medium-size states would have been those with territories of between 50,000 to 150,000 square kilometres, or, in other words, about the size of England and Portugal (which have areas of around 150,000 and 90,000 square kilometres, respectively). But smaller states would have been more typical of the political organization of the region at this time, perhaps having a population of between 3,000 to 30,000 people. Such small states would have filled the region later called the Gold and Slave Coasts, as well as the areas along the Gambia River and Niger Delta and along the Kwanza River in Angola.

The political elites of these small states tended to accumulate wealth and status not by means of territorial acquisition, as was the case in Europe and Asia, but by acquiring slaves through wars and raiding expeditions. While most slaves were used to increase the power and wealth of local elites, being set to work in domestic production, or in social or military service, some were sold on the internal African slave market. Slaves sold in this way were almost always newly acquired persons who



had not been assimilated into the dominant community, and the diversion of such slaves for sale to the transatlantic trade was a development resulting from the growing European presence in the region. The existence of such small states, together with the activities of their elites, resulted, as Thornton notes “in an enormous slave population in Africa at the time of the first Europeans”, and the Europeans swiftly engaged in political conflicts between the slave-producing states. Sometimes such involvement would have been for the explicit purpose of obtaining slaves; sometimes it would have been for more complex reasons. The Portuguese, for example, were deeply implicated in Kongo politics during the late 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, at the same time as they were consolidating their position as the prime mover in the growth of the transatlantic trade.

Research into West-African economic development on the eve of the transatlantic slave trade has shown that this was not far removed from conditions obtaining in Europe at the same time, and that the trade did not introduce vital goods into the region that the Africans could not produce themselves. On the contrary, the West-African elites began to participate in the transatlantic trade not in order to stimulate indigenous development or to acquire necessary goods, but rather to acquire exotic, or luxury, goods and commodities. Thus, the early years of the trade saw the arrival in Africa of European goods, such as textiles and metal products, mostly the iron and copper bars used to produce swords, knives and domestic utensils. However, many parts of West Africa could and did produce iron and textiles, so clearly the exchange of persons for these goods was not done in order to meet the basic needs of the African communities, but rather was done to develop conspicuous patterns of consumption among local elites. When the Portuguese arrived in Senegambia, for example, the local iron and copper industry was well established, producing trade

items of good quality. At the same time, Africans had long been recognized as sophisticated and skilled textiles makers; indeed, early Portuguese traders bought both iron and textiles in one part of Africa to sell to another. Many of those producing such goods were themselves slaves within the local division of labour.

A further effect of the Portuguese arrival in the region was the diversion of gold and slaves from the Saharan trade to the transatlantic. The political elites of the small African coastal and river states in particular saw the Portuguese presence as a way both towards their enrichment and as a potential source of protection from more powerful inland empires. At first, Portuguese merchants found it easier to obtain slaves than gold, which they desired more, since local Muslim merchants had long been reliable suppliers of slaves, and local elites were increasingly prepared to cooperate in the sale of captives secured in raiding missions.

In general, then, most West-African states on the eve of the transatlantic slave trade were small in size, and these small states, unlike their larger neighbours, were less concerned about expanding territory and more concerned about accumulating wealth, prestige and power by selling slaves at a profit to European slavers. Therefore, the expansion of the slave market in the century before the transatlantic trade took off was as much a function of local politics, as it was of economics. Local elites mobilized their resources in order to raid neighbouring vulnerable states for slaves, which were sold on first to Muslim merchants and then directly to the Portuguese. However, Central Africa had also become an important source of slaves by the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century, largely because of the existence there of states, such as Kongo, that engaged in persistent political and military conflict. These also generated large quantities of enslaved captives that could then be sold on to European slavers.

As a result, the Portuguese were also able to establish a major slave-trading network in the Angola area by the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

On their arrival in Africa, then, the Europeans were able to fit their need for slaves into existing patterns of localized and long-distance slave trading. The African elites responded to European demand for enslaved labour, doing so with greater alacrity than they had with respect to European demands for gold or for land. As long as the prices remained attractive for the European merchants, the continuation of the transatlantic slave trade as a client relationship between African and European elites was assured.

### **Summary**

The expansion of slavery in Africa during the 15th and 16th centuries is associated with the disintegration of the larger African states and the proliferation of smaller, fragmented ones. In this context, the local ruling elites saw slave owning as a principal way of consolidating their power and prestige.

The arrival of the Portuguese in the 1440s did not initiate slave trading in the region; rather, it served to give a transatlantic dimension to what was already an established commercial culture. Initially, the Portuguese engaged this culture on its own terms, and it was not until the beginning of the 16th century that Europeans began to determine and reshape the content and context of this slave-trading culture in fundamental ways.

### **Educational Framework**

## **A. CONCEPTS**

- Trade routes;
- Industry;
- Transatlantic;
- Trans-Saharan;
- Civilization;
- Co-operation;
- Unity;
- Chronology.

## **B. CONTENT**

1. The African continent before the transatlantic slave trade;
2. West Africa before the 1440s;
3. The political decline of West-African states in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries;
4. The fragmentation of West Africa's indigenous political systems; particularly those of Ghana, Mali and Songhai.

## **C. OBJECTIVES**

### **Knowledge**

Students should be able to:

- a. describe and understand the African continent before the introduction of the transatlantic slave trade in the form of a geographical overview;
- b. consider evidence and draw conclusions about West Africa's social, economic, political and cultural life before the introduction of the transatlantic slave trade;
- c. give reasons for the failure of West-African states to ally themselves against the transatlantic slave trade;
- d. identify African trade routes before the slave trade.

### **Attitudes**

Students will be encouraged to:

- a. appreciate and respect other peoples, and in particular to respect African civilization and its historical development;
- b. cherish and develop pride in African heritage and ancestry.

### **Skills**

Students will develop the ability to:

- a. interpret maps;
- b. prepare charts and maps;
- c. listen to other viewpoints and discuss issues and ideas;
- d. read critically from different texts;
- e. analyze, make interpretations and present oral reports;
- f. write critical essays;
- g. think chronologically (i.e. past, present and future time).

### **D. TEACHING STRATEGIES**

- Map study – individual and class;
- Group discussions;
- Art work;
- Craft work.

### **E. STUDENT/LEARNER ACTIVITIES**

- Construct a Time Line for the development of the slave trade;
- Using a map, locate territories in West Africa;
- Draw sketch maps to show trade routes in West Africa;
- Discuss the various contributions of African states to civilization at this time, such as their industrial and cultural development and their trading activities;
- Research traditional African symbols;
- Design a pattern for fabric using African symbols;

- Research Web sites on the slave trade and on other features of African history;

## **F. EVALUATION**

1. Short answer tests or restricted-response questions on West-African industrial development in the 15<sup>th</sup> century;
2. Map-making and chart building;
3. The use of designs or African symbols to communicate a given topic to the class, e.g. African civilization before the transatlantic slave trade;
4. Preparation of a “wall” of West Africa, highlighting its social, economic, political and cultural life.

## **G. RESOURCE MATERIALS**

A World map;

A map of Africa;

The Internet;

Supplementary Texts, including:

Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*

UNESCO *General History of Africa*

Cheik Anta Diop, *Cultural Unity of Africa*

Martin Bernal, *Black Athena*

### **Chapter 3: The Transatlantic Slave Trade**

The historian Patrick Manning, placing the transatlantic slave trade within the context of the global dispersion of enslaved Africans, has concluded that “a cumulative total of over 10 million Africans reached the New World as slaves from 1500 to 1900; closer to 12 million were dispatched in ships from Africa, and over 1.5 million lost their lives in the middle passage. In the same period, some 6 million slaves were sent from sub-Saharan Africa to the Orient, and some 8 million people were enslaved and retained within the African continent. An estimated total of 4 million people lost their lives as a direct result of enslavement within Africa, while many others died young because of the hard conditions of slave life.”

Portugal and Spain were the first European nations to sanction this trade by allowing settlers in their South-American colonies to own black Africans as chattel slaves. At first, royal licenses were granted to prominent citizens of both countries allowing them to import enslaved Africans into the colonies. However, since the native population of the Caribbean had been reduced to unsustainable levels one hundred years after Columbus’s voyages, such royal licensing swiftly fell into disuse and was replaced by unrestricted trade, so great was the demand for slave labour in the colonies.

The early development of the sugar industry on the Spanish islands of Cuba, Hispaniola and Puerto Rico, for example, as well as the many mining expeditions that took place to the interiors of these islands, promoted the expansion of the transatlantic trade. Meanwhile, the Portuguese had established the foundations of a large-scale plantation economy in Brazil by the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, using African slaves to produce sugar. By 1620, Brazil had become the largest producer of cane sugar in the

world, effectively dominating the European market for this commodity. The sugar plantations thrived on the labour of over 100,000 enslaved Africans, with twice as many again having been imported into Spanish colonies located between Mexico in the north and Chile in the south, in most of these colonies African slaves working alongside “native” slaves.

In Africa itself, the transatlantic slave trade grew alongside other commodity trades, and the growth of Elmina, a major Portuguese African trading station, was associated with both the gold and the slave trades. Indeed, by 1530 Elmina was more like a town than a trading station, being surrounded by a mixed-race population that was the result of white men’s sexual relations with black women. These African “coloureds,” or “Mina blacks,” as they were called, were thus also a product of the transatlantic trade, the Portuguese often also enslaving them and treating them as a distinct ethnic type.

Following Portugal’s example, other European nations such as France, England, Holland, Denmark, Sweden and Germany, also became involved in the transatlantic trade. Such nations fought both Portugal’s attempts to monopolize the trade and Spain’s determination to keep the Americas for itself. As a result, Portuguese slave ships had become vulnerable to attack by other European powers, as had its West-African forts and trading stations, by the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century. The French, for example, made significant early headway against the Portuguese monopoly on the Senegal River and in the Gambia, and William Hawkins, an Englishman, also became busy establishing slaving stations on the Gold Coast in the 1530s, as well as sales outlets in Brazil. While Queen Elizabeth I of England issued a pronouncement against the kidnapping of Africans by her subjects, she said nothing against their purchase and enslavement.



By the end of the sixteenth century, the Dutch, led by Bernard Ericks, had also established a slaving network on the Gold Coast. Trade in gold and ivory required elaborate separate organization with local African suppliers, and as a result the Dutch decided to focus their attention on slaves. Ericks's plan was to reach an agreement with sugar producers in Portuguese Brazil whose demand for slaves could not be met by Portuguese traders alone, and other Dutch merchants, such as Pieter Brandt and Pieter Van Den Broeck, also built up slave-trading operations in the Loango Bay between 1599 and 1602. The Dutch West India Company was established in 1607, and the Guinea Company later established a trading post at Mouri, about 12 miles east of Elmina on the Gold Coast.

Denmark and Sweden also expressed a keen interest in the transatlantic slave trade. Both King Christian IV of Denmark and King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden met with officials of the Dutch West India Company to discuss ways in which their two countries could participate in the trade, and Adolphus authorized the formation of a Swedish "South Company" to trade in slaves, the Danes following with a company of their own. Slave ships left Copenhagen for Guinea, later off-loading their cargoes in Virginia, Brazil and the West Indies. The Swedes also participated in a number of joint ventures with the Dutch, supplying the ships and crew for the voyages, while the Dutch provided the captains and finances. Forts built in Africa to store slaves were manned by Swedish soldiers. By the 1640s, the Danes were sending slave ships to Guinea, and in 1651 they chartered the Glückstadt Company to expand the trade. The *Neldebladet*, owned by Jens Lassen, the Secretary of the Exchequer in Copenhagen, was the first Danish ship to supply Africans to the Caribbean. Thus, like France and Holland, both Sweden and Denmark fought for a greater share of the African slave

trade, between them supplying over 50,000 slaves to the Caribbean during the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

In 1635, following a series of failed slave-trading ventures, the French government established the “West Indian Company ” with the objective of supplying slaves directly to France’s Caribbean colonies. Yet, despite this effort, Dutch slavers had assumed centre stage on the West-African coast by the 1640s, as well as in Caribbean and Brazilian markets. Between 1645 and 1700 the demand for African slaves, displacing white indentured servants in the English and French West Indian colonies, increased at a phenomenal rate. The enormous expansion of sugar production in the English colonies of Barbados, St. Kitts, Antigua and Jamaica, and in the French colony of Martinique, demanded African slave labour at a level beyond the capabilities of English and French nationals to deliver, and Dutch slavers filled this need.

In 1637, the Dutch took possession of the Portuguese fort of Elmina, and though the Portuguese managed to drive the Dutch out of Brazil in 1654, they never regained effective control of the Gold Coast slave trade. Instead, they moved into Angola, exporting over 10,000 Africans per year from Luanda by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Having established slave-trading arrangements on the Gold Coast, the Dutch then strengthened their control over the West Indian markets by supplying the French and English with slaves on favourable terms, these developments helping to promote Holland as the leading commercial and financial power in Europe, so much so that the Dutch West India Company had no significant rival during the 1640s and 1650s. In 1670, there were over 100,000 Africans in the English West Indian colonies, most of them supplied by the Dutch, and the Dutch also delivered over 50,000 Africans to Spanish America during this period.

Black Africans, then, 100 years after Columbus's voyages to the Caribbean, constituted the most important form of "unfree" labour in the Americas. White labour imported from Europe under a system of indentured servitude had proved to be inadequate to meet demand, and the enslaved native population, greatly reduced in number, was unable to reproduce itself. By 1650, the Spanish colonies alone had over 375,000 African slaves, some 30,000 of whom were in the Central America region, and about half on the islands of the Caribbean.

**Table 1: Spanish-American Slave Imports, 1595-1640**

<i>Port of Entry</i>	<i>Number</i>
Cartagena	135,000
Veracruz	70,000
Caribbean Islands	19,644
Buenos Aires	44,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>268,664</b>

**Source:** *Enriqueta Vila Vilar, Hispanoamérica y el comercio de esclavos* (Seville, 1977) p. 226

In fact, by the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, economic expansion in most European colonies in the Americas had come to depend upon the enslavement of Africans. Wherever profitable enterprises were established, in agriculture or in mining, African slaves were likely to be a primary form of labour. The trend was for slave societies to spring up everywhere, with Africans displacing enslaved natives, as well as white indentured servants, as the main suppliers of labour.

In order to counter Dutch control over the supply of African slaves to the English colonies, the government of King Charles II participated in forming a slave-trading company in 1663 called the Royal Adventurers, which traded in Africa. This company was financed by some of the leading aristocrats at Court, including the Duke of Buckingham and the Duke of Albermarle. The King's brother, the Duke of York, was also elected president of the company. In this way, the monarch and government of England formally engaged in the development of the transatlantic slave trade, since, though the company also traded in ivory and gold, slaves were its single most lucrative commodity.

However, when the Royal Adventurers Company fell into financial troubles on account of inefficient debt collection in the Caribbean, a new enterprise was launched in 1672 named the Royal African Company. This moved swiftly to establish trading posts at Cape Coast, Aha and Accra along the Gold Coast, and it soon became the largest single company involved in the slave trade, having a remit to supply the English colonies with slaves at the competitive unit price of £16 - £18. Between 1680 and 1700 it supplied some 30,000 Africans to the Caribbean.

The 30 years following the establishment of the Royal African Company saw a substantial upsurge in the size of the transatlantic trade. It is estimated that nearly 600,000 Africans were shipped out in these years, the majority to the sugar plantations of the Caribbean and Brazil. Most of these would have been delivered by the large companies, but small independent traders were also effective suppliers. The 18<sup>th</sup> century also saw the further expansion of the Caribbean sugar plantations, with sugar production taking over most of the Caribbean and much of north-eastern Brazil. In addition, the English North American colonies now began their investment in tobacco and in cotton, which matured a century later with the "Cotton Kingdom" of

the Old South. In all cases, however, economic expansion was linked to the development of the transatlantic slave trade, and in all these colonies slavery became a principal institution.

Almost everywhere, the demand for African slaves was on the increase. As a result, African clients seeking to supply European traders, and now North American ones as well, penetrated deeper into the African interior in search of captives. In 1697, the English abolished the monopoly granted the Royal African Company to supply the English colonies with slaves, and this opened the English trade up to freer participation, effectively enlarging it. The English South Seas Company was also awarded the *Asiento* (permission) by the Spanish government to supply Spanish America with 4,800 slaves per year.

It was not uncommon for English, French, Dutch and Danish companies to bid for the Spanish *Asiento*, often fighting to protect their contracts, so large had the Spanish trade now become. Until 1739, the British were the major *Asiento* suppliers of Africans to Spanish America, delivering over 150,000 between 1713 and 1739, before losing the *Asiento* in the latter year. During the Seven Years War of 1756-1763, in which England, France and Spain fought each other for colonial turf, the British captured French West African trading posts in Senegal, and carried large numbers of slaves to other conquered colonies, such as Guadeloupe and Martinique, as well as to Havana.

However, all this commercial activity on the part of competing European nations cannot disguise the fact that it was the Portuguese who, up until 1735, had shipped more Africans to the Americas than had any other single nation. Over 300,000 were shipped on Portuguese ships to Brazil between 1700 and 1735, mostly taken from the Gold Coast and Angola. Rio was the major slave port in the colony,

but Bahia also served the sugar-plantation belt in the north-east of Brazil. As the gold-mining area of Minas Gerais became overshadowed by the expansion of sugar production, Brazilian demand for slaves increased considerably in the 1760s, with the Maranhão and Pernambuco Companies importing the bulk of Africans into the northern captaincies in the 1750s and importing over 150,000 in the 1760s alone.

Yet, despite these Portuguese figures, in the decades after 1740 the British surged ahead of their European competitors, surpassing the Portuguese and the French over the course of the century. In the 1740s alone, for example, British traders removed over 200,000 Africans to the Americas – more than all other countries combined. Half of these were deposited in the Caribbean, especially in Jamaica and Barbados, with about 70,000 being brought to Virginia and North and South Carolina in what later became the United States. A further 250,000 slaves were shipped by the British during the 1750s, though the Portuguese also shipped nearly 175,000 to Brazil during the same decade.

Following the United States' successful War of Independence against the British in the 1770s, American citizens were deprived of new slaves by an English blockade around the American coasts, and as a result American traders stepped up plans to finance their own slave voyages to West Africa. The independence of the United States from Britain could have meant the loss of an important slave market; however, British military occupation of Cuba at the end of the Seven Years War created a major opportunity for English slavers to develop a new market to replace the lost American one, especially as Cuba was then beginning the development of a major sugar-plantation sector, and the British were keen to supply this with slaves and capital. Spanish settlers were willing to do business with English slavers, welcoming the opportunity to purchase slaves from them.

By 1780, Cuba and the French colony of Saint Domingue, (present-day Haiti) were absorbing more slaves than all the other colonies in the Caribbean combined, the latter having the largest black population in the region, with 275,000 slaves, together with the largest output of sugar. By this time, then, African slave labour had made possible the economic revolution that was transforming, or had already transformed, both the Caribbean and much of the Americas. And further expansion in colonial production would mean the further large-scale deployment of African slaves.

### **Summary**

The transatlantic slave trade had developed as the largest commercial undertaking of the Atlantic World by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Beginning slowly during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, its dimensions were enlarged as all European nations with colonial interests in the Americas began to participate. European demand for slaves in the Americas seemed insatiable, and African suppliers did what was required of them to meet market demand. Extensive organizational efforts were also required of the participants in the trade, and as a result it gained the support and involvement of political elites on both sides of the Atlantic.

### **Educational Framework**

#### **A. CONCEPTS**

- Native population;
- “Mina blacks”;
- Royal License;

- Joint-venture;
- Indenture – servitude;
- Monopoly;
- Embargo;
- New World;

## **B. CONTENT**

1. Portugal and Spain sanction the transatlantic trade;
2. Elmina (Ghana) – the main African slave-trading port in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century;
3. The formation of West Indian companies to engage in the trade by the English, French, Dutch, Danes, Swedes and Germans;
4. The slave trade helps Holland to emerge as the leading commercial and financial power in Europe.
5. The 18<sup>th</sup> century growth in the transatlantic slave trade means a hubbub of slaving activity on both sides of the Atlantic.

## **C. OBJECTIVES**

### **Knowledge**

Students should be able to:

- a. identify the shifting dominance of European powers involved in the slave trade;
- b. describe the importance of the slave trade to the economic expansion of the Americas;
- c. examine the involvement of political elites in the trade on both sides of the Atlantic.

### **Attitudes**

Students will be encouraged to:

- a. be sensitive to the ills caused by greed and the abuse of power;



- b. empathize with oppressed peoples, regardless of their racial, economic or social status;
- b. respect the dignity and worth of every human being, and grow to an acceptance of self and realization of self-worth;

### **Skills**

Students will develop the ability to:

- a. work together in groups and explore various viewpoints;
- b. recognize and respect different perspectives and viewpoints;
- c. plan presentations on the transatlantic trade, using a variety of resources;
- d. infer the “causes and effects” of the slave trade in the Americas.

## **D. TEACHING STRATEGIES**

- Group work;
- Oral presentations;
- Role play;
- Field trips to places of memory.

## **E. STUDENT/ LEARNER ACTIVITIES**

- Use of wall charts to depict European involvement in the slave trade;
- Discussion of factors leading to changing European dominance of the transatlantic trade;
- Students to work in groups in order to research and create an annotated map of the transatlantic trade;
- Students to work in pairs to create “cause-and-effect” charts showing the reasons for the development of the transatlantic trade. Volunteer pairs to present these charts to the class;
- Small group discussion of reactions to the slave trade;

- Field trips to places of memory to compare and contrast the living accommodation of planters and slaves.

## **F. EVALUATION**

1. Present illustrated evidence to support or refute claims that the British were the dominant European country involved in the transatlantic trade.
2. Open-ended Questions:
  - a. Imagine that you are a plantation owner in need of labour. Write a journal entry describing your attempts to acquire it;
  - b. Write a brief essay as an African citizen in the year 1530 expressing your views on the arrival of European slave traders in your country.
3. Student presentations (in pairs) on reasons for the development of the transatlantic trade.
4. Chart-building exercise.

## **G. RESOURCE MATERIALS**

Wall-chart paper;

Maps;

Supplementary texts.

## **Chapter 4: Slavery in the Americas**

Enslaved Africans made a significant contribution to European colonization and development of the Americas. However, it was not obvious at the outset that they would do so, and slavery as an institution at first developed slowly and amid considerable doubt and controversy.

Initial concerns about slavery reflected the perspectives of the different interest groups that promoted colonialism. Not all these groups were motivated by profit alone; indeed, the spreading of Christianity, or the quest for prestige and power, were equally important considerations. Furthermore, the early European colonies were located in territories belonging to heterogeneous, but well-entrenched, native peoples, and the European settlers that arrived following Columbus's voyages first needed to subjugate these peoples using their more advanced military technology.

The responses of the indigenous peoples to European colonialism varied over time and place, but ultimately they recognized that their survival and freedom were threatened by the European presence. Therefore, they fought against the Europeans, ultimately being defeated and reduced to servitude. Many were enslaved in the way that the Africans later also were, and others were forced into unfamiliar conditions of labour. However, everywhere the results of this process were the same, namely demographic catastrophe for the native populations. Within a century of European arrival, the indigenous population of the Americas had fallen by over 60%.

The Spanish and Portuguese states, and especially the Catholic Church, were divided on the legitimacy of the slave trade and on the contributions of African slaves to colonial society. Accordingly, they sought to establish guidelines and standards on the control and monitoring of slave life, judging it important, at least at first, to establish clear principles governing European colonialism and slave owning. Later

northern European settlers, among them the English, French, Danish and Dutch, arrived in large numbers a century after the Spanish and Portuguese, at a time when both Spanish and Portuguese settlers had demonstrated a preference for African over Indian slaves. The Portuguese had made this transition in Brazil by the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, being the first to establish the characteristic New World mix of “sugar and black slavery”. Thus, when the newcomers arrived, they too used Africans as slaves whenever and wherever this was judged financially viable and economically necessary.

Therefore, by the early 17<sup>th</sup> century there was little debate in colonial societies regarding the rights and wrongs of African slavery. Slavery had now become both a system of trade in itself and a means of generating trade through commodity production. Slave traders and slave owners, together with merchants and producers, were linked in a system that was supported both by the governments of the European countries involved and also by influential elements of European society.

As had been the case on the East-Atlantic islands in the Old World, the expansion of African slavery in the New was directly linked to the development of the sugar industry. With the growth of large-scale sugar production in Brazil in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, and in the West Indies in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, demand for African slaves increased at a phenomenal rate. Everywhere the relationship between sugar production and the use of Africans as slaves was the same, with slavery becoming the mainstay of sugar and coffee production in Brazil and the Caribbean, as well as, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, of tobacco and cotton in the United States. Mining and logging in Central America also relied heavily upon African slaves, as did some early manufacturing enterprises and urban service sectors.

Between 1502 and 1870, Brazil, was the largest single importer of slaves by virtue of the size of its sugar industry, accounting for 38% of the total. The British and French Caribbean, for the same reason, each took 17%, and the marginal Dutch, Danish and Swedish colonies received 6%. Spanish America took 17%, with the British colonies that became the United States taking a mere 6%.

The vast majority of slaves were imported during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which was the period of greatest expansion in the sugar industry, which absorbed at least 70% of all slaves. In the Caribbean alone, about 90% of slaves worked in the sugar sector, while in Brazil the figure was about 45%, with mining claiming another 25%. According to historian Philip Curtin, a total of 9,735,000 slaves were imported from Africa into the Caribbean, broken down into less than 0.25 million slaves until 1600, 1.3 million in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, 6.2 million in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and 1.8 million in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The USA was a minority importer of slaves largely because it did not have a developed sugar industry, and as a result in 1700 there were ten times more slaves in the Caribbean than there were in all the North American colonies combined. In 1770, Africans made up 90% of the population of the British Caribbean, but only 20% of the North American colonies. However, decline in the large black populations of Brazil and the Caribbean meant that by the 19<sup>th</sup> century the USA, where the small black population had nevertheless grown vigorously, emerged with a much larger total black population, and in 1800 there were 1.1 million slaves in the USA. Had the US also experienced the kind of population decline that the Caribbean slave populations had experienced, then this figure would have stood at 186,000, according to calculations carried out by the historians Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman. In 1825, there were 1.7 million slaves in the southern USA, 36% of the total in the

hemisphere, with Brazil possessing 31% of the total, the Caribbean 21% and Spanish America 12%. As a result, though the US had been a minority importer of slaves, it emerged as the country that had the single largest African slave population.

The management of such slave societies was no easy matter: the Africans did not wish to be enslaved, and they vigorously opposed their condition. As a result, such slave societies were maintained less by consensus and more by force and cruelty, depending for their stability on a combination of militia control, urban constables and garrisoned soldiers. These functioned within the context of laws designed to meet the specific needs of colonial conditions.

In all the colonies, slavery laws laid the foundations for elaborate systems of repression. In the English territories, such laws were passed by elected legislative assemblies dominated by elite slave owners, and they were invariably sanctioned by metropolitan officials who did not consider them contrary to English jurisprudence. Rather, slavery legislation was upheld by principles found in both the English statute and common law, where the right to own property was established as a fundamental right, having been upheld by the English judiciary for nearly 200 years. In 1788, the Privy Council heard testimony on the principles governing the early English slavery laws:

The leading Idea in the Negro System of jurisprudence is that which was the first in the Minds of those most interested in its Formation; namely that Negroes were Property, and a species of Property that needed a rigorous vigilant Regulation. The numerous Laws passed in the different Islands immediately upon their Settlement, and for a considerable Time after, with all their multifarious and repeated

Provisions, had uniformly this for their Object. To secure the Rights of Owners and maintain the Subordination of Negroes, seem to have most occupied the Attention and excited the Solitude of the different Legislatures; what regards the Interests of the Negroes themselves appears not to have sufficiently attracted their notice.

The accuracy of this assessment is not contradicted by reference to the few provisions contained in the slavery laws holding the slave owners responsible for supplying their slaves with adequate clothing, food and housing. Rather, these provisions served only to reinforce the slave owners' perceptions of the slaves as their private property, since it was expected that even inanimate property should be properly maintained.

In general, a similar perception of blacks as an inferior race whose role was conceived to be that of providing servile labour could be found in the wording of all the European slave codes, irrespective of their different national backgrounds. Nevertheless, there were important differences concerning these codes' origin and content, and to some extent also their application. Such differences can be traced to variations in the legal traditions and political cultures of the different European countries, while the codes' similarities owed most to the common conceptions of black people that obtained across national boundaries at the time, as well as to the slave owners' common search for broadly similar solutions.

However, the legal codes enacted by the different continental European governments, such as the Spanish *Siete Partidas*, and the French *Code Noir* of 1685, bore closer resemblance to each other than they did to the legislation in the English colonies, which had been enacted by the sugar planters themselves without reference

to the metropolitan government. Both the Spanish and the French code invoked the feudal value of paternalism, which too often only masked the racism and exploitation that slavery represented. If the slaves responded favourably to paternalist care, then it was thought that the legitimacy of the slave owners' claim to ownership of them would be more securely established. However, as the historian Eugene Genovese has shown, such displays of paternalism were understood by all the parties involved as serving merely to reinforce relationships of domination and subordination, having brutality as their principle characteristic.

There were, however, some differences even between these paternalistic codes. The Spanish *Siete Partidas*, for example, as historian Elsa Goveia has argued, was less the expression of the slave owner's views than was the French *Code Noir*, which had been drawn up in France "with West Indian conditions firmly in mind". The *Siete Partidas*, though it expressed the need for the strict guidance and control of slaves, did not see in this status any contradiction with the idea that slaves too were persons having civic identities and the theoretical right to freedom. Indeed, according to the Spanish king Alfonso the Wise who had framed the code, freedom was the natural and desirable condition of all mankind. Even the French code did not only express the interests of the colonial slave owners, since it too was a metropolitan code, and not a colonial one.

Indeed, in analysing the *Siete Partidas* in detail, the historian Franklin Knight has described it as a "liberal Code" that recognized and accepted the "personality of the slave" and held "aloft the idea of liberty," though he recognizes that there were marked differences between what the code said and how it was actually applied. The result of this divergence was that over time metropolitan legislators came to come to terms with the slave owners' different perceptions of colonial reality, issuing laws that



were more directly in the slave owners' interests. Thus, when a *recopilacion*, or digest of colonial laws, was compiled by Spanish officials in 1680, its provisions laid much stress on keeping slaves under control. Slaves were to be policed as potentially subversive, and, though the laws also called upon the colonists to baptize and manumit their slaves, seeking to enhance the slaves' family lives, the core idea was nevertheless the restriction of their freedom. In this digest, all blacks, whether free or enslaved, were conceived of as members of a dangerous and destructive caste, as well as of a subject race.

Like the *Siete partidas*, the French *Code Noir* is a major piece of legislation in the field of slave control. This code, which consists of 60 articles and was drawn up by officials of King Louis XIV, saw no contradiction between the interests of the slave owners and the opinion of the metropolitan authorities on issues of slave regulation and discipline. Furthermore, though the code guarantees a slave's right to life and to social identity, it also guarantees a slave owner's right to own slaves as private property.

The *Code Noir* was designed to give minimum protection to slaves without encouraging insubordinate patterns of behaviour, and under its provisions a slave could make a complaint to the French Crown in cases of maltreatment by his or her owners. As in the Spanish code, a French-owned slave was to be baptized and raised in the Catholic faith, encouraged to keep a family, and no limitations were to be placed upon possibilities for his or her manumission. Slaves were not to work on Sundays or on Catholic religious holidays.

Yet, for all this the *Code Noir* was also concerned to guarantee the rights of the slave owners over their slaves. It demanded absolute obedience from a slave, who could own no property and could be punished by death if found guilty of striking a

white. The code specified the amount of food and clothing a slave was allowed, and though it ruled out the use of torture, Article 42 of the code allowed slave owners to chain or to whip their slaves. Slaves were not allowed to assemble (Article 16), not even for the purpose of marriage, without the explicit agreement of their owners, and under no circumstances could they own or sell sugar cane (Article 18). Yet, interesting though the *Code Noir* is, its provisions probably do not reflect the reality of the slaves' lives on the sugar plantations, and they do not form an adequate window through which to view the experiences either of the slaves or of their owners. Such legal codes, whether emerging directly from colonial legislatures or imposed by the imperial government in Europe, were always designed to regulate the behaviour of slaves as social subordinates. However, while the *Siete Partidas* and the *Code Noir* attempted to balance repression with protection, English law reflected no such concern.

Instead, English law on slavery reflected only the need for constant vigilance on the part of the white population against the black, and, according to the historian Richard Dunn, it "legitimised a state of war between blacks and whites, sanctioned rigid segregation, and institutionalised an early warning system against slave revolt." English slave owners did not allow their slaves any rights until the very final years of slavery, and English-owned slaves did not enjoy the kind of civil rights nominally guaranteed in the Spanish and French codes, such as the right to family life, leisure time, religious instruction, or access to law to protest against cruel treatment. The Barbados Slave Code of 1661, for example, the first comprehensive legal provision of its kind in the English American colonies, and one that served as a blueprint for slave owners both in the Caribbean and in many mainland American colonies, clearly illustrates English legal opinion on the subject of slavery. The influence of this

opinion can be seen in laws later enacted in Virginia and in the Carolinas, where many West Indian slave owners resettled during the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

In this code, Africans are described as “heathenish”, “brutal” and “a dangerous kind of people” whose “naturally wicked instincts” should be suppressed. They are also defined as having “a barbarous, wild and savage nature”, “wholly unqualified to be governed by the laws, customs and practices” of the “English Nation”. In this way, the code reflected the daily tensions and violence that shaped relations between black and white in the English colonies. Slaves found guilty of serious offences, or even suspected of such offences, were to be put to death, with public torture being used to deter further potential offenders. In addition, English-owned slaves could be gibbeted, castrated, branded with hot irons, dismembered, or locked in dungeons for unlimited periods as punishment for insubordination.

Such English social and legal perceptions of Africans, together with the punishments that went with them, reflected not only the English definition of slaves as property that could be disposed of as an owner saw fit, but also English belief that Africans were an inferior people deserving their enslavement as a kind of natural status for non-Christians. Thus, whites who killed slaves in the course of administering punishments committed no criminal offence, though the “unprovoked” murder of a slave by an owner was punishable by a fine of £15. It was only at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that murdering a slave became a capital offence in the British colonies.

Elsewhere in Europe, Danish slave codes were shaped by the need to strike a balance between repressing slaves in order to control them and increase their economic efficiency and protecting them from the vices and violence of their owners. However, repression, rather than protection, still triumphed: when the Danish settlers

on the Virgin Islands of St Croix, St Thomas and St John debated possible insurrection among their slaves, for example, it was the need for repression that was reflected in the law. Similarly, like the other European slavery laws instituted elsewhere in the Americas, Danish laws became more severe towards the slaves as the ratio of blacks to whites increased. The Danish code of 1733, for example, which revised those of 1672 and 1684, introduced punishments that included hanging, dismemberment and branding with hot irons for offences such as theft and “insolence”, even though these had formerly been punishable by flogging and by specified periods of imprisonment. And, following English example, indemnities for economic losses resulting from the “just” punishment of slaves were introduced.

Though provisions remained in place in Danish law to ensure that slaves had proper access to maintenance and subsistence, measures were taken to protect the owners’ right to discipline their slaves and to enjoy every benefit from owning them. Over time, social custom played a greater part in the management of slaves than did statute law, and, as everywhere in the European American colonies, the slave owners’ authority over their slaves typically went far beyond the letter of the law.

Dutch legal provision for the control and regulation of slaves resembled that of French more closely than it did that of any other European state. The Dutch West India Company, for example, was simultaneously determined to discipline its slaves, benefiting from their labour as alienable property, while at the same time insisting that slave owners had an obligation to provide for the social, educational and religious guidance and instruction of their slaves. As in the French colonies, however, such obligations were swiftly subordinated to daily reality, which emphasized control rather than instruction. Indeed, the Dutch, writes historian David Lowenthal, were popularly thought of as being the “cruellest” masters of all the Europeans, though

according to another historian, van Lier, this reputation owed more to Dutch fears concerning their minority status in the New World, and to the harsh circumstances of life in the Suriname settlement in particular, than it did to any particular acts of cruelty carried out by the Dutch.

Thus, all the European slavery codes gave expression to divisions based on colour, race and class within American societies from the earliest years of colonization. Racism promoted a pro-slavery ideology, and white settlers demanded a legal framework that reflected this. Such racial divisions meant that while some colonialists inveighed against miscegenation, wherever blacks laboured and whites ruled in the Americas a prominent feature of society was the existence of people of mixed racial ancestry. The European slavery codes provided that all juveniles should take the socio-legal status of their mothers at birth, and, since most people of mixed racial origin were born of slave mothers, they too were designated as slaves.

This aspect of slave societies calls attention to the particular experiences of slave women, and recent scholarship, attempting to compensate for past gender insensitivity, has sought to emphasize that there was no single slave experience, and that analyses of slave conditions should therefore take gender into consideration. The result of this has been the uncovering of important details of women's experience in slave societies, and these now inform comparative discussion on gender and slavery.

Such findings indicate that women experienced day-to-day life in ways fundamentally different from men. Because of the need to benefit socially and financially from women's sexuality and fertility, slave owners' policies focussed on them in specific ways that deepened their exploitation. For example, slave owners could not be found guilty of the rape of an enslaved women, because under the law such women were his property. Slave women's experience varied sharply across

individual colonies, but less so across national lines. There were also sharp differences in the lives of women of different colours, reflected in manumission data showing that brown-skinned women were twice as likely to be freed than were black-skinned women.

However, the slave owners, despite all the detail of the legal codes, were in general caught in a wider dilemma. As rational entrepreneurs they sought to maximize their profits by minimizing costs, reducing expenditure on slaves to subsistence levels. However, at the same time, they were also obliged to look after their slaves, who represented considerable capital investment, and this required careful policy formulation and implementation. The effective maintenance of the enslaved Africans meant that daily management of their subsistence and health could not be left to chance. They had to be properly nourished and have proper access to medical care if they were to be productive workers. However, at the same time the impact of class and racial prejudice upon economic thinking often led to subsistence levels being located below what was required to maintain general health, and research has confirmed that slaves were generally malnourished, suffering from a variety of diseases associated with malnutrition. Not only did the availability of food fluctuate by season, but the slaves could also experience long periods of hunger after hurricanes, during droughts and at times of war. Crop cycles in Europe and North America also affected food availability. As a result, the slaves often suffered from severe deficiencies in important vitamins and minerals, making them vulnerable to disease.

This poor health and nutrition, together with demographic and other socio-economic factors, contributed to the inability of most slave populations to reproduce themselves fully until the closing years of the slavery system. In discussing the

reasons behind this inability, demographic historians have emphasized the need to analyse the social composition of the different slave societies and to identify variables determining demographic performance over time. Only in the southern states of what later became the United States was the black population able fully to reproduce itself during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with the Caribbean and Brazil seeing population decline and demographic failure.

The slaves, however, showed great willpower in struggling to survive such adversities and to fight against them. Needing to focus on effective resistance, not only did they fight back, but they also wrote back against their oppressors, with many slaves writing letters or petitions protesting against the conditions of their lives, or giving oral testimony to commissions and making arrangements for the publication of memoirs. In this way, they collectively created a literary tradition for themselves that is at the core of Atlantic political culture. The memoirs of Olaudah Equiano, for example, an Ibo man kidnapped when a child in his village and surviving years of slavery in the Caribbean, the United States and England, has no equal in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century anti-slavery and pan-Africanist literature. When added to the autobiographies of Esteban Montejo and Mary Prince and the speeches of Toussaint L'Ouverture, such memoirs represent the varied voices of blacks in the Americas struggling against slavery.

Blacks also pursued their freedom by other means, declaring war on the slavery system and fighting bloody battles in the process. Comparative studies of patterns and forms of slave resistance are now available, allowing the major events and ideas shaping the development of New World anti-slavery movements to be identified. It is still the case, however, that although slave revolts and rebellions have been considered in detail, the relations between these occasional events, which

required high levels of political organization, and the slaves' more spontaneous responses to their conditions have not yet been adequately assessed. The record of resistance nonetheless illustrates that there was hardly a generation of slaves in the Americas that did not take anti-slavery action to the level of armed struggle in the pursuit of freedom, with, from the perspective of the white slave owners, persistent slave rebellions being punctuated by daily rumour and suspicion of conspiracy.

Such slave rebellions were expected in much the same way as were crop failures or hurricanes – they were a part of the natural order of things in the slave societies. Among the owners, there was a constant fear of slave revolt, but this was seen as part of the climate of the times, and the slave owners' prime objective was to weather such storms and press on with business. The slaves, however, were able to build up a culture of resistance that transcended national boundaries, revolts often spilling over from one colony to the next and the slaves favouring the crossing of national borders as an effective organizational strategy. From the wheat farms of Canada to the cotton fields of the US, from the large Caribbean islands to the smaller island outposts, and in the mountains and valleys of Central and South America, the enslaved Africans pursued their freedom by all possible means, and in some of these colonies independent maroon societies were established, several of which still survive today.

Among the more important slave revolts was the 1791 rebellion on the French island of Saint Domingue, which led to anti-colonial revolution and the emergence of Haiti, the first black-ruled state in the New World, in 1804, ending some 300 years of European political monopoly in the Americas. As a result of this success, revolt took on a new dimension in all the other slave societies of the region, as slaves everywhere became more determined than ever to fight for their freedom, since they were now



able to look to the new state of Haiti as a symbol of hope. Thus, an 1805 document from Rio de Janeiro indicates that Brazilian slaves knew about the Haitian Revolution, and that they wore necklaces bearing the image of President Dessalines, who had declared the Haitian republic, around their necks. This flow of information among slaves about each other's actions speedily crossed colonial lines, facilitating the slaves' engagement in domestic politics. In Brazil, for example, slave rebellions took place in imitation of those that had brought on Haitian independence, and the Hausa ethnic group in particular were prominent in these revolts, achieving a reputation as formidable freedom fighters.

Though emancipation ultimately came through legislation in all the European colonies in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it had taken nearly 100 years for this to happen after the earliest formal emancipation movements had begun. Despite frequent slave revolts and rebellions over a 400-year period, slave owners were able to contain these because systems of control and regulation secured compliance and because considerable violence was used in putting down such revolts. The Haitian Revolution stands out as the great exception to this, but the slave revolt on the Danish island of St. Croix should also be mentioned. Here, slaves revolted on July 2 1848, refusing to work unless they were offered wages, and it was within the context of this general strike, representing an act of self-liberation, that Danish officials proclaimed the slaves' emancipation.

Considerable debate continues among historians about the relative responsibility of revolts and rebellions by slaves, European parliamentary debate and legislation, the development of industrial capitalism and philosophical discourse on human rights and freedom for ending slavery. However, there is general agreement

that a combination of social, political and economic forces was required finally to topple the transatlantic slave trade and the slave societies that it fed.

## **Summary**

The distribution of enslaved Africans across the Americas was determined principally by the location of the sugar industry. As a result, the Caribbean and Brazil, the heartlands of the sugar plantations, accounted for at least two-thirds of all arrivals. Other industries, such as cotton and tobacco production in the colonies that eventually became the United States of America, and mining and logging in South and Central America, were minority users of slaves.

Only in the United States were Africans able to reproduce themselves fully. The slave populations of Brazil and the Caribbean exhibited failing demographic trends, and these colonies pressed for larger imports of slaves as a result, rather than taking measures to reduce mortality. This trend was only reversed later at the time of growing agitation for the abolition of the slave trade.

In all the colonies, the enslaved population was controlled by a combination of military might and legal provisions. Important differences in the way that relations between slaves and free persons were conceived determined the nature of the laws designed for governing the slaves, and there were significant differences across national boundaries concerning the social relations and lived experiences of the slaves.

## **Educational Framework**

### **A. CONCEPTS**

- Old World;

- New World;
- Anti-slavery;
- Slave laws;
- *Code Noir*;
- *Siete Partidas*;
- *Recopilacion*;
- Maroonage;
- Miscegenation;
- Pan-Africanism.

## **B. CONTENT**

1. The demographic decline of the indigenous peoples in the Americas;
2. The expansion of African slavery in the Americas;
3. The establishment of slave laws and systems of repression;
4. The different mortality rates in the colonies;
5. Patterns of slave resistance;
6. The independence of Haiti – the end of an era of European monopoly rule in the Americas

## **C. OBJECTIVES**

### **Knowledge**

Students should be able to:

- a. describe and evaluate the expansion and development of plantation slavery in different territories;
- b. describe the slave codes of the British, Spanish, French, Danish and Dutch territories;
- c. explain differences and similarities between the codes;
- d. examine the effect of slavery on the lives of the slaves;

- e. assess the reasons for the differences in mortality rates;
- f. describe the methods by which slaves resisted control;
- g. demonstrate an understanding of Haiti's journey towards independence.

### **Attitudes**

Students will be encouraged to:

- a. recognize the impact of laws on the individual;
- b. recognize that laws can influence personalities;
- c. think critically about defending basic human rights;
- d. appreciate, understand and accept the equality of human beings.

### **Skills**

Students will develop the ability to:

- a. interpret statistical data and make inferences;
- b. select examples of decisions and laws made by governments that affect students' individual lives.

## **D. TEACHING STRATEGIES**

- Group work;
- Discussions;
- Simulation games;
- Dramatization;
- Debates;
- Use of art and music.

## **E. STUDENT/ LEARNER ACTIVITIES**

- Research and discuss the laws of your country that affect individual rights and freedoms, as well as how these are used or abused.

Do you agree or disagree with these laws? (Group Work)

- Enact a mock town meeting / mock assembly meeting of Maroons / enslaved persons.
- Debate the relationship between slavery laws and conventions on human rights.
- Act out a court case involving a slave (e.g. one who has run away).
- Listen to and discuss various types of music that reflect the experiences and legacies of slavery in the Americas, e.g. calypso, reggae, folk music.

## **F. EVALUATION**

1. Group presentations of research, role plays and simulations;
2. Show different aspects of the slavery laws through art (include an oral presentation with this visual display);
3. Debate/Essay  
 “Despite the many slave rebellions, slavery in the Americas ended though legislative measures. This shows that the pen is mightier than the sword.” Discuss.

## **G. RESOURCE MATERIALS**

Audiotapes;

CDs;

Visual materials;

Supplementary texts, for example the memoirs of Olaudah Equiano, Mary Prince and Toussaint L’Ouverture. (Refer to *Slave Voices*, edited by Hilary Beckles and V. Shepherd).

## **Chapter 5: Financial and Commercial Organization**

By the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the transatlantic slave trade required complex organization, the recruitment, shipment and sale of millions of enslaved people needing effective planning and the extensive use of financial instruments and institutions.

Outfitting a slave ship to sail from Europe to Africa, and then on to the Americas, for example, was a costly matter. It was estimated that such an undertaking would cost about 250,000 livres, the French currency at the time, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which was an amount that would purchase a large home in a prestigious street in Paris. Indeed, as Herbert Klein has noted, slaves purchased in Africa were not a “low-cost item,” and costly manufactured goods would be needed to pay for them, these being the single most expensive items in fitting out a voyage. The purchase of such goods constituted two-thirds of the costs, and they were more valuable than the ship, the crew’s wages and the food supplies combined.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a common method of raising finance for the slave trade had been to set up a joint-stock company, and many of these were accorded royal charters and monopoly trading rights in order to reduce risk and protect investment. However, since the trade was an attractive business venture there was considerable protest by private investors against royal monopolies. Such investors demanded free trade, and this became the norm during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. As a result, a large number of partnerships eventually dominated the trade, even if many of these were on a less secure financial footing than were the large joint-stock companies.

At the peak of the trade in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, Europeans were shipping some 90,000 Africans per year to the Americas. Until the 1680s, ivory and gold had been Africa’s leading exports to Europe, but by the 1780s the value of such

commodities had fallen to less than 10% of the value of Africa's exports, with slaves making up most of the rest. In exchange for slaves, African traders accepted a range of European, American and Asian goods, with textiles accounting for just over half of all goods shipped from England to Africa to pay for slaves. Among these textiles, East-Indian fabrics were a significant component.

Between them, the Portuguese, English and French transported about 80% of the total number of slaves shipped to the Americas. Prices paid for slaves in West Africa varied over time, and from place to place, reflecting all the usual variations of a commodity market. Indeed, the relationships between African sellers and European buyers, together with the relationships between their respective agents, could also produce different prices from voyage to voyage, and some African kings and nobles levied taxes on the trade. The volume of trade at any one time was therefore a function of a complex set of variables.

European commitment to large-scale and long-term commercial activity in West Africa, including to the transatlantic slave trade, was expressed in the construction of trading forts such as those at Elmina and Cape Coast in Ghana. The presence of such forts meant that the supply of slaves to shippers could be better regulated and that the shippers could be more selective in their purchases. However, even with such a system in place, buying slaves was rarely a straightforward matter, and a European slaver could often expect to remain on the coast for over six months awaiting a full load of 200 to 300 healthy slaves. It usually took at least six weeks to complete arrangements for a cargo of this size, and purchases could also be complicated by African suppliers' beliefs that the goods they were being offered in exchange for the slaves were not attractive

Thus, to counter such difficulties in raising cargoes, an established slaver would employ agents on the coast to make advanced purchases. However, even this was not always effective, since African sellers sometimes operated on a first-come, first-served basis, and the often volatile political situation on the coast could sometimes undermine even the most settled arrangements. Yet, the spread of European brokers and agents on the coast, whose job was to negotiate purchases with local kings and nobles, did make the operation of the trade easier, notably by reducing turnaround time and stabilizing the volume of slaves on the market.

In operating the trade the Europeans were required to know at first hand which goods were in favour with the local elites in West Africa. Certainly, such elites always wanted military hardware, and guns and cannons could always easily be exchanged for slaves. But consumer goods, such as brass, glass, iron bars, textiles, tobacco, oils, alcohol, soaps and exotic foods, together with a range of household items, also found their way into elite African households, and it was not uncommon for African traders to make visits to Europe in order to ascertain commodity values more accurately. Indeed, some contemporary European observers noted that the Africans sellers could be skillful and knowledgeable negotiators who persistently had the upper hand over European purchasers – an observation that contradicts other accounts stating that the African sellers had no real sense of the value of the European goods that they accepted in payment, nor indeed of the true economic value of the slaves. Had they had such a sense, then they could not have been so easily persuaded to sell slaves in return for useless items, such as pretty beads. It was often noticed that the European slavers had an exact sense of the true economic value of the manufactured goods that they offered to the Africans.



Nevertheless, on balance it seems true to say that the African slavers at the supply end of the trade were well placed to influence the market to their advantage, taking every opportunity to do so. They managed over time to increase prices for the slaves they sold, shifting the terms of trade in their favour and employing all possible recruitment measures. Communities near the coast, and those located on river inlets, were therefore progressively ravaged by slave raiders, with vulnerable villagers abandoning their homes and fleeing deeper inland. Thus, between the early 16<sup>th</sup> and the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the average price of a slave on the Gold Coast rose from £3 to £20, with prices often being expressed in iron bars, ounces of gold, or cowrie shells. For example, the purchase of 180 slaves on the Gambia coast in 1740-41 was made in exchange for the following goods: 1,179 silver coins, 430 iron bars, 92 cutlasses, 430 gun flints, 1,162 kg of salt, 300 kg of linen cloth, 130 kg English textiles (cotton), 108 kg Indian textiles, 219 kg woolen textiles, 47 reams of paper, 164 guns, 71 pairs of pistols, 518 kg of gun powder, 16 kg of lead balls, 102 brass pans, 301 kg. Pewter ware, 2 rods of copper, 119 gallons of rum, 15,194 beads, 60,000 crystal stones and 17 kg of cowrie shells.

The European slavers' ability to increase the volume of the transatlantic slave trade, on the other hand, was based not only on their commercial skills and financial capacity, but also on the effectiveness of their relationships with African suppliers, who went to great lengths to ensure that they did not lose control over slave supplies. The African slavers effectively determined both the quantity of trade and the prices on the markets. They would make every effort to do so through the establishment of monopolies over the supply of slaves, only sharing such supply sources when they were obliged to do so. At the same time, increasing European industrialization further served to enhance the financial returns to African suppliers: falling commodity prices

in Europe, together with rising slave prices in Africa, favoured African suppliers bartering slaves for such manufactured goods. Thus, the triumph of England as the leading European slave-trading nation during the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century was in part a reflection of its status as the first industrialized European nation.

In addition, sales were sometimes made under special credit arrangements made available to African suppliers by European merchants. The existence of such credit facilities speaks volumes about the degree of trust that sometimes existed between the African sellers and the European buyers, though such confidence could also be undermined by the general bad faith that characterized the slave-trading business. Commission payments to African agents were often made in cowrie shells, a currency used extensively in West Africa: in Whydah and the Bight of Benin, for example, cowrie shells were the most acceptable form of payment. In 1750, a physically healthy slave would sell for 150,000 cowries, compared with 6,000 in 1570. It has been estimated that over the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Europeans brought over 25 million pounds worth of cowrie shells into West Africa.

The ships used by the slave traders, built of wood and designed to maximize wind power, were typically of about 200 tons in mass and were designed to withstand the rigours of at least ten voyages to Africa, carrying some 5,000 slaves. Such ships were generally named after Christian Saints and pagan deities, such as Venus, although fashionable shippers in the 18<sup>th</sup> century also named their ships after lovers. Apart from the captain, a slave ship would have carried 40 or more sailors, a doctor, cooks and artisans, and it would have resembled a floating maximum-security prison.

The cost of fitting out a slave ship varied over time, varying too between voyages and countries. During the period 1783 to 1797, for example, Nicholas Arnous of Nantes in France spent between 194,000 and 336,000 livres on each of the nine

voyages he financed, the average cost being around 275,000 livres. These costs, called *misehors* by the French, included the chains used to shackle the slaves, the cargo for which they were to be exchanged, food and insurance. The French ship *Sainte Anne*, for example, cost 330,000 livres to fit out, its slaves costing about 866 livres each, later being sold for an average of 1,550 livres. Thus, the expedition made a 19% profit.

Precise financial calculations would have been made for each ship and for each voyage, with participants in the business being expected to know such costs and calculate revenues accordingly. The ship's captain, generally an employee of the firm that owned it, would have been given precise instructions with respect to the collection of slaves, being told to go to a particular place on the African coast and negotiate the purchase of a given number of slaves. Sometimes, the captain would have been able to exercise his initiative by reading the local situation and deciding how to proceed, but in all cases he would have done so within price ranges set by the owner of the vessel.

The ships were insured, as were their slave cargoes, with the major European financial centres of the time providing insurance services to the slavers. During the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Amsterdam led the way in the insurance business, being succeeded by London in the 18<sup>th</sup>. According to the historian Hugh Thomas, French traders at Nantes estimated that insurance averaged 7% of the cost of the ship in peacetime and 35% in times of war. Premiums for ship and cargo ranged from 5% to 25% of its value, and, given the prevalence of international conflict and rivalry, together with the risk of hurricanes and piracy, the slavers were generally willing to pay the very high rates quoted by insurers.

Most of the Africans who found themselves on the slave ships would have been kidnapped in raids on their villages, or they would have been prisoners of war or victims of political authority. Estimates suggest that about 45% of Africans sold in the slave trade were political prisoners, with a further 40% having been kidnapped and the remainder having been convicted of various crimes. However, the transatlantic trade itself also stimulated political instability and social chaos, facilitating warfare and conflict. As a result, growing numbers of Africans were exposed to the risk of kidnapping, and this vicious cycle over time served to increase the total volume of the trade.

In 1702, for example, the Africans near Cape Mesurado complained to William Bosman of the Dutch West India Company that “the English had been there with two large vessels and had ravaged the country, destroyed all their canoes, plundered their houses, and carried off some of their people as slaves.” According to English sources, it was common for the Dutch in the Gambia to attract the local African population by showing them fireworks, before kidnapping members of that population by force of arms. Local kings and nobles who opposed the trade were undermined by European traders, who would arm and finance neighbouring groups to launch wars against them. Opposition to the trade inevitably invited hostility from the Europeans.

The growth of the trade also placed greater financial and military resources in the hands of African suppliers. The kings and nobles of Asante, for example, controlled the hinterland of Elmina, Whydah was connected with Allada and Dahome, and the Yoruba kingdom of Oyo grew rich on the trade, at least for a while. Occasionally, local African rulers would impose conditions and constraints upon the trade, with a king of Benin on the Niger, for example, ordering early in the 16<sup>th</sup>

century that no male slaves should be sold and subsequently halting the trade altogether. In response, however, the Portuguese armed and financed a rival community on the Forcadas River to bring down this king.

The Europeans also left accounts of the procedures they employed for purchasing slaves from African suppliers, describing how their agents kidnapped Africans for sale, and why and how the African leaders recruited slave supplies. It was common, these accounts suggest, for African kings involved in the trade to appoint an agent or broker to act on their behalf, and it was common, too, for them to impose taxes on European buyers before a sale could commence. Some kings required a special ceremony in respect or recognition of their authority, while others insisted that their personal slaves be sold first. There was always an exchange of gifts before the granting of a trade license, and the captain of a slave ship was well advised to flatter a local king with an unusual or opulent present.

Translators would usually have been present at these transactions, and the “coloured” coastal population soon developed a niche skill as linguists and intermediaries in this regard. In addition, some of the slave traders also spoke the local African languages, and occasionally African kings would instruct Europeans to teach their language to selected persons for the purposes of trade. Nevertheless, both sides were always keen to get the best of the bargain: African sellers, for example, would dye the grey hair of aging men and women black, trying to pass them off as youngsters, and the Europeans were obliged to insist that all slaves be washed and closely inspected before sale. For example, Captain Richard Willing of England wrote in the 1810s that he had hired a mulatto African who could tell an unsound slave at a glance, handling the “naked blacks from head to foot, squeezing their joints and muscles, twisting their arms and legs, and examining teeth, eyes, and chest, and

pinching breasts and groin without mercy. The slaves stood in couples, stark naked, and were made to jump, cry out, lie down, and roll, and hold their breath for a long time.”

French merchants usually brought in the ship’s surgeon to examine the female slaves, in order to estimate their reproductive capacities. The Europeans developed the skill of accurately assessing the ages of blacks, as well as the general condition of their health, but when the Africans had the upper hand in a sale, they would insist that sick, aged and infirm slaves be included as part of a bulk purchase, a practice that greatly annoyed European buyers. The Africans would also mix brass with the gold dust that they gave the Europeans in exchange for manufactured goods, with the Europeans making every effort to sell the shoddiest possible goods to the Africans at the highest possible cost.

After the slave purchases had been made, *factors*, as the European agents on the coast were called, would secure the slaves for storage and shipment. As slaves were often obtained from along rivers deep in the interior, they had to be taken down river by canoe, or marched over land under heavy guard. The factors would deliver cargoes of slaves to the ship captains waiting off the coast, or they would store them in safe houses or forts until the ships arrived. During this process, the slaves were branded with hot irons on their shoulders, arms, or chest, in order to label them for transportation and storage.

Slaves purchased for the Royal African Company of England were branded “DY,” Duke of York, after the president of the company, for example. The Spanish firm, *Compañia Gaditana*, branded slaves with the letter “d,” and the *Middleburgische Kamerse Compagnie* of Holland used the letters “CCN.” The

German company, *Churfurstlich - Afrikanisch Brandenburgische Compagnie*, branded slaves on the right shoulder with the letters “CABC.”

European slavers also claimed that over time they were able to discern the different personality types of people from various African states and communities, the slave market thus showing itself to be associated with European notions of African identities. Stereotyped forms of behaviour were associated with certain groups of Africans, and European purchasers often made their decisions on the basis of such stereotypes.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, for example, the Spanish expressed a preference for Africans from Senegambia, the Wolofs and Mandingos especially, because it was said that they were intelligent, diligent and multi-lingual. Later, the French made similar observations that similarly influenced the market, this time being more satisfied with people from the Congo, who they described as robust, keen to please, peaceable and loyal. The Brazilians apparently preferred slaves who were the blackest in colour, without tribal marks on their faces or filed teeth, and they were not keen on either “yellow” or “brown-skinned” Africans. The Mozambicans were believed to be “devilish” in their response to ill treatment, but loyal if well taken care of. The English in the West Indies often urged slave traders to bring them slaves from the Gold Coast, judging the Coromantines to be the best slaves – hard working, loyal, intelligent and responsive to patronage. Whydah slaves they believed to be weak and vulnerable to “smallpox and sore eyes.” Slaves from Calabar were believed to be rebellious and ill-disciplined, preferring to die rather than work.

Such stereotypes were common among the Europeans, who tried in this way to make sense of the diversity of African identities around them and to bring rationality to the marketing process. More often than not, however, they took whatever slaves

they could find, but such attempts to manipulate the markets with notions of difference meant that information of this sort was easily propagated. Nevertheless, the fact remains that such distinctions were inaccurate, since all Africans participated in anti-slavery activities.

Finally, the transatlantic slave trade was carried on in the context of massive organizational and ideological efforts, with the historian Patrick Manning suggesting that those Africans actually shipped to the Americas represented only a fraction of the much greater number of people victimized in Africa. Manning notes, for example, that in order to deliver nine million people to the African coast between 1780 and 1850, some 21 million people were probably captured, the remainder either dying, being kept as slaves in Africa, or scattered as a result of flight and rebellion. The magnitude of European efforts to manage the trade make it one of the most complex and elaborate undertakings ever carried out in the modern era.

## **Summary**

The effectiveness of the transatlantic slave trade as a large-scale business enterprise was assured on account of the rise of the joint-stock company as a core organizing unit, having the capacity to create and maintain a network of agents and brokers to serve its many interests. These large enterprises, initially given monopolies by their respective governments, were later obliged to compete with a host of smaller operators within a system of free trade.

The transatlantic trade was profitable – had it not been, it could scarcely have been sustained for over 300 years. Nevertheless, profits fluctuated considerably over time and according to the conditions under which individual voyages were carried out. Some European nations were better prepared for the trade than others, and by the



end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century English slavers, though still not the majority carriers, extracted a greater return on investment than did their competitors. In general, profits were modest when compared to certain other alternative forms of business. However, they were still sufficiently attractive to sustain the attention of established and new investors over the long term.

## **Educational Framework**

### **A. CONCEPTS**

- Joint-stock company;
- Royal Charter;
- Free trade;
- Monopoly trading;
- Cowrie shells;
- Industrialization;
- Broker/Factor;
- Mulatto;
- Judicial system.

### **B. CONTENT**

1. Outfitting a slave ship;
2. The effects of industrialization on the transatlantic trade;
3. Commercial activity in West Africa, including the slave trade;
4. Favourable and unfavourable terms of trade.

### **C. OBJECTIVES**

## **Knowledge**

Students should be able to:

- a. describe the various methods of raising finance for the slave trade;
- b. give examples of procedures for the purchase of slaves;
- c. explain and critically assess the effects of industrialization on the slave trade;
- d. Identify and understand the “cause and effect” relationships involved in the trade.

## **Attitudes**

Students will be encouraged to:

- a. recognize different viewpoints;
- b. respect other people’s backgrounds;
- c. respect reasonable procedures rather than force as the means for the exchange of goods and services.

## **Skills**

Students will develop the ability to:

- a. work in groups and explore various possibilities, i.e. students should be able to disagree, but they should do so responsibly and not attack each other’s ideas;
- b. follow rules of discussion in weighing evidence;
- c. plan presentations using a variety of resources;
- d. construct annotated maps;
- e. infer causes and effects.

## **D. TEACHING STRATEGIES**

- Map work;
- Written assignments;
- Role play;
- Group work (pairs);
- Film study.

## **E. STUDENT/ LEARNER ACTIVITIES**

- Identify the various territories involved in the transatlantic slave trade;
- Divide the class into pairs or small groups to discuss reactions to those involved in the transatlantic trade. Develop an *Action Plan* in class that promotes the idea of human rights, based on the discussion;
- Research the web of people involved in the slave trade, and represent this graphically;
- Have pupils work in pairs to create cause-and-effect charts showing how European buyers influenced the terms of trade. Let volunteer pairs present their charts to the class;
- View the film *Amistad*. Discuss this film from the perspective of the aims of the producer and look at the portrayal of the characters.

## **F. EVALUATION**

1. Write a paragraph on the role of African kings in the sale of slaves.
2. Writing as a European slaver, express your view on procedures for purchasing slaves from African suppliers (role play and brief essay).
3. You are a financial advisor to a rich investor. Write a persuasive essay informing the investor of the benefits of investing money in a slave-trading expedition to Africa.

The essay should include the risks involved, as well as the rewards of a successful expedition.

## **G. RESOURCE MATERIALS**

Paper for wall charts;  
Maps;  
Film – *Amistad*;  
Supplementary texts.

## Chapter 6: Volume and Variation

Correct calculation of the number of Africans taken from Africa and transported across the Atlantic continues to generate debate among scholars, contention having arisen on account of the difficulty of separating issues relating to the moral and emotional aspects of the transatlantic trade from its quantitative dimensions. Yet, it is important to have an accurate sense of the volume of the trade, even as this should not be allowed to detract from broader analysis of it.

However, the evidence is fragmentary, and it requires much piecing together. Though data on the volume of the transatlantic trade has been derived from the records of Portuguese, Spanish, English, French, Dutch, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, German and American slave merchants, as well as from government records, gaps still remain, often because the records that exist only account for the activities of the major traders constituted as partnerships and companies. It seems likely that most slave traders either did not keep records, or destroyed them later when slave-trading became illegal and was publicly condemned. The many small traders were unlikely to preserve their records, and thus the true extent of their involvement has perhaps been overlooked.

Methods of measuring the extent of the trade are also important in gaining a sense of its true volume. Thus, while many scholars have looked closely at the records of individual European nations, or of specific parts of West Africa, fewer have carried out comprehensive or comparative analyses. In addition, little attention has been paid to the slaves who died *en route* from the interior to the coast, or in the “factories” where they were stored while awaiting shipment. It may never be possible to discover how many people perished in this way, since proper records were not kept with respect to kidnapping and to mortality incurred during raids on villages and on

journeys to coasts. The data that do exist are more often than not unreliable, and they do not reflect, for example, the numbers of Africans delivered “illegally,” that is to say, by unregistered persons not licensed to market slaves. These sellers of contraband slaves existed in significant numbers in both the large and the small African states, particularly in places where “outsiders” acted to undermine the monopoly held by the state-sponsored slaving companies.

All this being said, however, much research has been done on the number of Africans who died either during the “Middle Passage” – on the journey across the Atlantic – or shortly after arriving in the Caribbean colonies, and a voluminous literature now exists on the physical and psychological experiences of slaves during the Middle Passage. Research has focussed on the number of Africans who died and on the differing rates of death, mortality rates during the Middle Passage having assumed a new importance for demographers and for medical researchers having an interest in the relationship between stress, nutrition and mortality.

Estimates of the number of Africans sold into the transatlantic slave trade now range from about 9.6 million at the lower end of the scale to about 15 million at the upper. Over the past three decades, debate has centered on the work of historian Philip Curtin, who published the first attempt at a comprehensive census in 1969, estimating that about 11.2 million Africans were taken from Africa between 1500 and 1900 and that 9.6 million of these reached the New World alive. Curtin therefore suggested that around two million slaves perished during passage. Curtin’s figures have generated considerable debate, particularly among scholars who view them as being too conservative, though such critics have themselves tended to make only moderate upward adjustments. Paul Lovejoy’s 1989 calculations, for example, give a figure of 11,863,000 for Africans being sold into the transatlantic trade, with about 10.2 million

actually arriving in the New World. Joseph Inikori, a critic of Curtin's calculations, offered a larger global figure of 12,689,000 in 1998, yet he was keen to point out that "this figure has been contested by some scholars, and while the process of revision continues, it seems probable that the ultimate figure is unlikely to be less than 12 million or more than 20 million captives exported from Africa in the transatlantic slave trade". In 1995, Per O. Hernaes offered figures 100,000 in excess of Inikori, and in 2000, David Eltis presented calculations (see Table 2) that showed a grand total of 11,062,000 departures.

**Table 2: Volume of Slave-Trade Departures by African Region and Period, 1519-1867 (in thousands)**

	Sene- gambia	Sierra Leone	Wind- ward Coast	Gold Coast	Bight of Benin	Bight of Biafra	West- central Africa	South- east Africa	All Regio
1519-1600	10.7	2	0	10.7	10.7	10.7	221.2	0	266.1
1601-1650	6.4	0	0	5.2	2.4	25.5	461.9	2	503.5
1651-1675	17.7	0.4	0.1	35.4	21.9	58.6	104.3	1.2	239.8
1676-1700	36.5	3.5	0.7	50.3	223.5	51.5	132.6	10.9	509.5
1701-1725	39.9	7.1	4.2	181.7	408.3	45.8	257.2	14.4	958.6
1726-1750	69.9	10.5	14.3	186.3	306.5	166	552.8	5.4	1311.
1751-1775	130.4	96.9	105.1	263.9	250.5	340.1	714.9	3.3	1905.
1776-1800	72.4	106	19.5	240.7	264.6	3604	816.2	41.2	1921.
1801-1825	91.7	69.7	24	69	263.3	260.3	700.8	131.8	1610.
1826-1850	22.8	100.4	14.4	0	257.3	191.5	770.6	247.5	1604.
1851-1867	0	16.1	0.6	0	25.9	7.3	155	26.8	231.7
All Years	498.5	412.7	183	1043.2	2034.6	1517.9	4887.5	484.5	11062
%of Trade	4.5	3.7	1.7	9.4	18.4	13.7	44.2	4.4	100

**Source:** David Eltis "The Volume and Structure of the Transatlantic Slave Trade: A Re-assessment", paper presented at the Nigerian Hinterland Project Conference, York University, Toronto, Canada, Oct. 12-15, 2000.

While the transatlantic trade operated between the 1440s to about 1870, the 18<sup>th</sup> century is the period that has been the most fully documented. Historian Herbert Klein, for example, tells us that, "even though over a million and half Africans had

been brought to America before 1700, over six million arrived in the period 1710-1810, or 63% of the total who ever landed in the Western Hemisphere.” Furthermore, he says, “at its peak in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, Europeans were moving some 90,000 Africans per annum to America in some 200 to 300 ships under the flag of every major maritime power of western Europe.”

**Table 3: *Estimates of the Volume of the Transatlantic Trade since Curtin.***

<b>Author</b>	<b>year</b>	<b>number (millions)</b>
P. Hernaes	1995	12.7
P. Lovejoy	1989	11.8
J. Inikori	1998	12.6
D. Eltis	2000	11

Eltis’s recent work also enables us to identify more accurately the volume of the trade over time and by the nationality of the carriers.

**Table 4: *Volume of the Transatlantic Trade by Nationality of Carriers, 1519-1867 (in thousands)***

Year	Portuguese	British	French	Dutch	Spanish	USA/ Br.W. Indies	Danish	All
1519-1600	264.1	2	-	-	-	-	266.1	
1601-1650	439.5	23	-	41	-	-	-	503.5
1651- 1675	53.7	115.2	5.9	64.8	-	-	0.2	239.8
1676- 1700	161.1	243.3	34.1	56.1	-	-	15.4	510
1701- 1725	378.3	380.9	106.3	65.5	-	11	16.7	958.6
1726- 1750	405.6	490.5	253.9	109.2	-	44.5	7.6	1311.3
1751- 1775	472.9	859.1	321.5	148	1	89.1	13.4	1905.2
1776- 1800	626.2	741.3	419.5	40.8	8.6	54.3	30.4	1921.1
1801- 1825	871.6	257	217.9	2.3	204.8	81.1	10.5	1645.1
1826- 1850	1247.7	-	94.1	-	279.2	0	0	1621
1851-1867	154.2	-	3.2	-	23.4	0	0	180.7
All Years	5074.9	3112.3	1456.4	527.7	517	280	94.2	11,062.4
% of trade	45.9	28.3	13.2	4.8	4.7	2.5	0.9	100

**Source:** David Eltis, “The Volume and Structure of the Transatlantic Trade: A Re-assessment”, Paper presented at Nigerian Hinterland Project Conference, York University, Toronto, 12-15 October, 2000.

Like Curtin, Paul Lovejoy has estimated that six million Africans were shipped out in the 18<sup>th</sup> century alone, the shipping data showing that about 40% of these came from Angola and the Congo, 40% from the Bights of Benin and Biafra, about 15% from the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone and Senegambia and the remainder from unknown places. In order to put the trade in the proper perspective, however, it is also necessary both to highlight data on gender and to look at the volume of sales taking place during the same period for the Red Sea - Indian Ocean slave trade, which is estimated at about five million for the period of 800 AD to 1890. The ratio of male to female slaves in the transatlantic trade is an important indicator of the demand for slaves, with significantly fewer black women entering the Atlantic trade than men.

**Table 5: Sex Ratios of Slaves from Different African Regions, 1764-88**

<i>African region</i>	<i>Percentage male</i>	<i>Percentage female</i>
Gambia	72.1	27.9
Windward Coast	65.7	34.3
Gold Coast	66.8	33.2
Benin	49.96	50.04
Bonny	56.5	43.5
Calabar	58.8	41.2
Gabon	68.8	31.2
Angola	68.2	31.8

**Source:** J.E. Inikori, 1992, *op.cit.*

The records of the European slavers demonstrate this unequal ratio between male and female slaves. Historian David Eltis has shown that the age and sex distribution of slaves within the trade varied across the African coast, and that local economic and social circumstances played an important part in the retention levels of



females. Herbert Klein's comprehensive analysis of the records of Dutch slavers, who in the 17<sup>th</sup> century also supplied French, Spanish, English and Portuguese colonies, shows that only 38% of the Africans shipped were female. Using an English database, Klein has found a similar pattern in the records of English slavers.

The general pattern therefore is clear: around 60% of the slaves shipped from West Africa to the Americas were male, with only slight variations across the region from Senegambia to Angola. In addition, Eltis has analyzed sample slave shipments from different parts of West Africa over the period 1663 and 1713, finding that in a sample of 7,170 slaves from Upper Guinea, 22.6% were women, that of 23,016 slaves shipped from the Gold Coast, 39.2% were women, and that of 45,540 slaves shipped from the Bight of Benin, 34.6% were women. Inikori's figures for the period 1781 to 1798 are as follows:

**Table 6: Sex Ratios of Slaves landed in the West Indies, 1781-98, by Region of Origin, 1781-98**

<i>African Region</i>	<i>Slaves Landed</i>	<i>Percentage male</i>	<i>Percentage female</i>
Senegambia	190	67.5	32.5
Sierra Leone	5,544	64.9	35.1
Windward Coast	3,420	70.6	29.4
Gold Coast	2,721	64.4	35.6
Bight of Benin	315	54.5	45.5
Bight of Biafra	18,218	56.9	43.1
Congo-Angola	12,168	69.9	30.1
Unknown	13,279	65.3	34.7

**Source:** J.E.Inikori, 1992, *op. cit.*

However, while European New World slavery preferred male to female slaves for most of the period in which slavery was practiced, needing muscle power for agricultural development, construction and mining, the opposite was true for slave purchases in the Muslim World north of the Sahara. There, markets focused on slaves used for domestic service and concubinage, and thus the data shows that the Muslim trade was 67% female and 33% male. Demand there was primarily for slaves for household work, and so female slaves were preferred, though many of these slaves also worked in agriculture, particularly in the region's vineyards.

Children were considered to carry high risks and to have low value as slaves, and therefore the slave traders rarely targeted them. Fewer than 10% of the slaves sold were children, the records of the Dutch West Indian Company indicating that between 9 and 14% of its cargoes were children under the age of 14 during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Over time, however, children became marginally more attractive in some colonies, and there was a small increase in the number of children shipped during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In addition, the slavers could not always avoid purchasing children for the trade, since the slaves they were offered were quite often offered as a "package", with children being included with adults at nominal prices. And as the transatlantic trade came to an end, planters in the Americas began to pay greater attention to the purchase of women and children as part of an attempt to reproduce their slave-labour forces locally.

Finally, the "numbers" debate continues to generate a search for new data and for new methods of making calculations. In 1999, a computer database in the form of a CD-ROM was published, organizing much of this vast stock of data in a form that can be quickly and easily searched and from which calculations can be made. (*The Transatlantic Slave Trade: a Database on CD-ROM*, by David Eltis, Stephen D.

Behrendt, David Richardson, and Herbert Klein, published by Cambridge University Press, contains data on 27,233 voyages sailing between 1527 and 1866.) Since the 1970s, many scholars have produced data on thousands of slave voyages, these data containing information on about 11,000 transatlantic voyages by the mid-1980s. However, this data was for the most part still scattered, and therefore the creation of a single multi-source database for so many transatlantic voyages by a team of experienced scholars constitutes a major breakthrough in slave-trade research.

The authors of the CD-ROM tell us that it will: (1) enable historians to develop new insights into the history of people of African descent and into the forces that determined their forced migration; (2) allow the identification of trends and cycles in the flow of African captives from specific coastal outlets; (3) provide basic data on the relationship between warfare, slave trading, political instability, economic development and ecological change in West Africa during the slaving period; (4) provide new impetus to assessments of the volume and demographic structure of the transatlantic trade; (5) allow historians to shed greater light on slave pathways running from the interior of Africa to the coast; (6) allow a better understanding of the magnitude of slave rebellion and resistance during the Middle Passage, and (7) establish a better understanding of the connections between the economies of West Africa, Europe and the Americas.

However, the data also has limitations, since though the CD-ROM contains the names of thousands of European shipowners and ship captains, it contains not a single African name, despite the many millions of Africans that were transported on the slave ships to the Americas. In addition, it does not contain data on the ethnicity of the Africans thus transported: data on the slaves' ports of departure are not reliable

indicators of the cultural origins of the Africans shipped, and therefore should not be used to trace their ethnicity.

Some have criticized the research contained on this CD-ROM for being too conservative in its estimates of the volume of the trade, in much the same way as were Curtin's 1969 estimates. Gwendolyn Hall, for example, an historian who has examined the Louisiana slave records in detail, has said that the CD-ROM represents a "serious undercount of documented as well as undocumented voyages" as far as the American trade is concerned, though she considers it reliable for the British trade. Nevertheless, this new research now allows both teachers and students to conduct independent research into many aspects of the transatlantic trade by scrutinising the data and establishing trends, patterns and interpretations of their own. This in itself makes the publication of this CD-ROM an important event. Furthermore, the publication of this data also allows students in particular to experience the reality of the transatlantic trade with greater immediacy, exploring it with greater precision than ever before.

## **Summary**

Despite attempts spanning three decades, a definitive figure for the number of Africans shipped to the Americas during the transatlantic slave trade remains elusive.

Curtin's pioneering census of 1969, which proposed a total of 11.2 million departees, was quickly criticized as conservative. Though the latest figure of 11 million, published in 1999 by Eltis, Richardson, *et al.* on CD-ROM, constitutes a significant development and takes the figure further from the upper limit of 12.6 million suggested by Inikori, further work still needs to be done, particularly on the

Portuguese trade, before a final figure can be arrived at. The number of voyages unaccounted for on this CD-ROM also suggests that the overall figure of 11 million that it gives may be too conservative.

The volume of the transatlantic slave trade varied considerably over time, and there were significant variations between participating West-African regions and European carriers. The 18<sup>th</sup> century was undoubtedly the hey-day of the trade in terms of its volume, associated with the phenomenal expansion of the sugar industry in the Caribbean and Brazil. However, the Portuguese were still in the end the single largest carrier, since it was they who dominated both the early and closing phases of the trade.

## **Educational Framework**

### **A. CONCEPTS**

- Volume;
- Variation;
- Depopulation;
- Gender ratios;
- Concubinage;
- Middle-Passage mortality;
- Statistical analysis of data.

### **B. CONTENT**

1. The volume of the transatlantic trade, as derived from the shipping records of Portuguese, Spanish, English, French, Dutch, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, German and American merchants;
2. Rates of Middle-Passage mortality;
3. Variations in age and sex of the slaves shipped to the Americas;

4. The “numbers debate” – the search for empirical data concerning the number of slaves shipped from West Africa to the Americas.

## **C. OBJECTIVES**

### **Knowledge**

Students should be able to:

- a. give examples of the estimated volume of Africans removed from the African continent and transported to the Americas;
- b. identify difficulties in calculating the volume of Africans who perished while being transported across the Atlantic;
- c. describe and explain why fewer female than male slaves were shipped across the Atlantic.

### **Attitudes**

Students will be encouraged to:

- a. show awareness of the fact that historical judgements depend upon available evidence;
- b. empathize with all victims of forced migration and in particular with Africans affected by the transatlantic slave trade.

### **Skills**

Students will develop the ability to:

- a. analyze and interpret statistical data and make inferences;
- b. verify data through further research;
- c. present data in various forms e.g. tables, graphs, etc.;
- d. categorize information.

## **D. TEACHING STRATEGIES**

- Panel discussions;
- Debates;

- Graph work
- Statistical analysis;
- Group work.

## **F. STUDENT/ LEARNER ACTIVITIES**

- Debates or panel discussions on the magnitude of the slave trade, supported by available evidence;
- Map work, locating slave-trading ports and states;
- Statistical analysis (individual or in groups):

Students may be presented with tabular information on estimates of Africans removed from several states, with two sources for a given period. Questions may then be asked to prompt students to categorize information, make comparisons, recognize differences and similarities, make inferences and arrive at conclusions.

For example:

- > Which state provided the largest number of slaves for the period given?
  - > Which state provided the least number of slaves for the period given?
  - > Which state provided the largest number of female slaves?
  - > Why do you think State X provided the largest number of slaves?
  - > Why do you think source X figures differ from source Y figures for a given state, with respect to Africans removed?
- Discussions – Following the presentation of data, students can be divided into groups of five. Instruct students to discuss reasons for the variations in estimates of Africans removed, as well as reasons for the inferences and conclusions arrived at.

## **F. EVALUATION**

1. Presentation of data in the form of graphs, histograms, charts, etc. Allow students to communicate historical evidence in mathematical form;

2. Written summaries of discussions

## **G. RESOURCE MATERIALS**

Maps of Africa, West Africa and African States;

Statistical data on volume and variations in the transatlantic trade;

*The Transatlantic Slave Trade: a Database on CD-ROM*, by David Eltis, *et al.*



## **Chapter 7. The Middle Passage: A Way of Death**

Research by historian Joseph Miller and others on the experiences of enslaved Africans during the “Middle Passage” across the Atlantic has highlighted the effects of their “perishability” on the thinking and actions of European slavers. Miller provides powerful images of the inhumane conditions in which the slaves made this “death journey”, explaining that the fact that so many of the slaves died increased financial uncertainty for investors in the trade. Therefore, African enslavement in the Americas cannot be seen simply as an extension of Old World practices; rather, the experience of the Middle Passage alone meant that New World slavery was a break with tradition, ushering in an hitherto unimaginable level of human degradation. Furthermore, the Middle Passage was far more than being simply a transatlantic journey for millions of enslaved Africans; on the contrary, it was also a symbol of the social divisions that came to separate the peoples of Africa and Europe. It is therefore important to discuss the psychological and physical aspects of the Middle Passage, as well as its economic and demographic significance, in order fully to understand the transatlantic slave trade.

Recent research has shown that in the earliest years of the transatlantic trade mortality rates among slaves during the Middle Passage could rise to as much as 20%, that rate having fallen to about 5% during the closing decades of the trade in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Such declining rates of mortality were an effect of the growing efficiency of the slavers’ operations. An important aspect of this was the tendency towards standardization in shipping arrangements across imperial lines, expressed in the form of specially designed and constructed ships and the establishment of a standard size for slave ships. By the middle of the 18th century, 200 tons was thought of as the

ideal size for a slave ship. Yet, as the historian Herbert Klein has argued, the fact remains that even this dramatically reduced 5% mortality rate during the Middle Passage is still very high when compared to the mortality rates of Africans in their home environments.

The Middle Passage did not begin with the actual transatlantic voyage, but began instead with the capture of Africans in the interior and ended with their adjustment to the new environment in the Americas. Six distinct stages of the Middle Passage have been identified, including:

1. capture and enslavement in Africa;
2. journey to the coast and other departure points;
3. storage and package for shipment;
4. transatlantic crossing;
5. sale and dispersion in the Americas;
6. seasoning/adjustment in the Americas;

This separation of the Middle Passage into stages allows each stage to be analyzed in detail, particularly with respect to the successive experiences of individuals. Not all Africans survived each stage, and some experienced different stages more than once and for different lengths of time. Individuals captured in different regions also experienced the stages differently. Many potential slaves would have been captured and sold more than once before eventually reaching the coast, and some would have already been slaves before their sale to the Europeans. A few would have been swiftly taken to the coast and put on board ship, while others would have been kept in forts over long periods, or exchanged between different European slavers, before setting

out on the crossing. All of these circumstances would have impacted upon overall Middle-Passage conditions and determined rates of mortality.

Enormous loss of life would have been the norm even before the Atlantic crossing. The African coasts were often referred to as the “white man’s grave”, but they were also a veritable cemetery for blacks. Many succumbed to brutality and terror, or to diseases for which they had no effective immune response. The psychological impact of exposure to white slavers, whom many Africans thought were cannibals, as well as exposure to the ocean, to disease, brutality, trauma, degradation by branding with hot irons, and general malnourishment, would also have constituted a recipe for mortality for many and madness for some .

On the “Slave Coast” – Togo, Dahomey and Western Nigeria – Africans were stored in prisons called *barracoons* located on the beachfront. At Elmina and Cape Coast in Ghana, for example, the Forts, or Castles as the large barracoons were also called, had storage space for hundreds of Africans. Many died in these overcrowded, poorly ventilated conditions, the records of the Dutch West India Company, for example, showing that up to 8% of Africans died while being held on the coast in such conditions. This Company tried to reduce mortality levels by putting the captives to work in the fort while awaiting shipment and by encouraging ship captains to arrive more frequently. The Company manager at Elmina, for example, expressed concern in a letter to his employer in 1705, stating, “I recommend that you space the arrival of ships better, for we cannot purchase large numbers of slaves if no ships are on the coast or due to arrive, because if slaves have to wait a long time they run a great risk of dying and also cost a great deal to feed.” In that year, Company records show that 95 slaves died, or 14.6% of a group of 650 slaves stored at Elmina. While this may not be a representative sample of such mortality rates, it does suggest the importance

of examining the number of slaves that died even before shipment in trying to get a sense of the mortality rates experienced during the Middle Passage as a whole.

The historian Johannes Postma has estimated that 5% of the slaves held captive at Elmina by the Dutch in the early 18th century died awaiting shipment. But he also says that this figure may be a “best-case scenario”, since smaller traders had far worse facilities than did the Dutch. In addition, the slave ships themselves would have expected to spend several months off the African coast awaiting a full cargo of slaves: the average stay for Dutch ships during the 18th century was seven months, for example, but it was not unusual for a captain to wait over a year, with two months being the shortest recorded stay. Many Africans, then, could expect to be held in the dungeons of forts and in barracoons on the coast for long periods before beginning the transatlantic voyage.

Furthermore, Joseph Miller has shown that the average length of the voyage to the Americas varied according to the zone of departure and the time of year, and fellow historian David Eltis says that “on average, slave ships leaving Senegambia took only 48.3 days to reach their destinations in the Americas, compared to 74.4 days for all African provenance zones combined.” However, for many captives, the journey from inland points of capture to the coast would have taken as much time, or more, than the actual journey across the Atlantic. For many Africans, the voyage itself would have been the shortest period during their journey as a whole towards the New World. Nevertheless, more Africans died during the transatlantic crossing than died on the African coast. Indeed, slavers expected this, being much concerned about the potential loss of revenue mortality rates represented. The table below shows the Dutch experience on the Slave Coast and gives an insight into the early-18<sup>th</sup> century trade, when mortality rates were showing a downward trend. The higher percentage loss in

the Atlantic indicates the generally destructive conditions under which Africans were transported. The environment below deck on the slave ships was horrendous, breeding disease and besetting all on board with illness and trauma.

**Table 7: *Slave Mortality on ships owned by the Dutch West India Company.***

<b>Name of Ship</b>	<b>Year consigned</b>	<b>No. of Africans</b>	<b>Death in crossing</b>	<b>Death on African Coast</b>
Graf van Laarwijk	1701	488	150	91
Vriendschap	1702	393	72	23
Justitia	1702	740	152	48
Carolus Secundus	1710	510	32	18
Amsterdam	1726	466	178	14
Leusden	1727	748	66	25

**Source:** Johannes Postma: "Mortality in the Dutch Slave Trade, 1675-1795," in H. Gemery and J. Hogendorn, The Uncommon Market (N.Y., 1979) p .246

Joseph Miller's work has also shown that the European slavers debated at length the relative merits of two methods of transporting Africans across the Middle Passage, firstly "loose packing" and secondly "tight packing". "Tight packing," the latter system, was based on the assumption that a loss of about 10% of slaves was inevitable during passage, regardless of the numbers on board. Thus, it was thought more economical to pack the ship to capacity and seek maximum speed across the Atlantic. "Loose packing," on the other hand, was preferred by slavers who believed that the more physically comfortable the slaves were, the lower the mortality rates among them would be. Thus, such slavers stocked their ships to up to maybe 75% of capacity, with the objective of reducing mortality rates to less than 10%. In general,

the evidence indicates that packing above the usual levels had little impact on mortality rates, but that packing below them at only 50 to 75% of the ship's capacity, as French slavers did at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, could significantly reduce mortality, according to French historian Jean-Michel Devereaux.

Mortality rates also varied between major African slave-providing areas and over time. David Eltis, for example, states that at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Bight of Biafra was a "relatively uncongenial" trading environment, showing that almost one third of the slaves leaving ports there between 1663 and 1713 never made it to the Americas, whereas in no other region was the ratio higher than one fifth. A study of 301 British slavers who supplied 101,676 slaves to the West Indies in 1791-97 shows that mortality ranged from 3% for the Gold Coast to a high of 11% for the Bight of Biafra. The overall average mortality was 6%.

**Table 8: A Surgeon's (Joseph Buckhana) Journal of slave mortality: An account of the slaves that died on board the ship James, [Master, Mathew Morley], sailing from Africa to the West Indies, Nov. 4, 1788 to Feb 8, 1789.**

<u>Date of Death</u>	<u>Description of Slave</u>	<u>Cause of Death</u>
1788, Nov. 4	man	inflammation of liver
Nov 29	man	dysentery
Dec 18	woman	suddenly
1789, Jan 1	man	dysentery
Jan 3	woman	dysentery
Jan 6	woman	lethargy
Jan 15	boy	dysentery
Jan 16	boy	dysentery
Jan 17	girl	dysentery
Jan 18	man	dysentery
Jan 19	boy	dysentery
Jan 28	boy	dysentery
Jan 31	woman	sulkiness
Feb 3	boy	lethargy
Feb 8	man	dysentery
Total slaves departed ----- 154	70 men 46 women 23 boys 15 girls	
Total death in Passage ---- 15		
Arrivals ----- 139		
% Loss ----- 9.7		

**Source:** *English Parliamentary Papers*, 1789, vol. 29; *Extracts of a Guinea Surgeon's Journal*, no. 632.

Because the ways in which disease spread within confined environments was not properly understood at the time, and because the mechanisms of disease as a whole were also poorly understood, such diseases as appeared on the ships were dealt with on an individual basis, and there was no attempt to improve the ship's environment. Nevertheless, epidemics on board ship could destroy the better part of a shipment, and the risk of such outbreaks of disease was not helped by the fact that Africans from different disease environments and parts of the continent had been thrown together on slave ships and exposed to new pathogens. First-time African

exposure to European diseases also had predictable effects, with outbreaks of dysentery, measles and small pox being known killers.

Surgeons on board the slave ships examined slaves for signs of sickness and disease, and, in order to protect the seemingly healthy slaves, those diagnosed with disease were sometimes thrown over board. It has been suggested that many slaves treated in this way were in fact reasonably healthy and would have recovered, given the opportunity. Many of the symptoms identified by the doctors as signs of disease, including vomiting, bloody diarrhoea, delirium and skin rashes, were probably more related to stress and dehydration than they were to disease. Medical ignorance, then, may also have contributed to high Middle-Passage mortality rates.

Women survived the passage at rates marginally higher than did men, a difference that is noticeable in the slave-traders' records. While the overall death rate for men has been estimated at about 20%, for women this figure is closer to 15%. Many reasons have been advanced for this difference: women may have enjoyed marginally better conditions on board ship than did men, for example. Perhaps the women were better at managing stress, or perhaps they were better able to withstand the shocks of pain and malnutrition.

Furthermore, historians have done more than simply calculate the overall mortality per ship during passage. They have also measured the rate of loss during each week of the voyage. A number of observations have emerged from such calculations, including the fact that the highest rate of mortality was experienced during the first 20 days of the voyage (many of these persons would probably have died on land had they been in storage longer), and that the rate declined during the middle part of the voyage, rising rapidly again after about 60-70 days, caused largely by a shortage of both food and water on the ship. No direct relationship has been



established between mortality rates and ship size, which is unsurprising given that conditions below deck for the slaves were unlikely to vary whatever the total size of the ship may have been. In fact, it is striking how similar European ship-building methods and slave-storage systems were, with slave ships during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when the trade had reached its height, carrying on average about 300 slaves.

Portugal was the first European country to attempt to regulate the number of slaves that could be carried per ton of ship's weight, a standard of about 2½ slaves per ton being set in 1684. Large ships sometimes still carried up to 800 slaves, but this was unusual even with the use of "tight packing". The records of the English Royal African Company for the period 1675 to 1725 show that the mean number of slaves per ship was 235 to Barbados and 270 to Jamaica, with the average size of the ships used being 179 tons. Half of the ships used by the Company in the 1720s were between 100 and 200 tons, and a third were between 200 and 300 tons. English ships also tended to be smaller than French or Portuguese, with a typical French ship, particularly one owned by an established trader, carrying about 395 slaves, and a typical Portuguese ship carrying about 350.

The horror of the Middle Passage led many commentators at the time to adopt critical views on the slave trade, while remaining supportive of slavery as an institution, with Europeans rallying against the slave trade long before rallied against slavery. Overcrowding was the norm on all slave ships: in spite of the debate about "tight packing" and "loose packing," all ships carried slaves under conditions that made extreme discomfort the norm, and, in order to prevent flight, suicide or revolt, slaves were chained together beneath deck, packed like "stones in a wall" and kept like prisoners on commuted death sentences. The stench on slave ships was sickening even to the slavers, whose mortality rates from disease was sometimes as high as that

of the slaves. Yet, despite the high mortality rates the profitability of the trade explained its viability. Slaves were a costly investment, and the slavers were concerned to maximize their profits, even if this meant losing quite a few slaves by doing so. Dr. Wadstrom, for example, a contemporary ship's surgeon commenting on the Portuguese trade, stated with respect to the mortality during the Middle Passage, that "their [the slaves'] cheapness in Mozambique fully compensated for their increased mortality." The slavers, then, expected high mortality rates to be compensated for by the high prices they could get for surviving slaves in the West Indies, though in general the trend over time was for slave prices to rise in the Americas as mortality rates during the Middle Passage fell.

However, whatever the calculations involved may have been, for the enslaved Africans the Middle Passage was always an abominable experience. Dr. Thomas Trotter, a Scottish physician reporting on the English trade, stated that the slaves were so tightly packed that they had no room to move. They were packed "spoonways", he said, locked to one another. Below deck, conditions were filthy and filled with the sound of suffering and sickness. Furthermore, the two sexes were stored separately, and the crew considered sexual access to female captives their right during the journey, with thousands of female slaves arriving pregnant in the New World, having been the victims of rape and sexual violation. Such conditions on board the slave ships were denounced on public platforms during the European and American anti-slave trade campaigns.

In conclusion, at least 1,000,000 Africans lost their lives during the Middle Passage, and an even larger number, says historian Patrick Manning, died as a result of capture and enslavement within Africa. However, an even greater number of enslaved Africans, running into the millions, died following their arrival in the New

World. A conservative estimate would be that about 15% of survivors of the passage died within the first two years of arrival. David Eltis has shown that mortality rates fell to half this figure over the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but the figures were still very high for the Caribbean as a whole. One effect of such high mortality rates among new arrivals in the Americas was that the African slaves were rarely able to reproduce their numbers for most of the slavery period. In fact, a distinguishing feature of the African populations in the Caribbean and in Brazil up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century was that they experienced natural demographic decline, with blacks suffering a systematic, long-term decline in their numbers because of high death rates, particularly among infants, and low birth rates.

In the United States of America, the black population grew naturally, an experience that stands in contrast to Caribbean decline. In a way, high mortality rates had been a feature of the Caribbean since the disappearance of the indigenous Indian populations, and they continued with the Africans for most of the slavery period. Unbalanced sex ratios in the islands, the debilitating impact of sugar-plantation work on the minority female population and an inability to reproduce under such condition, resulted in low birth rates and high infant-mortality rates, which meant negative population growth on most of the Caribbean plantations.

### **Summary**

In addition to the many well-known descriptions of the Middle Passage that depict its horror, inhumanity and general destruction of life, it is now possible to arrive at detailed figures for the number of slaves who died while on board the ships transporting them to the Americas. However, the Middle Passage should not be

regarded as only the transatlantic part of the slave-transportation system; rather, it should include the slaves' initial capture and sale, as well as their transportation overland to the waiting slave ships off the coasts.

The brutality of conditions during the Middle Passage resulted in considerable loss of life among the slaves. Described as “a way of death” by one historian, scholars have examined in detail the many causes of the high mortality rates that afflicted the slave population on their journey to the Americas. That the slave ships were in effect “floating tombs” has long been understood. It is only more recently that precise measurements of the number of enslaved Africans who died while on board have been available as a feature of the literature. In addition, scholars have not only gained greater understanding of the aggregate loss of life sustained during the Middle Passage, but they have also studied the rates of such loss and the extent to which these changed over time, as well as between voyages, for different parts of Africa and among different European slavers.

## **Educational Framework**

### **A. CONCEPTS**

- Middle Passage;
- Transatlantic journey;
- Enslaved Africans;
- Forts;
- Barracoons;
- Branding;
- Malnourishment;
- Commodities;

- Investors.

## **B. CONTENT**

1. The psychological and physical aspects of the Middle Passage;
2. The demographic significance and consequences of the Passage;
3. Six distinct stages of the Middle Passage – from initial capture to adjustment to life in the Americas;
4. Mortality rates among the slaves and among slave owners;
5. The types of ships used.

## **C OBJECTIVES**

### **Knowledge**

Students should be able to:

- a. define the term “Middle Passage”;
- b. describe the recruitment of Africans as slaves;
- c. examine critically conditions during the Middle Passage;
- d. describe the causes of the high mortality rates;
- e. differentiate the types of ships used to transport slaves.

### **Attitudes**

Students will be encouraged to:

- a. recognize and respect the courage and strength of the Africans who survived the journey to the Americas;
- b. recognize the contributions made by slaves to developing the Americas;
- c. desire to make a productive contribution wherever they are placed and desire justice for all peoples.

### **Skills**

Students will develop the ability to:

- a. improve map-reading skills;
- b. debate issues related to the Middle Passage;
- c. analyze arguments from various sources.

#### **D. TEACHING STRATEGIES**

- Map work;
- Debates;
- Lectures;
- Group work;
- Discussions.

#### **E. STUDENT/ LEARNER ACTIVITIES**

- Brainstorm the words “Middle Passage” and create a semantic map of the responses, e.g. dungeon, overcrowding and madness;
- Write a diary (15-20 entries), or a reflective essay, for either a surgeon or a captain aboard a slave ship during the Middle Passage;
- Identify modern forms of “Middle Passage” – in the Caribbean region, for example, or in Europe, Africa and the Middle East;
- Ask Stimulus – Response type questions and observe students’ responses (anger, sadness, or confusion) to the numbers of Africans who died on board the ships.
- Develop student portfolios on recent/contemporary forms of Middle Passage, or find graphs, charts or maps describing the Middle Passage. Use relevant information from these sources to write an article on its effects.
- Creation of a Web site. Allow students to use the Web to conduct research on the transatlantic trade. Compile and categorize data found in this way.

#### **F. EVALUATION**

1. Presentation of Portfolio;
2. Use the events discussed in class to construct a chronological outline of the six stages of the Middle Passage, with brief comments on each stage;
3. Assessment of computer data (give marks for relevance and accurate compilation of data).

## **G. RESOURCE MATERIALS**

The Internet;

Archive materials;

Supplementary texts.

## **Chapter 8: Prices and Profitability**

The trade in “black ivory”, as the historian James Walvin has called the enslaved Africans, was profitable enough to attract an apparently unending stream of investors on four continents for more than four centuries. Slave trading was big business, utilizing advanced management techniques, complex financial arrangements and state-of-the-art investment instruments. Furthermore, it was not a poor man’s business, since the investment required to participate in the trade was often considerable.

While there were many small traders, who functioned by pooling their resources through partnerships and other strategies, large companies handled the bulk of the trade, many of them having been granted royal charters and monopoly rights. Free trade ultimately became the dominant framework within which business was transacted, opening the door to hundreds of participants, yet even then the larger companies were more effective in organization, pricing and establishing patterns of trading conduct. Shipping over 10 million people across the Atlantic over a period of nearly 400 years was a major management project, investment coming from both sides of the Atlantic and from Europe, Africa, and North and South America. The trade called for global enterprise and considerable entrepreneurial confidence, and it required a business ethic that did not object to the international trade of enslaved people under conditions of violence and duress.

According to the historian Herbert Klein, the business culture of the transatlantic slave trade “fitted into traditional trading networks” from the perspective of the African suppliers, being simply an extension of the internal and external slave markets that already existed in Africa. From the European perspective, however, the trade required major investment in start-up costs, as well as a concerted effort at



cultural preparation. The ideas that facilitated the trade – that blacks were inferior and could be reduced to chattels – had to be accepted and promoted in order that the slavers could continue to engage in trade that many within their own societies considered odious. The trade attracted the rich and famous from all the major European commercial nations, since it offered the possibility of quick fortunes for both investors and managers, and monarchs, merchants, aristocrats, politicians, priests, farmers, soldiers and others who had capital to invest contributed to its financing. Slave-trade companies invested in ships in Europe and in forts on the African Coast, employing brokers and agents in Europe, Africa and the Americas to make ever higher profits.

In Europe, governments competed with private businesses, and in Africa, kings and nobles tried to monopolize the trade. Everywhere, nations competed against each other for the largest share, France emerging as a major player. In 1677, the Senegal Company, for example, financed the capture of Gorée Island off the coast of Senegal from the Dutch and was given a monopoly by the French government over the entire African coast. By the 1780s, Nantes had no serious rival in the French slave trade, sending out some 35 ships annually to West Africa – 55% of the French total. Indeed, it was only the slave trade, historian Robert Stein has argued, that “kept Nantes from declining to the level of a provincial port.” At this time, the French were investing over 30,000,000 livres in the trade per year, with millions of livres going to related businesses. French traders, Stein adds, “predicted gains of up to 100 percent, and realising paper profits of up to 50%, they were confident that they had found the true El Dorado.”

**Table 9: *Nantes Slaving Departures***

<u>Year</u>	<u>Average. no. per year</u>
1713-22	15
1726-35	12
1736-44	24
1749-54	31
1763-77	24
1783-92	34

While the slave trade was not always as lucrative as such traders hoped, average profits for long-term slavers being less than 10%, and perhaps nearer about 6-8%, it was nevertheless possible to realize large profits on individual voyages, or on a small cluster of voyages. According to the Normandy Chamber of Commerce, French merchants sold some 82,663 Africans for 76,293,330 livres between 1738 and 1744. This meant that the average African sold for 923 livres. At the same time, French slavers were paying about 300 French livres per slave on the African coast, hence earning gross returns of over 100% on each sale. In the 1780s, slavers bought Africans on the coast for about 750 livres each and sold them for about 1,325 livres, a profit of nearly 80%. Many financial charges, however, were likely to be incurred, and net profits would have been considerably less. Nevertheless, the expectation of miracle profits was still the attraction of the trade for many.

**Table 10: Major French Slaving Families (1708-1790)**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Expeditions</u>	<u>Port</u>
Montaudouin	60	Nantes
Bouteiller	56	Nantes
Michel	52	Nantes
Begouen Demeaux	41	Le Harve
Walsh	40	Nantes
Premor	39	Honfleur
Garesche	38	La Rochelle
Rasteau	38	La Rochelle
Beaufils	35	Le Harve
Bertrand	32	Nante
Mesle	31	Saint Malo
Giraudeau	37	La Rochelle
Nairac	25	Bordeaux
Chauvet	25	Le Harve
Deluynes	24	Le Harve
d'Havelooze	23	La Rochelle
Feray	22	Saint Malo
Delacroix	22	Nantes
Dumoustier	22	Nantes
Magon	22	Nantes
Espivent	21	Le Harve
Portier	20	Le Harve

**Source:** Robert Stein, The French Slave Trade in the 18th Century (1979 p.153)

England also developed a major trade. In 1663, the English Company of Royal Adventurers had a shareholder list headed by the King, and it included all the leading investors of the time. Cape Coast was the Company's main station in Africa, and during its first four years of trading the Company made annual revenues of over £100,000 on slaves, and twice as much again on gold. When the Company ran into debt, it was replaced by the Royal African Company in 1672, this new company raising £111,600 from 200 shareholders, including John Locke, the English philosopher of liberty, who invested £600 in the first three years. Aside from its activities on the Cape Coast, the Company also opened slaving stations at Commenda, Accra, Aga and Anashan. The Royal African Company spent large sums to outfit each

voyage to Africa in order to secure Africans who were sold in the West Indies for about £18 per female and £20 per male. Between 1672 and 1690, it sold at least 100,000 slaves in the West Indies, about 25,000 of whom were taken from the Windward Coast (Liberia), 25,000 from the Gold Coast, 15,000 from Whydah, and the rest from Senegambia, Angola, Benin and Calabar.

**Table 11: Slave Prices in Brazil (Pernambuco) and Jamaica**

	<u>Year</u>	<u>Price Per Head (£)</u>
<u>Brazil</u>	1640	30.03
	1643	20.54
	1645	20.98
<u>Jamaica</u>	1665	21.14
	1670	21.14
	1675	21.92
	1680	19.32
	1690	23.85
	1700	23.68

**Source:** R. Bean and R. Thomas, “The Adoption of Slave Labour in America”. In Gemery and Hogendorn, The Uncommon Market (1979, pp.391, 397)

The Scandinavians also invested in the “black ivory”. For example, though Louis de Geer, an acclaimed financial leader from Liège and a trader in iron, formed a partnership with Samuel Blommaert, an established slaver from Amsterdam whose ships operated from Gothenburg under the name of his trading company formed in 1649, this business was headed by Henrick Carloff, an experienced Scandinavian slaver who built Fort Carlosburg on the Gold Coast within sight of Elmina. Carloff’s venture attracted investment from as far afield as Lithuania, then part of Poland, and from members of the European nobility, such as the Duke of Courland. When he ran into problems with his Swedish employers, Carloff speedily negotiated a deal with the Danes, building two Danish forts on the West African coast, Christiansborg and

Friedrichsburg. He then parted company with the Danes and started to work for the French, Carloff's career showing the multinational character of European involvement in the trade.

Less is known about German involvement in the trade, though there were several German attempts in the 17th and early 18th centuries to establish a foothold in West Africa. Using mainly the Dutch as their allies, German ships sailed under the Brandenburg flag, but, having no colonies in the Americas, they sold slaves mostly to Danish settlements in the Virgin Islands. Efforts were made to establish a German colony on the Caribbean island of Tobago, but local Carib resistance, informed by Dutch intelligence, led to the project's cancellation.

Though the volume of the different European countries' involvement in the trade varied, investment would not have been made had attractive profits not been expected, and we have a great deal of information about the levels of profit realized by Europe's largest companies, as well as by some small family businesses and partnerships. French and Dutch merchants made substantial profits, for example, and the records of 100 slaving voyages sent out by the Dutch *Middelburgsche Commercie Compagnie* between the 1730s and the 1790s show an average return of 2-3% per voyage, with some making as much as 20%. Other voyages, however, made losses of 10-15%. Much work has also been done on the profitability of the English trade at its peak in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The historian Roger Anstey, for example, has shown from his study of the Bristol and Liverpool trades, that investors in the slave trade could expect an average annual return of about 9.5%. Furthermore, the records of William Davenport of Liverpool have survived for the period 1757-1785, and these are the best available for any late-eighteenth century English trader. Davenport shipped most of his slaves from Old Calabar and Cameroon, and David

Richardson, a historian who has analyzed the records in detail, has shown that the 67 voyages analyzed entailed a gross capital outlay of £320,000, generated returns of £380,000, and made a net profit of £60,000, which means an average yearly profit of nearly 7% per voyage.

Historians Jean Meyer and Dieudonné Rinchon have made similar studies of profits made in the French trade, which, like the English, saw 10% as an average return on investment. They emphasize, however, that an important problem for slavers was the tendency for slaves to be bought in the Americas on credit, which could mean that full payment would not be received until two or three years after sale.

**Table 12: *Profit and Loss per voyage - William Davenport of Liverpool 1757-1785***

<i>Profit or Loss as a % of Outlay</i>	<i>Voyages Making Profit</i>	<i>Voyages Making Losses</i>
0-9	4	5
10-19	5	4
20-29	7	-
30-39	6	4
40-49	5	1
50-54	4	-
60-99	9	4
100+	9	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>18</b>

**Source:** D. Richardson “Profitability of the Bristol - Liverpool Slave Trade”

David Richardson has shown from the above figures that many 18<sup>th</sup>-century English voyages made very large profits, considerably above the norm for other investment options available to Davenport in England. The majority of the voyages made over 50% in profits, which explains why the trade was so attractive. There was always the possibility of making a really large profit, even if many voyages only

made a small one, and some made a loss. Thus, a number of summary observations can be made:

- 1) The slave trade was in general profitable for investors;
- 2) Profits fluctuated over time, between destinations and even between ships within a single fleet;
- 3) Many voyages made losses, but the lure of big profits continued to tempt investors;
- 4) Possible losses incurred in the sale of slaves could be compensated for in profits made from the sale of other commodities;
- 5) The slave trade offered profits, prestige and power to companies, governments and individuals;
- 6) Profits were sometimes quickly made, either being converted into commercial and industrial capital in Europe, or invested in plantations in the Americas;
- 7) Few, if any, other investments in Europe offered such high rates of return at the time;
- 8) The average profits of most slaving companies show that profits were in general modest; however, this conceals the powerful speculative attraction of the trade;
- 9) Profits from the slave trade were often linked to returns on other commodity trades, particularly in gold and ivory.

By the middle of the 18th century, the English had established themselves as the most profitable operators of the slave trade. Slave prices were generally lowest in British America, with Dutch slavers offering attractive credit terms to British colonists, since, apart from Suriname, Holland had no major agricultural colonies of

her own. However, the relatively advanced condition of England's industrial and commercial economy was reflected in a tendency for English slavers to experience lower unit costs. The English could outfit their slave ships more economically than could their rivals, because most of the goods put on board for Africa were either locally made or had been procured in English colonies in Asia and the Americas.

**Table 13: Average slave prices in Africa and the Caribbean, 1670s - 1780s (pounds sterling)**

<u>Years</u>	<u>Africa</u>	<u>Caribbean</u>
1670s	3	15
1690s	10	20
1710s	15	20
1720s	16	22
1730s	12	25
1750s	15	30
1760s	13	30
1770s	18	35

In addition, England's maritime supremacy gave it a distinct advantage, with some English slave voyages making profits as high as 100%. Even though others made losses, the attractions of such special cases of extraordinary profitability were part of the attraction of the slave trade. According to the historian Robin Blackburn, gross receipts from voyages entailing the sale of 1,428,701 Africans by the English in this period totalled £60 million – the equivalent of £6 billion in 1996 terms.

Since each voyage was financed by a specific group of investors who were in the trade over the short term, the attractions of making a quick fortune were compelling. However, even with average returns being only 9.5% of investment, the slave trade was still one of the more attractive options available to investors: government bonds, for example, yielded 3.5 - 4%, mortgages on real estate 4 - 5%, and sugar estates in the Caribbean at best 6-9%. Thus, for the speculator, the slave



trade could mean the possibility of a quick fortune, while for the long-term investor it could represent a higher rate of return than the competing options. In 1783, for example, the Nantes firm of Giraud et Raimbaud sent an 150-ton ship, the *Jeune Aimée* (*Young Beloved*), to Angola. There, the captain obtained 264 slaves at a capital outlay of about 156,000 livres. These slaves, together with other goods, were sold for 366,000 livres in Saint Domingue, the profit thus being 210,000 livres, or about 135%!

**Table 14: *Value of Slaves Exported***

<b>Year</b>	<b>No. exported from West Africa</b>	<b>Average prices in Africa (£)</b>	<b>Total (£)</b>
1701- 10	339,000	12.6	4,271,400
1711- 20	391,000	16.8	6,568,800
1721- 30	312,000	14.2	4,430,400
1731- 40	377,000	20.2	7,615,400
1741- 60	790,000	17.7	13,983,000
1761- 0	497,000	20.0	9,940,000
1771-76	456,000	21.0	9,576,000
1777-80	240,000	11.4	2,736,000
1781-90	504,000	29.1	14,666,000
1791- 1800	344,000	25.3	8,703,200
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4,249,000</b>		<b>79,754,600</b>

**Source:** H Gemery and J Hogendorn, "Economic Costs of West African Participation in Atlantic Slave Trade ", in Gemery and Hogendorn (eds) The Uncommon Market 1974, p.156

While the records of the large Dutch trading establishments show that average returns in the 18<sup>th</sup> century fell below 6%, with French returns averaging between 6 and 8%, it must be borne in mind that the slave trade was but one component of a wider trade network that embraced the New World, Asia and Europe. Thus, the American colonies could not have been profitable without the use of slaves, and this was also true for Brazil, where Portuguese slave traders established a complex

financial relationship with Brazilian sugar and coffee planters that assured them very attractive returns on investment.

Therefore, while recent literature on the transatlantic trade has tended to show that profits were moderate and not as spectacular as had been originally thought, historians R. Thomas and R. Bean have also argued that the trade could not in fact have been *more* profitable, since it was a highly competitive industry. For most of the period of the slave trade, there was no effective barrier to entry to the trade and large numbers of ships, crews and managers were always available. Thus, Thomas and Bean argue that profits in the trade would have tended to fall into line with other maritime trades, and returns on investment over the long term would have been unlikely to exceed those of other industries. However, they concede that some voyages were nevertheless “highly profitable,” and when organized as single, short-term investments by individuals or small group of partners they could be financially very rewarding.

In addition, despite the high risks, profits probably increased as a result of rising slave prices. Average profits may therefore have increased to 15-20% in the second quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but even then such levels, given the risks involved in the trade, were not considered extraordinary. Falling mortality rates among the slaves on their passage to the Americas, dropping to about 5% at this time, would also have made a considerable and favourable impact on the bottom line. It has been shown, for example, that the death of one slave on a 300-slave voyage would theoretically have cut the total profit by 0.67%, which means that the earlier slave mortality rates of 10 to 15% would have reduced total profit by 20 to 30%. Falling slave mortality rates would have meant higher rates of return.

During the hey-day of the trade, fortunes were made and heavy losses were also incurred. Slavers able to carry a range of other commodities may have been able to ensure consistent profits by doing so in a market known for its high risks and considerable fluctuations. Yet, it remains true to say that the trade was able to attract consistent investment over a period of some 400 years, which is compelling evidence of its long-term attractions to investors and of its viability.

### **Summary**

In general, slaves were sold at a profit by African suppliers in Africa and by European suppliers in the Americas, and it was profit that made the trade attractive to all those participating in it, determining the extent and duration of their engagements. Slaves were treated like marketable commodities, though considerations of their “perishability” were also always a prime consideration.

European slavers have left financial accounts suggesting that profits made in the trade could fluctuate considerably. Though there was a trend for profits made in the trade to rise significantly over time, the growing number of European traders had served to drive down average profits for all to only moderate levels by the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Thereafter, any increase in profits would have required significant improvements in operational efficiency, as well as cuts in costs. By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century English slavers had considerable advantages in this regard, chiefly because they were able to turn the benefits of England’s being the first industrialized European nation to their advantage.

## **Educational Framework**

### **A. CONCEPTS**

- “Black Ivory”;
- Profitability;
- Free trade;
- Pooling resources;
- Global enterprise;
- Maritime supremacy;
- Individual supremacy;
- Royal Charters;
- Monopoly rights;
- International trade.

### **B. CONTENT**

1. The slave trade as a global enterprise;
2. The transatlantic slave trade – a 17<sup>th</sup> century El Dorado in terms of profit, prestige and power;
3. England’s maritime and industrial supremacy giving it advantages over other European slavers;
4. The long-term viability of the trade.

### **C. OBJECTIVES**

#### **Knowledge**

Students should be able to:

- a. describe the “business culture” of the transatlantic trade from an European perspective;
- b. describe this from an African perspective;
- c. describe the driving forces behind the trade, such as power, prestige and profit;
- d. describe and evaluate the factors affecting profit fluctuation over time

and the impact this had on the trade.

### **Attitudes**

Students will be encouraged to

- a. be sensitive to the fact that human rights and the dignity of each person must be respected in the quest for wealth;
- e. accept responsibility for each other and value integrity.

### **Skills**

Students will develop the ability to:

- a. use and interpret statistical data;
- b. present data in various forms;
- c. make inferences and draw conclusions.

## **D. TEACHING STRATEGIES**

- Map work;
- Art work;
- Group discussions;
- Use of pie charts, graphs, etc.

## **E. STUDENT/ LEARNER ACTIVITIES**

- Use a map to show the routes between the major slave-trading centres on the African coast. Highlight the port of Gorée Island and state the significance of this port;
- Develop an art portfolio, illustrating slave ships used for the transatlantic trade in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Compare and contrast these with modern ships;
- Divide the class into groups. Look at the statistics on the value of slaves exported, and present these in the form of pie charts and graphs;

- Group discussion on “The Conduct of the Transatlantic Trade and its Profitability”
  - a. from the African perspective;
  - b. from the European perspective.

## **F. EVALUATION**

- Presentation of statistical information;
- Art portfolio;
- Debate:

“Be it resolved that modern-day slavery is as great a human tragedy as slavery practiced during the time of the transatlantic slave trade.”

## **G. RESOURCE MATERIALS**

Maps;  
Supplementary texts.

## **Chapter 9: Resistance and Rebellion**

The Africans caught up in the transatlantic slave trade did not wish to be enslaved, and they rebelled whenever they could, their resistance indicating how individuals and communities fundamentally rejected their entrapment. The evidence of resistance – from individual flight to armed revolt – is compelling, and it took several forms and was shaped by complex forces in different places over time. The historian David Eltis makes this point in his analysis of African resistance to the trade, though it is more difficult to accept his view that the determined efforts of African elites to contain geographical encroachment and settlement by Europeans, and to determine the scope of their control over the slave trade, were also acts of resistance to the transatlantic trade. For these were linked more to African efforts to dictate the terms of the trade, and to limit the Europeans' scope to bargain, than they were to disengaging European control.

More important, however, from the perspective of the enslaved Africans themselves was their individual and communal resistance to both African and European slavers. Despite the role played by the African elites in supplying slaves to the European traders, the transatlantic trade was imposed upon village communities by means of violence and terror, and the existence of the many forts, initially European monuments to trade and self defence, in a chain along the West-African coast is testimony to this. For this reason, resistance was different from traditional forms of social protest in West Africa, given the new and unfamiliar system of oppression that the trade represented. There were four main periods during which this resistance took place: (1) at the point of capture and sale; (2) in transit to the coast and in the barracoons; (3) on board the ships; (4) on arrival in the Americas. Nevertheless,

despite this opposition the European slavers were able to establish trading arrangements with many African kings and nobles, some African rulers even restructuring their systems of administration as a result of their involvement in the transatlantic trade, as historian Philip Curtin's research has shown. The development of client relationships with European traders even became the economic basis of some new African states.

These client, or "predatory", states raided neighbouring societies to procure slaves for the trade, increasing their involvement in it and efficiency over time. This often meant the development of armed forces whose role was violently to invade neighbouring states and beyond with the aim of capturing slaves for the trade. In some cases such violence was sponsored, either directly or indirectly, by European slavers. Client states of this sort sprang up in the vicinity of the coastal slave forts and also in the interior. The Bambara State of Segu, for example, formed in about 1712, has been described as "an enormous machine to produce slaves," and slave raiding and trading were crucial parts of its economy, the Europeans providing arms for this purpose. Similarly, the historian Robin Law has shown that in the years following the conquest of Ouidah by Dahomey in 1727, the ruler of the latter state sold large numbers of military captives, whom he considered to be his personal property, to the Europeans. However, even such military campaigns could not yield sufficient slaves to satisfy the demand, forcing the king to purchase slaves from independent slave raiders for resale to the Europeans.

The African populations, then, whether they lived inside or outside such client states, were exposed to raids from professional warriors. From Senegal to Angola, such new client states sprang up, or were created from older ones as part of the development of political cultures in West Africa. One of the primary functions of



these client states was to undermine and displace states and leaders that were opposed to the slave trade. However, local communities also learnt how to defend themselves within this new context, developing a culture of resistance to both their European and African captors.

In 1730, for example, Captain Adrien Vanvoorn, a Dutch slaver and owner of the *Phoenix* from Nantes in France, was moored at the mouth of the River Volta in West Africa and engaged in negotiations for the purchase of slaves from a client king in the area. Without warning, a group of Africans appeared from nowhere, burnt the ship and killed many members of the crew. Similarly, Captain William Potter of the *Perfect*, a slave ship registered in the English port of Liverpool, had a similar experience in 1758 on the River Gambia, his ship being attacked by members of the local community that had witnessed the sale that was taking place. Potter had almost completed the purchase of over 300 slaves and was preparing to sail to Charleston, South Carolina. The entire crew was killed in the assault. Historian Hugh Thomas also notes that ten years after this event the *Côte d'or*, a 200-ton vessel belonging to Rafael Mendez of Bordeaux in France, was assaulted by warriors in rafts on the River Bonny. Heavily armed with guns and knives, these boarded the ship and freed the slaves, the crew only escaping when the Africans fled on seeing the approach of an English vessel.

The records of the English Royal African Company are also replete with such incidents of protest and rebellion. In 1703, for example, Africans overpowered the guards at the Company's fort at Sekondi on the Gold Coast and beheaded its governor, and in the same year a European agent was captured in Anamabo and forced to buy his life with the money he had brought with him to buy slaves. The 1999 CD-ROM database compiled by David Eltis *et al.* contains references to 382

slave-ship revolts, two-thirds of which took place at the port of loading or within a week of setting sail. When such revolts were put down, high fatality rates among the slaves could be the result: according to Eltis *et al*, an average of 57 slaves per incident died in 18 revolts on ships in the Senegambia region, compared to 24 per incident in 49 revolts elsewhere on the coast.

There are also many detailed descriptions of revolts that took place during the early stages of the Middle Passage. In 1776, for example, an English Captain, Peleg Clarke, described how slaves aboard his vessel rose up, struggled with the crew, and jumped overboard. Of these slaves, 28 men and two women drowned, but six survived and were recaptured. In 1765, Captain Hopkins of the *Sally* arrived on the island of Antigua in the Caribbean and described an insurrection that had taken place aboard his vessel four hours after leaving Calabar. A number of the captive men, vomiting from seasickness, had been allowed on deck, where they were catered to by healthy slaves. These healthy slaves managed to secure the freedom of the entire group, but in the resulting struggle Hopkins won by forcing 80 Africans overboard to their deaths.

According to David Eltis, “the vast majority of rebellions resulted in inordinate bloodletting, whatever the outcome. If the slaves got the upper hand, even temporarily, most of the crew could expect to be killed. If the crew retained control, the death of the rebel leaders was almost inevitable, and the actual numbers of slaves put to death would be limited only by the need to get enough slaves to the Americas to ensure a profit in what was a highly competitive business.” Physical force determined who was in control of a slave ship, and any relaxation of vigilance, or reduction in the amount of force available, on the part of the slavers would mean rebellion.

Having tried and failed to secure their freedom the Africans could expect the most gruesome punishments at the hands of the Europeans, inflicted to serve as examples to others. The captain of a Danish vessel, for example, Fredericius Ovarthus, having suppressed an African insurrection on board dismembered the captives over a period of three days in the sight of the rest of the slaves. On the fourth day, their heads were cut off. A French captain who had successfully put down a rebellion on board his ship hanged the rebel leaders by their feet and whipped them to death. A Dutch captain who survived a revolt hanged an Ashanti rebel leader by his arms after cutting off his hands, the leader being allowed to bleed to death in the sight of the other slaves.

Hundreds of similar occurrences were reported, but some events had a greater impact on the conduct of the trade than others. One well-documented event took place at Calabar in 1767, when seven English ships, five from Liverpool, one from Bristol and one from London, were awaiting slave cargoes on the Old Calabar River where trading relations had been established with traders in New Calabar. An armed contingent of Africans from Old Calabar attacked the English, but they were unsuccessful because the king's soldiers assisted the English slavers. The leader of the Old Calabar warriors was then beheaded, and the survivors sold into slavery in the West Indies.

Descriptions of resistance to slaving on the coast, particularly in the forts, are also vivid, depicting circumstances in which Africans sought every opportunity to free themselves. In 1727, for example, slaves succeeded in organizing a rebellion at the Dutch fort of Christiansborg on the Gold Coast, fighting the Dutch soldiers and killing the fort's governor. While many of the Africans held in the fort managed to escape, those who had been injured and were unable to flee were seized when the Dutch

regained control of the fort and were put to death. Their bodies were beheaded and thrown into the sea, as was the customary punishment for rebellious slaves in the barracoons.

This practice of beheading the bodies of the Africans before throwing them into the sea was thought effective in preventing suicide among the slaves. The Europeans thought that the Africans believed that the soul returned to the ancestors for rebirth after death, and, by beheading the dead bodies of the Africans they could impress upon the survivors that there would be no journey to the ancestors, since the head had been separated from the body and disposed of separately. However, suicides among the African captives were still commonplace, and these too need to be understood as acts of resistance, the Africans in this way sending out a message to the Europeans that could have left them in no doubt concerning the depth of African anti-slavery sentiments. Historian Hugh Thomas, for example, cites a case witnessed by slavers of the Dutch West India Company in 1767:

“A harsh response followed a sale of Ashanti slaves in Elmina ....Six captives had been personal servants of a recently dead director-general of the ....company, and they would have been freed if the Asantehene had paid some debts which he owed the company. But he did not, and the Dutch decided to sell the men concerned to traders. “We put their feet in shackles”, ...on the day that they were to be sold; the slave dungeons were thoroughly searched for knives and weapons, but apparently not enough...”

What followed horrified the Dutch, but it was consistent with the defiant conduct of the Africans in captivity. The narrative continues:

“The result...was that when the company slaves were ordered into yards to hold each other, they (the personal slaves)...cut their own throats; one negro even cut the throat of his wife and then his own; the yard of the noble company’s chief castle was thus turned into a bloodbath”

Appalling violence of this sort continued on the Atlantic voyage to the New World, with maximum security being imposed on every part of the journey. Slavers used the ship’s guns, and even cannons mounted on deck pointing at the slave holds, to secure order. But even with such methods being used, the records of the Dutch West India Company list 15 major revolts on board ships in the years 1751-75, most of them occurring while the vessels were still close to the African Coast. Hugh Thomas tells us that at least one insurrection occurred on every 8-10 journeys for Dutch slavers, and one for every 25 voyages for French. In 1770, for example, the Africans aboard the Dutch slave ship *Guinnee Vriendschap*, whose captain was one Essjerrie Etti, seized control of the vessel but were soon overpowered by forces from the Dutch warship *Castor*. In 1795, slaves seized control of the *Neptunius*, and sought their return to Africa. However, an English warship, alerted to the situation and noting that the *Neptunius* was not an English ship, opened fire and blew the ship and the rebellious slaves out of the water. In 1751, the approximately 260 Africans aboard the *Middelburgs Welvaren* escaped from the hold and engaged the crew in a battle. The Captain, recognizing that the Africans had the advantage, ordered the

cannon on board to be used against them, and 230 Africans were killed. On another occasion, slaves aboard the *Vigilantie* in 1780 overpowered the crew and took control of the ship, forcing the crew to flee in lifeboats. The ship was eventually captured by an English warship.

For their part, the European slavers were not keen to report accounts of successful African rebellions, but a few such accounts have nevertheless come down to us. One of the earliest concerns an incident that took place in 1532, when a Portuguese vessel, the *Misericordia*, captained by Estevão Carreira, was transporting 109 slaves from Saõ Tomé to Elmina. Somehow, the Africans freed themselves, killed all the crew except for the navigators, and vanished. The navigators later reached Elmina in a lifeboat, but nothing more was heard of either the *Misericordia* or of its human cargo. Something similar happened in 1752 on the British ship the *Marlborough*, which was registered in Bristol. On this occasion, the 400 slaves on board, who were being transported from Elmina on the Gold Coast and Bonny on the Niger Delta, rose up and killed 33 of the 35 crew, two crew members being kept alive to assist with navigation. The ship then started its return voyage to Bonny, but internal quarrels broke out between the Africans, with the Gold Coast group objecting to the destination. A clash between the two groups ensued in which 98 persons were killed. At the end of the conflict, the Gold Coast group took control of the vessel and headed for Elmina with one of the navigators. This group, too, vanished from written history.

Finally, acts of resistance such as these were always possible during the Middle Passage, adding a legacy of triumph and survival to the general record of suffering and mortality. But rebellions also continued at the end of the voyage in the New World, contributing to a radical tradition of struggle that informed black resistance to the slave trade throughout its existence. Thus, the anti-slavery struggle in

the Americas continued the struggles that had taken place in Africa and during the Atlantic passage, and the later African decolonization movements of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century also embraced this wider history of African struggle.

## **Summary**

Africans did not wish to be captured, enslaved and sold as commodities on the labour markets of the New World, and despite the client relationships that existed between African suppliers and European traders there is considerable evidence of African resistance to the transatlantic trade.

All Africans, whether suppliers, traders, collaborators, or captives, were adversely affected by the slave trade, and resistance to it took many forms, appearing at the levels of state policy, community agitation and individual action. The slave trade was therefore circumscribed by refusal and opposition on the part of the African slaves that at times could threaten, even if only temporarily, its effectiveness in particular locations. Resistance was always discernible among those captured for the trade, rebellion taking place *en route* to the coast, in the barracoons and on board the slave ships. At every stage of the Middle Passage, remarkable attempts at escape from the grip of the transatlantic trade took place.

## **Educational Framework**

### **A. CONCEPTS**

- Recruitment and supply;
- Resistance and rebellion;
- Slave forts;

- Decolonization;
- Client governments and states;
- Bloodletting;
- Insurrection;
- Social oppression.

## **B. CONTENTS**

1. Development of a culture of resistance to the transatlantic slave trade, at both individual and communal levels;
2. The restructuring of African systems of government to accommodate the needs of the transatlantic trade, e.g. the Bambara State of Segu;
3. Aspects of African resistance to the trade, from point of capture to arrival in the Americas.

## **C. OBJECTIVES**

### **Knowledge**

Students should be able to:

- a. give an account of the development of African client states that sought to accommodate the transatlantic trade;
- b. describe the ways in which individuals and communities resisted the trade.

### **Attitudes**

Students will be encouraged to:

- a. appreciate the resistance of human beings to enslavement and to oppression;
- b. recognize that freedom is a natural right of all peoples;
- c. recognize the role played by the enslaved in the pursuit of their freedom;
- d. respect and desire freedom at any cost.



## **Skills**

Students will develop the ability to:

- a. conduct interviews;
- b. develop questionnaires;
- c. conduct research using a variety of resources, such as the Internet, libraries and archives.

## **D. TEACHING STRATEGIES**

- Interviews;
- Surveys;
- Guest lectures;
- Group work;
- Role plays;
- Class visits.

## **E. STUDENT/ LEARNER ACTIVITIES**

- (a) Identify situations of oppression in a local community or neighbourhood; (b) Conduct an interview with a local Councillor or representative of the area, asking structured questions about these situations; (c) Write articles or simple reports to newspapers, recommending peaceful solutions to these situations;
- Visit the library or national archives and compile a list of materials dealing with forms of resistance and rebellion during the transatlantic slave trade. Write a report of information obtained from at least five of these sources;
- Write and then perform a mock trial of the captain of the vessel, *Middlesburg Welvaren*, charging him with the killing of 230 slaves;
- Discussions on forms of rebellion and resistance, in co-operation with

other teachers and guest speakers.

## **F. EVALUATION**

1. Portfolio of interviews conducted and of responses to a structured questionnaire;
2. Report of forms of resistance and rebellion collected from the Internet, original documents, textbooks, etc.
3. A mock trial, which can also be done in the form of a debate

## **G. RESOURCE MATERIALS**

The Internet;  
National archives;  
Supplementary readings.

## **Chapter 10: The Impact of the Trade on Africa**

The transatlantic slave trade was very far from being in the interests of African societies, and the harm done both to people and to their communities by the trade is incalculable and enduring. Nevertheless, the social and material changes that the trade caused in Africa, particularly the forced exportation of over 10 million people, should not be linked in a direct way to present-day development problems in Africa. This is the case even if the argument made by some European slavers and their supporters that the contact with Europe and the Americas that the trade offered was good for Africa is false.

Some have argued that the transatlantic trade offered profits and new and prestigious goods to the local African elites in control of the supply of slaves, and that those Africans that survived the Middle Passage benefited from being relocated to societies in the Americas, since these offered greater material benefits over the long term. Yet, it is impossible to argue that the trade, and the slavery that it fed in the Americas, was not primarily about plunder, brutality and a general contempt for the human rights of those Africans who were enslaved. Indeed, the trade may properly be described as a “reign of terror” that was unleashed first on West and Central Africa, and then on the continent’s south-eastern coasts at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This had devastating effects upon local community and national life.

In most of the affected regions, agricultural production, systems of food management, political organization and the social and psychological well being of inhabitants were disrupted. The various parts of Africa affected reacted differently, but all were deflected from their proper path to development, some smaller societies being completely destroyed, with those that refused to participate being assaulted militarily until they did. The ruling African elites that managed the trade in client

relationships with European slavers also attacked neighbouring states in search of captives.

There has been debate among historians as to how extensive and long lasting such effects were. The historian Philip Curtin, for example, has suggested that the “disastrous losses to a particular society from slave exports were rarely sustained for more than a few decades, leaving the possibility of recovery.” And Joseph Miller has argued that at the peak of slave trading in the Angola region in the 18<sup>th</sup> century the natural growth rate of the population was 2.5%, and even after the effects of slave trading are factored in, the population growth rate would still have been in the vicinity of 1.3%, or higher. He explains this in terms of increased outputs of maize and manioc, as well as of the recruitment of slaves by less violent methods than were used in the rest of Africa. David Richardson, however, has disputed this claim, arguing that true population growth was more likely to have been around 0.5%, and that slavers “from Angola placed severe strains on the reproductive capacity of the region’s population during the 18<sup>th</sup> century.”

Similarly, Herbert Klein has contributed to this debate by arguing that the fact that the slavers did not in general choose to ship women meant higher birth rates among the remaining African populations. Thus, he says, the overall population in Africa suffered less than it would have done had the massive removal of people from Africa that the slave trade represented been sexually balanced. Yet, Klein admits that the immediate impact on the African workforce was a negative one, since the removal of so many adult males reduced the productivity of the population as a whole.

Once the selling of persons as slaves to Europeans had emerged as a profitable business, and later as a core commercial activity, for the African elites, slave-raiding wars increased in response to market forces. Over time, demand in the Americas

seeming to be insatiable, European slavers sponsored African client states, promoting the trade to the mutual benefit of each. Recent research has suggested that by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century there had been a definite shift in the terms of trade from European slavers in favour of their African counterparts. In addition, as the price of slaves rose and the price of goods used in exchange for them decreased, notably the price of the European textiles that were replacing Asian textiles in the trade, African slavers gained a greater share of the profits. Hence, it has been argued that there was a net transfer of capital into Africa from this time onwards. However, this argument does not take into account the devastating economic and social impact the trade had upon the lives of the majority of the people, even if it benefited the elites. Forced to move from their communities to safer places in the interior, they were driven to abandon their farmlands, markets and other economic and social institutions. This is how historian Herbert Klein states the matter:

“Although trading was profitable at the micro level of the individual, group, or class doing the trading, the question remains of the societal costs of the trade. The slave raids against agriculturalists and subsequent abandonment of good croplands, the stress on defence or militaristic activity, the draining of young adults from the labour force, all had their long-term economic costs.”

Thus, many societies lost the capacity to manage food production and distribution, becoming more vulnerable to famine caused by drought and diminished access to fertile land. Areas along the rivers, for example, where large-scale farming had been the norm, became danger zones as a result of the high risk of kidnapping. According to Joseph Inikori, defence costs incurred against slave raids and

kidnapping restricted “the opportunities and incentives for economic growth and development in sub-Saharan Africa,” and produced “a serious negative impact on the demographic process in the area.” And though research carried out by Joseph Miller and others has pointed to population growth in Angola and in other areas despite the existence of the slave trade, the general opinion among historians is still that the trade had a costly and negative demographic impact on West and Central Africa. In this context, little is at stake in deciding whether increased warfare was caused directly by the slavers, or merely by their enormous appetite for slaves. What is crucial to understand is that the existence of the trade meant large-scale atrocities, with population levels falling in some places, and growth rates being reduced in others. The trade crippled growth in most places and seriously distorted domestic and social life everywhere.

Five consequences of the trade for Africa can therefore be arrived at. These are, that the slave trade:

- i) undermined African economic potential and derailed development;
- ii) destroyed and distorted systems of government;
- iii) generated high levels of fear, warfare and distrust, and undermined moral and civic practices in community life and culture;
- iv) constituted a massive drain of accumulated skills and abilities, and depleted the pool of human resources needed for sustainable development;
- v) created protest against the European presence in Africa, which could have been beneficial in other circumstances.

In addition, the widespread introduction of weapons into West Africa by slave traders generated an arms build-up, with security and defence becoming linked to client involvement in the trade. The historian Walter Rodney has shown, for example, how the export of enslaved people was helped by the rise of heavily armed states that carried out raids against neighbouring countries in order to capture Africans for sale to European traders. Thus, the militarily powerful Guinea slave-trading states of Akwamu, Denkyira, Asante and Dahomey developed their combative character and power during the era of the slave trade. And this increasing availability of European arms in West Africa, fuelled by the slavers and especially by the English, transformed African domestic politics and economic relations. Joseph Inikori has shown that for the short period between 1796 and 1805, for example, 1,615,309 guns were imported into West Africa from England alone, an annual average of 161,531. States supplying slaves to the Europeans would have received these guns, with those not supplying slaves being attacked by their neighbours until they did.

**Table 15: Guns imported into West Africa from England, 1796-1805**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Value £</b>	<b>Quantity</b>
1796	93,588	140,151
1797	58,804	88,061
1798	82,338	123,304
1799	139,622	209,089
1800	128,901	193,034
1801	127,127	190,377
1802	145,661	218,132
1803	85,269	127,693
1804	117,131	175,408
1805	100,205	150,060

**Source:** *British Parliamentary Papers, Accounts & Papers 1806*, vol. XII no. 443. J. Inikori, "The import of firearms into West Africa, 1750 to 1807: a quantitative analysis" in J. Inikori, ed., Forced Migration: The Impact of the Export Trade on West African Societies (Hutchinson, London, 1982, p. 133).

Some African rulers purchased firearms from the Europeans in order to protect themselves, with slaves being demanded in exchange. West Africa thus became a large market for cheap arms, and people were encouraged to kill and enslave each other as a means of survival. Human life and guns steadily became cheaper, and the volume of people made available for enslavement rose. In this way, the buyers and sellers of slaves created an environment that destroyed the quality of life of millions of Africans.

While even Europeans who were not involved in the transatlantic slave trade could see the benefits of it everywhere in their societies, especially in port towns, Africans did not experience the trade in this way at all. Rather, they saw terror, flight, rebellion and general mayhem all around them. To ignore this experience, which was that of ordinary Africans, at the expense of the experience of the elites, would be to disregard the extent of the crisis and tragedy that the slave trade represented for African societies. The English historian Hugh Thomas, for instance, makes this point when he argues that there was often little difference in practice between a war fought by two African states for territory or trade routes and a slave raid on a neighbouring town or village, if the result in both cases was the recruitment of victims for disposal in the transatlantic trade.

Discussion of the impact on Africa of the trade has also tended to focus on two groups of societies – the powerful states that captured and sold prisoners of war, such as Benin, Oyo and Ashanti, and the less powerful ones that traded slaves on the African coast, such as Calabar and Bonny. However, this emphasis on “the winners” in the trade has helped obscure its negative effects on overall African development. “There was no servile class simply waiting to be shipped by Europeans,” the historian



Albert van Dantzig states, agreeing with Walter Rodney, whose reflections are worth quoting at length:

“It has often been claimed that slaves formed part of African society and that, consequently, it was easy for African chiefs to begin by selling their own slaves. No convincing evidence has been brought forward to support this view: on the contrary, it appears that the sale of human beings was a new feature in most African societies, which came about as a direct reaction to the presence and activities of Europeans.”

For such people had to be created, either directly or indirectly. Whydah, for example, a small state, was able to “produce” over 1,000 people per month for sale to Europeans at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century by violent assaults on neighbouring states less well armed with European guns. Similarly, the Ashantis developed formidable military capabilities with the help of European guns to protect themselves from slave raiders, eventually using these to participate in the trade themselves, this time as suppliers. Fanti and Akwamu states that had grown rich in the gold trade later turned their skills to the slave trade in order to generate more wealth.

Throughout West Africa, evidence of wholesale flight and destruction caused by the slave trade can still be seen. People fleeing slave raiders, who were heavily armed with European guns, left massive stretches of empty land in fertile areas behind them. Mahi, to the north west of the Abomey plateau, is a classic case, and here there is still a great “empty belt” of land running through the sub-Saharan zones of Ghana, Togo, Dahomey and Nigeria, in other words through the main slave-raiding areas of West Africa. There are also spaces of virtually empty land in South-Eastern Ghana

and in South-Western Togo, notes Albert van Dantzig, which are by no means infertile, but from which people fled because of the trade. Much of Yoruba remained well populated, but many towns and villages were forced to invest heavily in defence works, sometimes consisting of three or more concentric outer walls and moats.

Flight meant the abandonment of agricultural land, and an inability to plan food production on a sustainable basis. The result was a reduction in the effectiveness of agricultural activity caused by the diversion of labour into short-term survival strategies. The internal African food-distribution system was damaged by the trade, and less effective new patterns emerged that disrupted established trade routes. Food shortages were the result, and famine became frequent in many places. In fact, there are several cases of Europeans in forts such as Elmina having to release slaves awaiting shipment because there was simply no food to feed them.

However, it was in Angola that the Europeans left the clearest evidence of the violence that was commonly used in the pursuit of slaves. For most of the slave-trading period, Portugal, the major slave-trading nation in the region, lacked a domestic industrial base from which to generate manufactured goods to sell to African leaders in exchange for slaves, and as a result it resorted to violence in order to secure them. Portuguese slave raids were called “kuata! kuata!” by the local populations, and it was quite common to hear that an entire community had been destroyed by “kuata! kuata!”.

The Kingdom of the Congo, for example, had a relatively highly developed political and economic system when the Portuguese arrived in 1482. However, by the 1560s, if not before, it had been wrecked by the interference of slave traders. Similarly, following the king of Portugal’s gift of Angola to one of his noblemen, Paulo Días de Novais, in 1571, the Portuguese sent an army to secure the territory,

thus beginning a cycle of wars that led to political chaos and economic dislocation over a wide area. New states then emerged as clients of the Portuguese, though two of these, Matamba under Queen Nzinga and Kasanje, briefly emerged as significant opponents of Portuguese military occupation. Yet, though they were able to hold the Portuguese at bay for a short period, by the 1650s Matamba had emerged as one of the main slave-trading partners of the Portuguese in the region, and Kasanje had no choice but to follow. The violence that attended these struggles undermined the local economy, the Portuguese providing cheap wine and rum, as well as textiles and other supplies, to the elites of the new client states. This facilitated the elites' dependence on the Portuguese, who demanded slaves in return.

In conclusion, the transatlantic trade significantly increased levels of social conflict, political rivalry, warfare and economic distortion in most of West and Central Africa, and these conditions were extremely harmful to economic development. Political instability and militarization caused by extensive arms supplies helped to destabilize traditional trade patterns and marketing systems, leading to the dominance of slave raiding and trading within economic life. African societies did not benefit from the transatlantic slave trade. Rather, their development prospects were adversely affected by it, whatever temporary benefits the trade may have brought to various local elites.

### **Summary**

Despite arguments setting out the benefits that African suppliers derived from the transatlantic slave trade, the evidence shows that the African community as a whole was adversely affected by it, and that damage to the material, social and psychological well-being of the African peoples was enormous. Indeed, so

considerable was this damage that the trade should best be understood as one of the greatest crimes against humanity.

The enormous destruction of human life that the trade entailed may never be fully quantified, but it may be said with certainty that African communities and entire societies were undermined by it, being rendered unsustainable in some places and destroyed in others. The loss of the young, productive population in many communities meant that both agriculture and industry were undermined, becoming unable to meet social and economic needs. As the reach of the trade increased over time, such damaging changes to the patterns of African life became more and more widespread. Increased political and military conflict was a consequence of the trade, the European traders even encouraging such conflict as a method of securing slaves. Africa was unquestionably the loser in the transatlantic slave trade; the only question is how much did it lose and why.

## **Educational Framework**

### **A. CONCEPTS**

- Human development and resources;
- Slavery as the transfer of human resources;
- Xenophobia;
- Egocentrism;
- Globalization;
- Human Rights;
- The human tragedy represented by the trade.

## **B. CONTENT**

1. The devastating social, economic and demographic effects of the transatlantic slave trade on community and national life in Africa;
2. The exchange of human life for guns;
3. The abandonment of agricultural land and industry as a result of the trade;
4. Political chaos and economic dislocation in Africa as a result of the trade.

## **C. OBJECTIVES**

### **Knowledge**

Students should be able to:

- a. understand the effects of the transatlantic slave trade on West African populations;
- b. describe the economic, political and social changes in Africa brought about by the trade;
- c. assess the role of the African states and elites in the trade;
- d. identify ways in which Africans and Europeans co-operated in conducting the trade.

### **Attitudes**

Students will be encouraged to:

- a. be objective when examining the economic impact of the trade on Africa;
- b. view the trade as a human tragedy;
- c. reflect on individual motives behind the slave trade;
- d. develop an attitude of concern for the consequence of one peoples' actions upon others.

## **Skills**

Students will develop the ability to:

- a. collect facts and other data in order to present information;
- b. analyze sources and present balanced perspectives;
- c. interpret the social situations in Africa and recognize the motives and needs of others.

## **D. TEACHING STRATEGIES**

- Group work;
- Oral presentations;
- Note taking.

## **E. STUDENT/LEARNER ACTIVITIES**

- Construct a Time Line from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century showing the effects of the slave trade on Africa;
- Divide the class into five groups, and assign each group a specific topic relating to the trade, such as the social background and the military, political, religious and economic aspects of an African state.

Each group will then present one of these aspects to the class, illustrating the importance of the trade in the rise and fall of an African state in the period;

- Develop plays and dramatize the perspectives of those involved in the trade, for example an African chief, a European slave trader and an enslaved person. Link these individual perspectives to the wider impact of the trade on Africa.

## **F. EVALUATION**

1. Peer evaluation: have peers evaluate student work and presentations. For example, students can be asked to relate what they have learnt from other students' presentations or dramatizations.

2. Essay Writing -

“To what extent can civilization in the Americas be compared to the civilization of Africa in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and in the 18<sup>th</sup> century respectively, in terms of its achievements and organizations?”

**G. RESOURCE MATERIALS**

Textbooks;

World History Web (an Internet Site for historical documents).

## **Chapter 11: The Impact of the Trade on Western Europe and the Americas**

The transatlantic slave trade was an important component in the development of the modern world economy, which was itself taking shape in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the trade was a mechanism through which the economies of Western Europe, Africa and the Americas were integrated into what became known as the Atlantic Economic System. However, debate over the importance of the slave trade to the rise of industrial economies in Europe has been intense.

Some have wanted to see the development of industrialization in Europe from the 18<sup>th</sup> century on as a result of forces associated with the slave trade, the argument being the trade – meaning the entire economic complex of goods produced by slavery, such as the capital raised to finance the trade, the production of goods and services used to purchase slaves, as well as the investment potential of capital generated – was critical to European sustainable growth. Furthermore, new economic opportunities and a range of imported consumer goods were made available by money raised as a result of investment in the transatlantic slave trade, enabling Western Europe to emerge as a primary centre of wealth accumulation. However, recent research has challenged these arguments, suggesting that the contribution of the trade to European economic growth, as well as to the overall process of economic transformation in Europe, was more modest than had previously been thought.

Nevertheless, the relations between the slave trade, the institution of slavery in the New World and European economic development seemed obvious to observers at the time. The islands of the East Atlantic, such as the Canaries, Azores and Madeira, which had been colonized by the Portuguese and Spanish in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, had become areas of considerable economic activity by the 16<sup>th</sup> century, depending on the



large-scale use of enslaved Africans, and the economic formula pioneered on these islands – the use of chattel slaves on sugar plantations – was later applied to even greater effect in the West Atlantic, the Caribbean and Brazil during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Indeed, the Brazilian colonial economy, based initially on sugar plantations but later on gold mining and coffee, was only made possible and profitable because of the slave trade, and the Caribbean islands only emerged as centres of wealth accumulation, the “best of the West”, between 1650 and 1800 because of the trade. Throughout what became known as “Plantation America”, including the southern part of the United States, the abundance of land and the availability of capital made slave labour the solution to the challenge of large-scale agricultural production, and the transatlantic trade was the answer to ensuring the supply of such labour. Indeed, the historian Franklin Knight has argued that without the institution of slavery and the transatlantic trade that fed it, “the potential economic value of the Americas could never have been realised.” Slavery made possible the rapid expansion and development of economic activity in the Americas and Europe, Knight argues, adding that European entrepreneurs acquired and mastered at an early stage many of the skills necessary to manage a market economy through their involvement in the transatlantic slave trade.

The Atlantic economy expanded in two distinct phases, and the slave trade was linked to both. The first phase entailed the establishment of colonial settlements on the islands of the East Atlantic, the Caribbean and the American mainland, this phase being led by the Portuguese and the Spanish, who depleted much of the human and mineral wealth of native American societies, but largely lacked the financial and industrial skills necessary to develop the West Atlantic economy on the basis of

agricultural production and trade. Thus, the second phase, which started in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century and was led by the Dutch, the English and the French, with minor but significant inputs from the Swedes and the Danes, highlighted the economic deficiencies of the Spanish and Portuguese system and showed the Northern Europeans to be far more effective in their use of slaves. This was the case even though the Portuguese had been able to develop a plantation economy using slaves in Brazil with Dutch financial and managerial support, anticipating what the English were later to build in Barbados and Jamaica and the French in Martinique and St. Domingue. Likewise, the Spanish allowed the English to assist them in the development of the Cuban sugar plantation economy along what were then typical Caribbean lines in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as a result of the transatlantic slave trade and the dependence on slavery for sustainable development in the Americas, Atlantic connections constituted the core business of many European Atlantic ports. The French ports of Nantes and La Rochelle, for example, were connected to a global trade system that linked the Americas, Africa, parts of Asia and the Mediterranean. The leading slavers of the day were the principal financial leaders in these port communities, holding the highest political offices and being well placed to influence local, and sometimes national, politics. In England, too, the larger slavers were also prominent members of the business and political communities. Humphrey Morice, for example, a leading slaver in London during the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, was a major figure in economic life, being a member of Parliament, governor of the Bank of England and well-known owner of a fleet of slave ships, which he named after his wife and daughters.

Morice was also a business partner of Peter Beckford, Jamaica's leading sugar planter, whose son, William Beckford Jr., was both a member of parliament and a powerful businessman in London. Twice elected Mayor of the City of London, Beckford Jr. was a close friend of the Prime Minister, William Pitt (the elder), and an innovative industrialist. Such slavers took advantage of the many important investment opportunities in British trade and manufacturing opened by the slave trade, the perception being that prospects for the trade in slaves were limitless. Elsewhere in England in the port city of Liverpool, the leading political and economic figures of the day were also heavy investors in the slave trade. Sir Thomas Johnson, for example, the city's member of parliament and mayor, held a fifty percent stake in the *Blessing*, one of the largest slave ships registered in Liverpool, and another local businessman, Foster Cunliffe, three times mayor of the city, made an enormous fortune from the slave trade during the 1730s. The Cunliffe family had extensive business dealings in both England and America, and in Liverpool their offices were located on the thriving commercial street of "Negro Row".

Liverpool's slave trade also stimulated the economic development of the surrounding hinterland, the nearby industrial city of Manchester becoming famous for its manufactured goods, which found ready markets in the slave system. Cotton goods manufactured in Manchester, for example, dominated the West Indian market by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and were also sold to Spanish and Portuguese colonists in America. The city grew as a result of the transatlantic slave trade, its export markets rising from £14,000 in 1739 to over £300,000 in 1779 on account of the export trade to Africa, the Caribbean and North America. Such English cities had their fair share of entrepreneurs, the leading Manchester cotton manufacturer and exporter being Samuel Touchett, also a slave merchant, who was associated with the new machine

technology that was revolutionizing cotton spinning and who also had industrial concerns in London, particularly in ship building. In Liverpool, the largest shipbuilders were a firm called Baker and Dawson, slave traders in their own right, and this firm held a licence from the Spanish government allowing it to sell slaves to the Spanish colonies.

What was true of the English port cities of Bristol and Liverpool was also true of the French port city of Nantes. Slavers here were also prominent local businessmen having major investments in manufacturing and agriculture. One lucrative activity engaged in by the Nantes traders, for example, was sugar refining, raw sugar being imported from the Caribbean and then refined for export. The town exported as much as 25,000,000 livres worth of sugar annually to Holland, Germany, Spain, Sweden, Italy and Denmark. The town also thrived on semi-processed cotton, which was imported to Nantes for weaving. One leading local slaver, René Montaudoin, for example, led the way in finding markets for Nantes' cotton goods in Africa and the Caribbean, being a major investor in La Grande Manufacture, a company that made dyed cotton using indigo from the Caribbean. The Royal Glass Manufacture, another of his companies, specialized in making bottles for the slave trade. The Grous family, who also did well from the trade, invested their profits in rural property.

According to the historian Robert Stein, “by 1789, the Nantes economy relied on the slave trade. Not only did investments in slavery exceed investments in other forms of commerce, but the trade was instrumental in keeping Nantes as a major distributor of colonial commodities.” Furthermore, “only the slave trade kept Nantes from declining to the level of minor provincial port” when Bordeaux emerged as a major port with a “massive re-export trade” based on the colonial economy. The “slave trade also had an important role to play in Nantes' industrial development,”

Stein argues, showing that local slavers invested heavily in a range of related businesses, such as textiles and shipbuilding. In the 1770s, Nantes was the largest shipbuilding port in France, and local businessmen Nicholas Arnous was both the leading slave trader and the leading shipbuilder, symbolizing the link between the two businesses.

At least a dozen factories were built in Nantes during the 1760s and 1770s to manufacture the printed cloth used in exchange for slaves in Africa. By the time of the French Revolution, cloth-making was the leading industry in the town, and it was owned by slavers. According to the Trinidadian writer and historian C.L.R. James, “nearly all the industries which developed in France during the eighteenth century had their origins in goods or commodities destined for the Coast of Guinea or for America.”

As a contribution to the debate on the impact of the slave trade on Western European economies in the later 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Caribbean historian Eric Williams in 1944 published his now classic work on the subject, Capitalism and Slavery, which argued that the profits and economic activities generated by the slave trade, such as the plantation commodities and slave-based colonial products, released an important source of energy that propelled the English Industrial Revolution. Williams was building on James’s thesis, developed in relation to French capitalism and slavery, but he saw Britain as the primary economic beneficiary of the exploitation of enslaved Africans in the colonies. The Industrial Revolution, Eric Williams said, constituted an explosion in manufacturing output generated by the availability of investment capital, supportive financial institutions, innovative entrepreneurship and new markets. The slave trade, he argued, had facilitated all these, giving the English economy the stimulus it needed to revolutionize production. Indeed, the evidence suggests that

some 40 per cent of all British manufacturing production in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was exported. The colonial market enabled English exporters to double their trade, making up for stagnation in Europe, and colonial markets in Africa, the Caribbean and North America stimulating the new industries that led the way in the Industrial Revolution, giving Britain a head start over her continental competitors.

**Table 16: *Exports of manufactures from England (£)***

<u>Annual Ave.</u>	<u>Continental Europe</u>	<u>Africa &amp; Americas</u>	<u>Asia</u>
1699-1701	3,287,000	473,000	111,000
1772-1774	3,617,000	3,681,000	690,000

Williams’s thesis, that the markets, profits and financial skills generated by the Atlantic slave trade triggered an upsurge in economic activity and supported Britain’s position as the leading military and naval power in Africa and the Americas, was also argued by some 18<sup>th</sup>-century observers. Indeed, by the last quarter of the 18th century, political economists were comfortable in their opinion that Britain’s military and commercial might was based on its success in securing the “lion’s share” of the African slave trade and the Caribbean sugar market. Such an achievement, together with the unequalled commercial competence that went with it, provided the English commercial classes with a global perspective on national development. English economic success was now symbolized by the fact that the financial centre of Europe had shifted from Amsterdam to London, and that two English banks, Barclays and Lloyds, both of which had developed out of profits from the slave trade, now functioned as global institutions, both of them being important sources of credit for British industry.

Nevertheless, recent critics have suggested that Williams's arguments cannot be substantiated from empirical evidence, and that it has not been shown that capital gains from the transatlantic slave trade were in fact invested in the companies that fuelled the Industrial Revolution. On the contrary, such critics argue, the trade only constituted a minor part of Europe's overall international trade. The historian Herbert Klein, for example, has shown that while between 180 and 360 ships would have been required in any one year to transport the estimated 90,000 slaves per annum that were being transported in the 1780s, the highest figure in the trade's history (assuming a ratio of 2.5 slaves per ton on average and ships ranging from 100 to 200 tons), this figure would have absorbed no more than a fifth of any major European nation's ships or resources.

With respect to the French, for example, exports to Africa have been calculated at about 25% of total French exports to the colonies in the 1770s and at about 20% in the 1780s. These exports took up about 15% of the ships and about 13% of the tonnage allocated to the Africa trade in 1788. Yet, Herbert Klein argues, if this Africa trade is located within the context of overall French foreign trade at the time, then its relative importance drops by about 50%, though still representing a substantial 10% of the value of France's total foreign trade. And research into the trends and composition of British overseas trade has followed broadly similar directions. During the last quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, for example, it has been estimated that exports and re-exports to Africa averaged about 4.5% of total British trade. With respect to shipping volume, slavers in Bristol at this time sent out 14% of all ships leaving that port, with nearly 33% of the ships leaving Liverpool in the 1770s being sent out by the city's slavers.

In general, much more research is required to achieve a better understanding of the share the slave trade had in Europe's overall export trade. It also remains unclear how important slave-produced goods from the Americas were in the generation of trade surpluses. Yet, recent research has shown that the contribution of overseas trade, including the slave trade, to gross British capital investment in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century was only a moderate one, amounting to perhaps about 15% of the total. Recent findings, then, suggest that while the transatlantic slave trade was an important and profitable enterprise within the context of the European domestic economies, it was not a direct contributor to the explosion in capital investment associated with the rise of industrialism, contrary to Williams's original thesis.

Nevertheless, Eric Williams's ideas have continued to receive support with respect to his suggestion regarding the role of Africa as a market for cheap European manufactured goods in the period. It has been suggested, for example, that the French armament industry was heavily dependent on the African market during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, especially when peace reigned in Europe. French historian Pierre Boulle has also argued that the expansion of the African market within the context of the transatlantic slave trade was also critical to the development of many of Europe's infant industries. Yet, again, much more work needs to be done to establish with certainty the nature of these relationships, and it is fair to conclude that the full picture is not yet fully understood.

Another contributor to this debate among historians, Barbara Solow, has considered gross capital investments in colonial and metropolitan production, the value of slave labour and its outputs, sugar trading and the colonial and African consumption of European manufactured goods as constituting an overall set of economic forces that turned the American colonies, Africa and Europe into an



Atlantic-wide commercial space. These economic forces, she says, unquestionably stimulated economic growth in all the European centres. Furthermore, Solow argues, “the microcosm of capital and trade flows associated with plantation slavery became quantitatively important for British economic development in the eighteenth century. Finally, Solow concludes that “to argue that slavery was *important* for British economic growth is not to claim that slavery *caused* the Industrial Revolution” (my italics). But it is to say that the transatlantic slave trade, together with the institution of slavery in the European colonies in the Americas, increased economic activity in the Atlantic economy, raised the volume and level of return on investments and produced financial institutions and relationships that accelerated the pace of economic development in Europe as a whole and in England in particular. These activities enabled Britain’s manufacturing sector to expand very much faster than domestic demand alone would have permitted. Thus, Solow concludes that the economic forces and relations that were centred on slavery and the transatlantic slave trade provided an important impetus to Britain’s domestic economic growth.

### **Summary**

The extent of European material, social and psychological benefits from engagement in the transatlantic slave trade has generated lively and contentious discussion among historians. In this discussion, no one has suggested that the European economies suffered a net loss as a result of their engagement in the trade. Rather, discussion has highlighted the extent to which the trade stimulated industries such as shipbuilding, insurance and finance and metallurgy and textiles, and the impact that these industries had on European development.

Recently, historians have moderated earlier claims on the importance of the slave trade for European economic growth, arguing that the transatlantic trade made only a marginal contribution to European economic and social development. However, the evidence shows that almost every aspect of European life was touched by profits from the slave trade. The debate among historians, then, is less about the fact that European societies benefited from the slave trade and more about the magnitude and extent of those benefits.

## **Educational Framework**

### **A. CONCEPTS**

- European entrepreneurs;
- The Atlantic Economy;
- Sustainable economic growth;
- Capitalism and slavery;
- Industrialization.

### **B. CONTENT**

1. The transatlantic slave trade as crucial to European growth and a spur to large-scale production;
2. Slavers as leading members of the business and political communities;
3. The emergence of the French port of Nantes as a leading industrial and economic centre due to the slave trade;
4. Britain as the primary beneficiary of the slave trade and as the leading European military and naval power in Africa and the Americas;

5. Debate among historians on the economic impact of the slave trade.

## **C. OBJECTIVES**

### **Knowledge**

Students should be able to:

- a. outline the factors related to the transatlantic slave trade that supported Europe's economic growth;
- b. assess the roles of prominent Europeans in the trade;
- c. identify the leading European slaving ports;
- d. give examples of links between the trade and the Atlantic Economy during the period of the trade;
- e. evaluate the sources that have informed historical discussion on the economic impact of the slave trade in Western Europe and the Americas.

### **Attitudes**

Students will be encouraged to:

- a. reject the oppressive exploitation of labour in pursuit of economic growth;
- b. develop an objective attitude towards research on the slave trade;
- c. investigate issues that impact adversely on others, although they themselves may not be directly affected;
- d. co-operate with others in the examination of issues connected with the slave trade.

### **Skills**

Students will develop the ability to:

- a. organize and communicate information relating to the Atlantic Economy and the transatlantic slave trade;
- b. analyze relevant sources in researching issues connected to the trade.

## **D. TEACHING STRATEGIES**

- Group work;
- Debates;
- Use of charts and graphs;
- Essay writing.

## **E. STUDENT/LEARNER ACTIVITIES**

- Divide the class into research teams, and have these teams present and defend findings on the impact of the slave trade on the economic development of Western Europe and the Americas;
- Locate charts or graphs on the export of European manufactured items that the class may examine together. Divide the class into groups, and assign a chart or graph to each group, asking group members to discuss the following questions:
  - What information is shown on the chart or graph?
  - What trends are shown?
  - Which historical groups were likely to have been most affected by the data shown on the chart or graph?
  - Which groups in society were likely most to have benefited from the economic prosperity generated?
- You are the resident of a flourishing European port or town in Western Europe.

Write an essay explaining how the slave trade has changed the way people live in your port or town and examine the socio-economic effects of the trade on your port or town.

- Research the relationship between modern-day forms of slavery and economic growth (look for source materials in newspaper articles and magazines, for example *Time*, *Newsweek*, etc).

## **F. EVALUATION**

1. Presentation and defense of positions on areas researched;
2. Formulate a position and devise an Action Plan to address modern-day forms of slavery;
3. Debate:

“The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed, the world is ruled by little else.”

(John Maynard Keynes, British economist, 1935)

Relate the above statement to debates on the economic impact of the transatlantic slave trade. What are your views on this statement?

## **G. RESOURCE MATERIALS**

- Charts/graphs;
- World History Web;
- Newspaper articles;
- Supplementary readings.

## **Chapter 12: Abolition Struggles and Opposition Movements**

### **(i) African Beginnings**

Across the Atlantic World, there were always individuals who, acting either alone or as members of groups, publicly expressed their opposition to the transatlantic slave trade. They did so in many ways, choosing different methods and occasions according to the nature of their concerns. However, among no group of individuals was opposition to the trade more intense or prolonged than it was among the slaves themselves. Their resistance to the trade, together with that of abolitionists across Europe and the United States, was eventually enough to bring the trade to an end, despite continuing support for its continuation. The fight against slavery was an important feature of West-African politics, both at the level of the formal policy of states and of the resistance of local communities. European opposition to slavery was also important, but it needs to be seen within the context of a wider campaign against the trade. Ultimately, the people who did most to fight the trade, and who paid the heaviest price for doing so, were the Africans themselves.

### **(ii) The African Diaspora**

Africans continued to fight against slavery even when they had been captured and shipped to the Americas as slaves. Indeed, for three and a half centuries, a dominant political feature of all colonial societies in the Americas was the fear of rebellion by African slaves, and the development of complex systems of defence against possible insurrection, as well as the creation of socio-cultural institutions that effectively excluded blacks, attests to the seriousness with which anti-slavery activities were viewed. Maintaining the slave-status of blacks in such societies,

against a background of the threat of mass rebellion, was a priority of most colonial administrations, and this was all the more important since no colonial slave society was politically stable, and slave revolt and conflict over slavery were permanent features of them. The record of such anti-slavery rebellions in the colonies, from Canada in the north to Argentina in the south, constitutes an impressive narrative of popular demand for human rights and recognition, Africans making their particular contribution to the American struggle for democratic rights and civil freedoms in this way. Everywhere, the words “freedom” and “liberty” were associated with the anti-slavery politics of Blacks. .

This history of African anti-slavery struggle in the Americas has received considerable attention in recent years, with hundreds of rebellions, conspiracies and rumours of revolts having been studied by historians, both as discrete events and within comparative contexts. In particular, attention has been paid to the following:

- i) The African and creole origins of the anti-slavery leaders and of their ideas;
- ii) the social and political ideologies that informed the slave revolts;
- iii) the organization and planning of the rebellions;
- iv) the reasons for the success or failure of the rebellions;
- v) the impact of the rebellions upon the civil-rights reforms;
- vi) the rise of Haitian and Maroon communities as societies representing black autonomy and self-determination.

Furthermore, this research has demonstrated that the commitment of Blacks to anti-slavery was irreversible, despite the heavy losses in terms of human life and the immeasurable suffering they incurred in opposing it. Even when slavery had been abolished in the European colonies, together with the transatlantic slave trade, the African struggle for freedom and justice continued.

Enslaved Africans in the Americas believed that the slave trade would not end until slavery itself was abolished, and they drew no conceptual or political line between the two. Their earliest, and in many ways most important, victory was in St. Domingue in the 1790s, when slaves defeated the slave owners in battle, losing some 50,000 lives in the process. Independence was declared by them in 1804, the country was renamed “Haiti,” the indigenous name for the island they partly occupied, and slavery was abolished. This unprecedented and visionary development made clear on an international scale the nature of black expectations for the future and where their struggle would lead them. Haiti was the first country where enslaved Africans had been able to obtain freedom and formal political power. This had taken many rebellions and conspiracies, together with attempts to establish “Maroon” enclaves, and it was a seminal development in terms of Atlantic history. However, the greatest challenge to the transatlantic slave trade, and to the institution of slavery, came with the new Haitian Constitution of 1805. In this document, the new leaders of Haiti, most of whom were former slaves, declared that any black person who arrived in the country would automatically become a citizen, in this way effectively abolishing slavery and conferring nationhood and citizenship on all former slaves. This was the greatest revolutionary development of Atlantic modernity. As a result, slaves from many societies in the Americas fled to Haiti in search of liberty and citizenship, the country becoming a beacon of black liberation, with subsequent constitutional developments reinforcing this role.

Toussaint L’Ouverture, the revolutionary leader of what was then St. Domingue, himself a former slave, emerged as the first national leader committed to the fight against slavery, and under his leadership the island’s slave market, which had been the largest in the Caribbean in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, was destroyed. For the first



time, liberation through revolt seemed a very real option to all the enslaved people of the African Diaspora, who wanted the trade stopped by all means possible

**(iii) The European and American Anti-Slavery Movements**

European opposition to the transatlantic slave trade developed slowly, and for a long time it was ineffective given the economic interests involved. Of course, there had always been individuals in Europe, and among the European settlers in the Americas, who had voiced their opposition to the trade and to the institution of slavery. However, these individuals were in general unable to build anti-slavery movements that had a wide or significant impact on the growth and spread of the slave market, and it was not until the late-18<sup>th</sup> century that anything resembling a serious political movement against slavery emerged in Europe.

The European abolitionist movement was dominated by members of religious groups, by certain thinkers and philosophers and by a smaller number of radical political leaders. However, many of these people were less than fully committed in their condemnation of the trade, and most fell short of calling for its outright and immediate abolition. The opposition of the Roman Catholic Church was also intermittent and largely ineffective, though Pope Leo X had condemned the slave trade in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and his views were supported by de Mercado, Bishop of Cape Verde, who in 1569 had also condemned slavery. However, Catholics in the Spanish American colonies were in the main nevertheless committed to the trade, despite the concerns expressed by some priests. In general, those clerics who were concerned about slavery protested against the enslavement of the native population rather than that of the Africans, effectively lobbying the Vatican and European governments for the abolition only of the trade in Indian slaves and of Indian slavery.

As a result, whenever success was achieved in improving the conditions of the Indians, it was done at the expense of African slaves who were imported as substitutes.

In fact, there was a consensus among Church, state and settlers in the American colonies that the trade in African slaves was the answer to the labour shortage associated with the decline in the Indian populations. Catholics and Protestants alike subscribed to this formula for developing the New World, with Bartholomew de Las Casas, the leading philosopher-priest of the Catholic movement in Spanish America, promoting the idea that protecting the Indians meant trading in Africans. This, he said, was part of the natural order of things: Spanish colonialism needed labour, and the importing of African slaves was the answer to this need. However, when Las Casas witnessed the high levels of mortality among the enslaved Africans, noting that the Spanish settlers neglected and exploited them, he denounced the trade and indicated his regret for the role he had played in its development. Queen Elizabeth I of England was also sensitive to the social destruction caused by kidnapping in Africa, urging her subjects to procure slaves by “honest” means. Kidnapping, she said, was a moral offence, but slave trading was not. Other European monarchs did not engage in this debate, though many, like Elizabeth, expressed their opposition to the importation of Africans into Europe, as opposed to into colonial societies.

In the English-speaking colonies there were other sporadic protests against slavery and the slave trade. But these were similarly restricted in their aims. In 1644, for example, a Massachusetts court ordered the return to Africa of slaves deemed to have been kidnapped. However, at this time the colony was plentifully supplied with indentured labourers from the British Isles, and African slavery had not developed as

an important institution. While some clerics and philosophers were critical of the trade, few were committed to public agitation in order to achieve its abolition. Similarly, the Quakers in the English Caribbean colonies in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, though they called for “moderation” in the use of slaves, requiring slave owners to make provisions to free slaves deemed loyal and responsible, they were not opposed to the slave trade, and nor were they opposed to slavery in general. Yet, the English slave owners read even this limited position as an attempt to subvert their property rights, persecuting and driving out members of the Caribbean Quaker community as a result. In the mainland colonies, Quakers showed greater tolerance of the slave trade and of slavery. Finally, many early North American colonists objected to the slave trade because they feared the social effects of a growing black population. The employment of slaves in artisanal activities in particular was always controversial, but slave owners were concerned to cut costs and to secure reliable labour, and so slave numbers increased. Some suggested that Blacks should perform manual tasks, so as to prevent white working-class immigration.

European philosophers who wrote on human liberty, social freedom, justice and notions of the public good also supported and participated in the slave trade. John Locke, for example, the English philosopher of liberty, engaged in the trade, as did fellow Englishman Thomas Hobbes, who provided an intellectual legitimization of slavery in his writings on freedom and the functions of the state. Africans he viewed as being captives of war, defeated in a power struggle by a dominant state, and therefore their enslavement was both lawful and moral. For both Hobbes and Locke, slavery was consistent with notions of human liberty. Rather than put prisoners of war to death, as had previously been customary, enslaving them was now considered more enlightened, carrying the additional benefit, these philosophers argued, of exposing

Africans to European civilization. The ideas about race in the work of both philosophers represent a paradox in much English liberal philosophy during the age of slavery.

Intellectual opposition to the transatlantic slave trade came mostly from the philosophers of the French Enlightenment during the middle part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and particularly from Voltaire, Montesquieu, Diderot and Rousseau, with additional support coming from the playwright Marivaux. These figures wrote at length about the private and public immorality of imposing inequality based on race, as well as about the immorality involved in taking away the liberty of others, describing the slave trade as corrupting to civilization and degrading to all those who engaged in it. Of course, these authors' works are also not exempt from contradiction, but in spite of passages where slavery is accepted or even approved of, in general they were in favour of the abolition of both slavery and the slave trade.

The French philosopher Voltaire, in particular, rejected racist ideas in all their forms, ridiculing the idea that whites should be entitled to enslave blacks and calling the whole concept of "race" into question. He was persistent in his criticism of the Catholic Church for the litany of Papal bulls that endorsed the slave system and the right of whites to dominate others, regarding it as a sign of ignorance that people should consider features such as skin colour, hair texture and facial structure as important indicators of civilization, and he criticized the slavers for using arguments based on such features to justify their trade. Montesquieu, another French philosopher, was also hostile to slavery, focusing his arguments on the brutalizing nature of this institution, which victimized both slaver and the slave in a relationship of mutual violence. The slaver, he argued, loses virtue in pursuit of purely economic values, and the destruction of the American natives, together with the enslavement of

the Africans, had been driven in large part by such greed. For Montesquieu, the slave trade was a moral crisis for European civilization, pointing out how ironic it was that such an unsavoury business should have led to the mass consumption of cheap sugar.

Rousseau, another important 18<sup>th</sup>-century philosopher, saw the slave trade as part of an illegitimate economic and political system, much in the same way as had Voltaire. The notion of a European “right” to enslave others, he argued, was in itself contradictory, since using such “rights” to dominate and enslave others only demonstrated the illegitimate use of force. Rousseau’s and Voltaire’s views combined to produce intellectual opinion in France and beyond that was hostile to the slave trade, and the writings of these philosophers were later valuable weapons in the fight to abolish both slavery and the slave trade. Both men argued that Catholic priests, especially members of the Society of Jesus that had led Catholic missionary activities in Africa and the Americas, were attempting the impossible in trying to spread the Christian faith within a framework of slavery and violence. By not supporting the principle that all men are born with a natural right to liberty, the Church had effectively endorsed racist opinion that Africans were somehow not fully human and that only whites had the right to liberty. This opposition to the slave trade within the context of philosophical and theological thought in France was strengthened by the publication of Adam Smith’s book The Wealth of Nations in England in 1776. In this famous analysis of capitalist political economy, Smith described slavery as being a less productive and more expensive system of labour than free contractual systems.

At the same time, the American War of Independence against Britain was demonstrating that slaves were more than keen to fight and die for the promise of liberty and citizenship. Pro-slavery opinion in the Americas was unhappy with this, realizing that slaves could be used to constitute a potentially revolutionary army

opposed to European colonialism that could also be used to sweep away the privileges of the slave owners. However, the fact that many slaves supported the fight against the British was enough in itself to generate anti-slave trade sentiments and abolition movements and meant that some American colonists were happy to fight for the abolition of the slave trade.

The Massachusetts Assembly had already debated, but had failed to pass, a resolution to abolish the slave trade before the War of Independence broke out, seeing the importation of large numbers of slaves into the Americas as a potentially dangerous act that would allow permanently rebellious persons to take root in America. At the time when Thomas Jefferson wrote the first draft of the Declaration of Independence, it would not have been thought unusual that he should later father children with a slave woman, since many in the Americas would have accepted his as part of the colonial way of life. Jefferson's references to the right to life and liberty in the American Constitution were not meant to apply to Africans either in the public or in the private sphere. However, although such thinking did not find its way into Jefferson's vision for the enslaved Africans that made up a significant proportion of the new nation, the fear of insurrection on the part of the 700,000 black slaves in the mainland colonies, together with the discourse on human rights that was fuelling the American revolutionary war, combined to create political problems for the emerging nation, with both the issue of the slave trade and that of slavery demanding public discussion. In 1780, the State of Pennsylvania banned the trade among state residents from 1789 onwards, with the States of New York, New Jersey and Rhode Island following suit, followed by the neighbouring country of Canada. Only the American State of Georgia now openly supported the slave trade

In Britain, the House of Commons debated a bill to abolish the slave trade on moral grounds in 1783. Though this bill was defeated by a majority who argued that the economic value and political significance of the trade was too great to ignore, five years later a “Committee for Effecting the Abolition of Slave Trade” was founded in England led by Thomas Clarkson. Later becoming the British Anti-Slavery Society, this Committee argued for a two-phase approach to abolition, first of the slave trade, and then of slavery.

The Anti-Slavery Society was supported in Parliament by the evangelical leader, William Wilberforce, the Member of Parliament for the town of Hull, Charles Fox, and by the Prime Minister, William Pitt. Clarkson campaigned against the trade by arguing that it was unprofitable, that it led to large loss of life among the English crews that manned the slave ships and that it damaged both African and colonial societies. For his part, Fox stated that “slavery itself, odious as it is, is not nearly so bad a thing as the slave trade,” and Pitt, always the economic pragmatist, argued that the evil of the trade should be removed provided that English financial interests did not suffer. The following year, the British Privy Council in London launched an investigation into the trade.

Following such developments in England, the *Société des Amis des Noirs* was founded in France with the aim of abolishing the trade. Led by such eminent personalities as Marie-Jean Condorcet, Antoine Lavoisier, Jacques-Pierre Brissot, Honoré Mirabeau, Etienne Claviere, Louis-Alexandre La Rochefoucauld, and Jerome Petion, the French abolitionist movement was nevertheless subordinate to the revolutionary political issues of the day, and it never gained the popular support that the British movement enjoyed. However, it was the Americans, once they had achieved their independence from Britain, who took the lead in the abolition of the

transatlantic slave trade. Thus, many newly independent American states, such as the Carolinas, Maryland and Virginia, outlawed the importation of slaves from Africa in the 1780s, and when the Massachusetts legislature again debated an anti-slave trade bill in 1778, the commerce was described as tainted by an immoral “lust for gain,” with Virginia voting to free all illegally imported Africans.

A bill for the abolition of the slave trade was passed in England in 1807 and implemented from 1808 on. The British parliament had now been persuaded that national economic and political interests would best be served by abolishing the trade, since the loss of the North American colonies, together with the existence of well-stocked Caribbean plantations, meant that the economic benefits of transatlantic slaving could no longer outweigh the trade’s criminal, political and cultural implications. In France, the post-revolutionary French National Assembly debated the transatlantic slave trade, as well as the institution of slavery in colonial societies, in 1793, condemning both. The French Assembly also followed the decision taken 20 years earlier by the British courts by declaring that any person arriving on French soil would automatically become free. However, a distinction was still drawn between trading in slaves and owning them, the post-revolutionary French Convention abolishing slavery in France in 1794, but allowing the slave trade to continue. It has been argued, though, that French law never provided for the legal ownership of slaves, and that the widespread ownership of slaves in France was rooted in custom and not in law.

Elsewhere in Europe, the Danish government went the furthest of all European governments at this time by declaring in 1792 that from 1803 onwards the trade in African slaves would no longer be permitted in its colonies. This gave Danish West Indian settlements 10 years to replenish their slave populations, which they did, more



Africans being imported into St. Croix and St. Thomas during this period than in the whole of the previous century. For the Danish government, the economic benefits of transatlantic slave trading were now so low that it was no longer worth fighting the increasing moral and political criticism of the trade. Danish forts on the African coast, for example Christiansborg at Accra, were now no longer profitable, and the Danish, like the English, now preferred to make use of slaves born in their colonies, rather than buy new ones. Colonists now also went to some lengths to promote the natural reproduction of slaves, it being believed in all European colonies that this could put the institution of slavery on a more secure and less controversial footing. If slave mortality could be reduced, especially among infants, and birth rates increased, then this would lead to the creation of a sustainable labour force in the colonies without the need for fresh imports. This was an example of simple economic rationality responding to the increased moral and philosophical criticism of the trade.

Yet, despite these moves towards abolition and the eloquent denunciations of the slave trade that came increasingly to be heard at this time, the economic viability of the colonies was still the primary consideration of European governments. In most colonies, black women were now given incentives, in the form of cash and material allowances, to have children, as slave owners sought to secure adequate future labour supplies, with abolitionists in England, France, Denmark, Holland and elsewhere in Europe supporting this shift in policy as evidence of progress and considering it a possible improvement in the condition of the slaves. In addition, while slave trading was now outlawed in Northern European colonies, slavers had now found new markets in the older colonial empires of Spain and Portugal. Indeed, the Spanish colony of Cuba and the Portuguese colony of Brazil became the largest 19<sup>th</sup> century slave markets, following the abolition of the transatlantic trade to the colonies of

England, France, Denmark and Holland. At the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the British had pressured Spain, Portugal, France and the Netherlands to abolish the slave trade, but Spain and Portugal were permitted to continue slaving in order to increase the slave populations in their colonies.

In 1800, the United States Federal Government voted to make it illegal after 1808 for any American resident or citizen to ship slaves or to invest in slave trading that supplied slaves to a foreign country. As a result, there was a flood of Africans into the major US slave-owning states, such as South Carolina and Louisiana, between 1800 and 1808. Furthermore, in 1802, Napoleon Bonaparte again legalized transatlantic slaving in the French Empire, a policy reversal that was celebrated by the slavers of Nantes and Marseilles. But despite these setbacks, the abolition of slave trading by the British and the United States in 1808 ushered in a new era now marked by the illegal European trading of slaves, mostly to Cuba and Brazil. British and American political pressure was put on the Spanish and Portuguese governments to abolish the trade, with an agreement being reached in 1815 with the Portuguese to bring this about and a further agreement being reached with Spain and the Netherlands in 1818. However, these agreements were often violated, since the Iberian governments, in particular, were not keen to enforce them. Thus, slaves poured into Cuba and Puerto Rico in English, French, Dutch, Danish, Portuguese and American ships, despite attempts to prevent the trade by English and American warships. In 1818, the French once again abolished the slave trade.

The Haitian government also participated in policing the seas in order to suppress the trade. In 1819, for example, a Haitian naval vessel, the *Wilberforce*, seized a Spanish slave ship off its coasts, the *Dos Unidos*, which was laden with slaves headed for Cuba. The Africans were freed and declared citizens of Haiti,

despite demands by the Cuban government to President Boyer of Haiti that the slaves be returned. The request was ignored.

However, the Spanish and Portuguese governments and colonists declared their support for maintaining the transatlantic slave trade as a “life-line of colonial development”, denouncing what they called English duplicity and hypocrisy. England, they said, had only decided to enforce anti-slave-trade policies because its own colonies were developed and no longer needed African-born slaves. What England was attempting to do in suppressing the trade, they said, was to deny the same opportunities for development to the Hispanic region of the Caribbean and Latin America that the Anglophone region had enjoyed. Thus, thousands of slaves a year were shipped into Brazil in the 1820s, though the transatlantic trade was finally abolished by Portugal in 1831. However, it was not until 1850 that Brazil actually refused new African slaves.

Slavery also took off in Cuba during this age of abolitionism. By 1830, the island had twice as many sugar plantations as it had in 1800, and the slave population was growing rapidly as a result of imports from Africa. Though the Spanish Government had legislated in 1826 to the effect that any African who could prove that he or she had been illegally imported into a colony would be set free, this provision, like the Portuguese law of 1831, was not applied. In addition, it was in Cuban waters that the most famous anti-slavery legal case of the Americas began.

In 1839, 49 African captives aboard the slave vessel *Amistad* (Friendship), which was bound for Cuba, freed themselves of their chains and launched a successful revolt. Now in possession of the ship, the Africans tried to force two Cuban sailors whose lives had been spared to return the ship to Africa. However, this did not take place, and instead the ship sailed to the United States, where the Africans were taken

into custody at Long Island. The Spanish government took steps to have the ship and the former slaves returned, demanding that the Africans be returned to Cuba to stand trial for piracy and murder. However, abolitionists in the USA made the case public, mounting a high-profile defence team that included John Quincy Adams, former President of the USA, to secure the freedom of the Africans. In March 1841, the case found its way to the US Supreme Court where the abolitionists won the day, the Court ruling that the Africans had been illegally enslaved and thus had exercised their natural rights in fighting for freedom. Ten months later, 35 of the original 49 Africans who had survived the ordeal were returned to their homelands.

Yet, despite this celebrated case Cuban slave owners pressed ahead with the expansion of slavery on the island, becoming the world's leading producers of cane sugar. Africans continued to be imported as slaves to Cuba in their thousands, and the trade was only ended in the 1860s.

## **Summary**

Bringing the transatlantic slave trade to an end required enormous efforts on the part of all concerned and on both sides of the Atlantic. There had always been opposition to the trade in Africa, Europe and the Americas, but this was not sufficiently well organized or determined to defeat the slavers until the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Though the Africans themselves had set opposition to the trade in motion, this opposition later spreading to all parts of the world that witnessed its horrors. It was the governments of Europe and the Americas that finally ended the trade, first declaring it illegal and then patrolling the seas to enforce anti-slaving laws. However,

special mention should be made of the fact that some African states also made efforts to outlaw the trade in their jurisdictions, and that it was the post-revolutionary black government of Haiti that first outlawed the slave trade.

## **Educational Framework**

### **A. CONCEPTS**

- Freedom;
- Black autonomy;
- Opposition to the slave trade;
- Servile labour;
- Human liberty;
- Rebellion and insurrection;
- Humanist philosophy;
- Moral crisis;
- Pragmatism.

### **B. CONTENT**

1. The Africans themselves established the framework of opposition to the slave trade, first in Africa and then throughout the Atlantic world;
2. The development of systems of defense against slave insurrections;
3. The Haitian Constitution of 1805, which was the greatest revolutionary development against the slave trade;
4. Actions taken by religious, humanist and political thinkers in support of the abolitionist movement;
5. Contradictions between the theory and practice of European liberal philosophy, notably in the works of the French Enlightenment

philosophers;

6. The reasons for the abolition of the trade;
7. The reasons for the violation of the abolition treaties;
8. The *Amistad* case, the most famous anti-slavery legal case in the Americas.

## **C. OBJECTIVES**

### **Knowledge**

Students should be able to:

- a. describe the involvement of Africans, wherever they were enslaved, in the abolition struggles;
- b. assess the extent of European and American opposition to the trade;
- c. identify the views of European philosophers on the viability of the trade;
- d. describe and evaluate the reasons for the abolition of the trade.

### **Attitudes**

Students will be encouraged to:

- a. recognize and respect the commitment of Africans in the struggle against enslavement;
- b. respect human rights;
- c. develop a sense of commitment to social justice;.
- d. desire freedom for all.

### **Skills**

Students will develop the ability to:

- a. improve their writing and research skills;
- b. discuss and debate issues and ideas;
- c. present information in various forms.

## **D. TEACHING STRATEGIES**

- Group study;
- Art work;
- Group discussions;
- Role play;
- Film study;
- Letter writing

#### **E. STUDENT/LEARNER ACTIVITIES**

- Students could be encouraged to create a class book about the Abolition Movement, contributing original articles, poems, cartoons and drawings about important persons and issues;
- Production of an abolitionist newspaper, each member of the class contributing an article representing an abolitionist interest group or individual. The class will then be responsible for preparing, editing and producing the newspaper;
- Creation of a poster by each member of the class announcing an abolitionist meeting and featuring speakers from the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Abolitionist Movement;
- The Abolitionist Movement had many heroes; research the work of one of the following individuals, or look at the work of a particular abolitionist group, and share findings with the class:
  - Thomas Clarkson;
  - President Boyer of Haiti;
  - Toussaint L'Ouverture;
  - The Societé des Amis des Noirs.
- Have students imagine that they are members of a legislative body, and ask them to draw up a law that addresses a pressing socio-economic

problem in their country, in helping in reform, etc.

- “Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!”

Discuss this quotation from Martin Luther King Jr., on the experience of peoples of African origin today in the Americas, especially in Haiti. To what extent is this statement true?

- Watch *Amistad*, the film based on the Amistad legal case. Discuss the rebellion and the treaty that the British government had signed with Spain declaring the slave trade illegal, which entitled the *Amistad* captives to freedom.

(Teachers might develop an appropriate worksheet to structure students’ viewing of the film).

## F. EVALUATION

1. Student letters to the editor of a newspaper, either in support of or against the slave trade;
2. Speeches written for an abolitionist meeting, as well as advertisements for posters;
3. Essay: To what extent should individuals get involved in issues to protect human rights? (Use current issues as examples, e.g. issues such as peace, freedom, women’s rights, minority issues, etc.).

Students could also prepare a multi-media presentation on the above issues, using PowerPoint, audio and video, for the class;

4. Grading of the completed worksheet on the film *Amistad*.

## G. RESOURCE MATERIALS



- The Internet;
- Prescribed texts;
- Newspaper articles.

## **Chapter 13: Legacies and New African Identities**

Healing the wounds associated with four centuries of the transatlantic slave trade is one of the main challenges facing contemporary societies, with much having been done on all sides to face up to this shameful aspect of history. Nevertheless, the harmful legacy of the trade continues to impact interpersonal and international relations, and much remains to be done in terms of acquiring accurate knowledge of the trade, discussing its significance with honesty and a sense of creative purpose and moving beyond cultural misunderstandings and divisive ways of thinking.

Over 100 million people of African ancestry now populate Diaspora communities in Europe and the Americas. Since the emancipation victories of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, such people have had to press for the implementation of promised civil liberties and democratic freedoms. The right to vote, for example, and the right to enjoy the same constitutional and social rights as whites, have only been achieved as a result of considerable public protest. Thus, for many, the journey “up from slavery” has been turbulent, with racial issues tearing the fabric of all post-emancipation societies. In their quest for equality, blacks have received considerable support from sections of white communities that see racial discrimination as unethical, undemocratic and economically irrational. Much progress has been made with respect to issues of social justice and equality, but the evidence suggests that the everyday experience of blacks continues to be adversely affected by social values and attitudes inherited from the slavery period that have survived the post-emancipation reforms. Changes and continuities in black contemporary experience, therefore, should be examined against the background of the history of the transatlantic slave trade.

By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, three aspects of the trade were already obvious:

- 1) that the racial oppression of blacks had become common practice in the Atlantic world;
- 2) that criticism of the slave trade on moral, political, or economic grounds, was a separate issue from the wider question of slavery itself, with many Europeans being prepared to oppose the slave trade but unwilling to reject slavery as an institution;
- 3) that most Europeans were aware of the benefits they derived from slaving, generally believing in their social, economic and military superiority over Africans, and this racist systems of values was a significant part of Europe's heritage.

These things meant that attempts to stop the trade and to emancipate the slaves encountered considerable opposition, not only from persons having a direct material interest in slaving, but also from a wide cross section of civil society.

Therefore, legislation abolishing the slave trade in Europe and the Americas would require fundamental attitudinal change if such legislation was to be deep-rooted and meaningful. It was understood by anti-slavery advocates and organizations that the battle for abolition and emancipation would have to be fought in hearts and minds, and that this battle would be a far more difficult task even than passing legislation. However, anti-slavery and anti-racism were still largely considered to be separate issues, some anti-slavery advocates being prepared to oppose the purchase and sale of Africans and abhorring their sale and shipment during the Middle Passage, but being less inclined to participate in movements that aimed to reverse the negative effects of slavery upon African identities and societies. As a consequence, racism remained powerful even after slavery and the slave trade had been abolished, and it

took on new forms in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Political debate over the abolition of the slave trade that divided societies in Europe and the Americas also exposed anti-black racism in Western culture to intellectual scrutiny. The pro-slave trade argument had been based on a widespread belief in black inferiority, such ideas finding expression in many texts from the period, and the intensity of some of these “negrophobic” commentaries reveal the extent to which some whites had come to see the world in terms of racial difference.

In the USA, for example, the anti-slave trade movements did not consistently have a political confrontation with anti-black racist attitudes and opinions as their principal objective. Many white abolitionists actually subscribed to the view that blacks were culturally inferior and would benefit from the long-term tutelage of European civilization, with some believing that though it was the “white man’s burden” to civilize black people, slavery was an inappropriate mechanism for doing so. In Europe, similar views were expressed, with the Europeans being keener on abolishing slavery at home than on ending it in the colonies. The legal judgement of Lord Mansfield, for example, in the “Somerset Case” of 1772, says a great deal about the thinking of parts of the English abolitionist movement, Mansfield ruling that English law did not recognize slavery in England, and that English society was free from the vile relations of slavery, and therefore all Blacks in England were to be freed because the English at home considered themselves too advanced “to breathe the foul air of slavery”. However, the slave trade to English colonies was allowed to continue until 1807, and colonial slavery was maintained until 1838. Other European societies presented similar political and legal paradoxes, with what was not acceptable at home nevertheless being acceptable in the colonies.

It is necessary to look in more detail at the emancipation process in these colonies in order to gain insight into the way, and the reasons why, racism survived the dismantling of the slave system. For, in all colonial slave societies, though not in revolutionary Saint Domingue (present-day Haiti) the emancipation process was not designed to empower black people. Instead, emancipation was planned and implemented by colonial legislators, some of whom were concerned to continue white, economic, political and social domination.

In the Americas, for example, blacks were expected to continue to be socially subordinate to whites, trapped within institutional systems that ensured their second-class status in society. In fact, when concepts of citizenship and nationhood were debated, it was common for blacks to be excluded on racial grounds by white political leaders. For such people, the ideal emancipated African was a politically disenfranchised wage labourer or sharecropper who accepted social marginalization as the price to be paid for being black. European governments and their colonial administrations had clearly this vision of a “free” society. “White over Black” was the agreed-upon political formula, such attitudes forcing blacks, together with a minority of white supporters, to oppose them by active resistance and rebellion.

Furthermore, many efforts at improving the economic and social status of blacks were dishonest. In the USA, for example, an attempt was made to offer compensation to blacks by granting them a mule and land. However, the thinking behind this was how best to ensure a pool of cheap labour for white farmers, and this was also the thinking behind British actions in the Caribbean. Slave owners here received a grant of £20,000,000 from the British government, representing compensation for their loss of property following the passage of the Emancipation Act of 1833. Such financial support to the former slave owners was intended to strengthen

their hold over the colonial world in the aftermath of emancipation. In effect, it was an investment in the future of the white elites in the colonies – the planters and the merchants – in order for them to perform the same tasks of social management under the new dispensation. The blacks, on the other hand, received no compensation for the deprivations they had sustained.

As for the USA, while it had fought a war of national liberation against the British, it kept slavery as an institution, tainting the moral and political importance of the American Revolution. Eventually, the contradiction of building a new nation committed to liberty and freedom upon the foundation of slavery exploded in civil war, but even this war, though about black emancipation, stimulated the growth of an anti-black racism in the United States that terrorized the African-American community. In general, the difficulties post-slavery societies experienced in embracing blacks as citizens with equal civil rights, particularly in the new states of North and South America, were reflected in enduring legacies of ethnic chauvinism that had been brought about by centuries of racialized chattel slavery. In Latin America, blacks were subjected to similar kinds of attacks to those that took place in the United States, and in the latter country, and particularly in the southern states, violent white supremacist organizations, such as the Ku Klux Klan, routinely killed blacks and persecuted other persons committed to realizing the vision of liberty offered by the emancipation legislation. The criminal lynching of blacks also became a common occurrence, and emancipation was associated with increased violence against blacks in many parts of the Americas.

During the earlier part of the 19th century, much talk about black emancipation focused on the experience of Haiti, a land where, according to one English travel writer, “black rules white.” The enslaved Africans in Haiti had done

what the whites had long feared, and against which every conceivable precaution had been taken – they had revolted, destroyed the slave system, taken control of their destinies and declared their freedom. This was the first and only time in the history of colonial slavery that Blacks had done this, in this way not only disrupting European colonialism, but also, and for the first time, destroying a slave system, declaring an independent republic and maintaining that republic in the face of international hostility. At this time, the rest of the hemisphere was still committed to slavery, and the Haitians were the first people in the modern period to have declared both the abolition of the slave trade and of slavery, writing human freedom into their national constitution.

As a result, the Europeans counter-attacked, with the French government of the day doing its utmost to regain its former colony. When military efforts failed, it opened negotiations with the English and Spanish governments in an attempt to recapture the island and to re-enslave its population, since Haiti's freedom symbolized a challenge to the whole slave system. Napoleon's troops had been soundly defeated on the battlefields of Haiti before they fell to the English at Waterloo in 1815. France refused to recognize the country's declaration of independence in 1804, as did the rest of Europe and the United States, with all these countries taking the view that Haitian independence could not be recognized unless it was first recognized by France, and the French were demanding compensation for their loss of property during the Haitian Revolution. The Haitians refused to comply for some 21 years, finally capitulating only in 1825 under the weight of international diplomatic pressure. Under the agreement made with France in this year, Haiti's independence was only recognized in return for compensation of 150 million gold francs.

Haiti was compelled to pay this indemnity over the following century, bleeding its national treasury dry in doing so and contributing to the poverty that unfortunately characterized the newly independent nation. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were periods when up to 60% of Haitian revenues were paid to France, and, in addition to this considerable financial burden, the Haitians were treated as economic outcasts by those who controlled the world economy. However in Europe, the persistent denigration of emancipated blacks that characterized colonial attitudes in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was linked to the so-called “Haitian menace.” Racist intellectuals explained the economic and political instability of Haiti not in terms of the indemnities it was obliged to pay, but in terms of black incompetence and inferiority. Thomas Carlyle, for example, the noted mid-19<sup>th</sup> century English political philosopher, also wrote essays on what he termed “The Nigger Question,” expressing his hostility to blacks. Granting freedom to blacks, he argued, had been a mistake bred in the minds of misguided and naive politicians who had failed in their duty to help the “primitives” by keeping them in tutelage through slavery.

Such racist views found support in 19<sup>th</sup>-century European academic disciplines in the form of “scientific racism”. This set out to explain human social development in terms of race and colour, rationalized and justified white supremacist social systems in colonial societies, promoted the segregation of “races” and maintained the stereotype of blacks as being culturally backward. In many European societies, there were calls to keep black immigration to a minimum in order to obstruct any movement towards the development of multi-racial societies, and in the Caribbean and Latin America blacks remained politically disenfranchised until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, being subjected to race-based socio-economic exclusion as a result. Attempts to “whiten” Latin America surfaced as a direct response to the post-slavery situation



in these societies, and institutional racism everywhere was the principal response of former slave owners to black emancipation and problems of public governance.

Racism in the Americas was also supported by separate events that transformed Europe's relationship to Africa, transforming the continent from a trading partner to a set of European colonies. For, following the abolition of slavery there occurred the so-called "scramble" for Africa, when the European powers competed with each other to establish colonies on the continent in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. European success in the military conquest in Africa at this time was symbolized above all by the fall of Ashanti in southern Africa, and this new direct domination of Africa by the Europeans, even in the wake of the emancipation of the former slaves, called into question the idea that abolition had indeed come as a result of European goodwill. Rather, it supports the view that the slave trade and slavery had been abolished because they had outlived their usefulness, and that more effective methods of accessing Africa's resources were now available.

Furthermore, the new European settler societies in Africa reinforced racist thinking about blacks. The Dutch, French, Portuguese and English established racially segregated communities in Africa based on the political exclusion of blacks, these societies evolving into the Apartheid regimes of South Africa and Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). Similar white regimes were also established in East Africa and South-West Africa, institutionalizing the principle of black oppression and exclusion that had typified the slave system through the new political arrangements of Apartheid.

As a result of this history, a considerable body of literature has grown up linking the different stages of European engagement with Africa with Africa's underdevelopment in the postcolonial era. In this literature, the transatlantic slave trade is considered to have been the first stage in the construction of an unequal and

exploitative relationship between the continents, the trade being the beginning of a process that undermined the potential of West Africa by destabilizing, and in some cases destroying, its economic, political and social infrastructure. The result of this, it has been argued, was that a “culture of dependency” developed in Africa, together with a persistent state of structural underdevelopment.

Walter Rodney, for example, a West Indian scholar of African history, has been an influential exponent of this argument. For him, West Africa and Western Europe were not far apart in terms of their economic development at the beginning of the transatlantic slave trade, but the later relative technological backwardness of West Africa was in part at least an effect of that trade. In addition, the trade has left behind it a poisonous legacy of race and colour prejudice, with certain sections of the population having a higher regard for European culture than they do for African, and this continues to be a major problem for national reconstruction. Such arguments have been forcefully criticized, but there is nevertheless a strong belief in Africa that many of the challenges facing the continent, such as insecure and contested borders, random distribution of ethnic groups across national boundaries and the persistent preference for Eurocentric standards of taste, are all legacies of the slave trade and of the European-African relationship that it supported.

Following the end of the slave trade, and throughout the European colonial period in Africa, black resistance did not cease, with only the forms such resistance took being modified to meet changed circumstances. Thus, the commitment of blacks to securing freedom and justice remained strong throughout the Atlantic world. By the 1920s, evidence of this commitment was obvious throughout Africa and the Americas in the form of the proliferation of organizations and movements committed to black advancement, with issues of full citizenship, nationhood, national sovereignty and

human and civil rights making up the agenda of these groups. Then, in the years following World War II, the objectives of blacks in Africa and in the African Diaspora communities were taken up again, this time by their own leaders in international fora, particularly the United Nations. A number of issues now received attention, among them being:

- 1) the building of mass decolonization and independence movements in Africa;
- 2) the establishment in mainland American Diaspora communities of civil-rights organizations dedicated to the attainment of racial justice and equality;
- 3) the rise of labour movements and political parties in the Caribbean that sought full civil rights for all, together with the ending of colonialism through the establishment of independent Caribbean nation-states.

These objectives received support from throughout the African continent and the African Diaspora communities. Thus, during the 1930s and 1940s, important intellectual, political and cultural links were forged between countries and regions in Africa and between members of the various Diaspora communities, with the objective of advancing decolonization. The Marcus Garvey movement, for example, provided an organizational and intellectual framework that reached across the Atlantic, and the Ethiopian struggle against Italian military invasion focused attention on the need for a strong Pan-African movement.

Ghana's independence from Britain in 1957 was a major step forward, with African Diaspora community leaders playing major roles in the country's liberation. Prominent among such leaders were George Padmore and C.L.R. James, both from Trinidad, and William Dubois from the United States, and these individuals are now recognized as having played important roles in achieving Ghanaian independence. In

the years that followed, most of the formerly colonized African countries attained their independence, though some of them only attained this at considerable cost in terms of the loss of human life. Finally, the collapse of the Apartheid regime in South Africa in the early 1990s signalled a new era in black freedom in Africa and elsewhere.

Today, it is important to note that the descendants of slaves now occupy the highest political offices in many parts of the Caribbean in societies that have been transformed by the struggle for freedom and justice. The movement from “slave” to “prime minister” and “president,” for example, that typified Haiti in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century has now become the norm in most of the Caribbean, with the celebration of “Emancipation Day” as an official public holiday bespeaking the political importance attached to the uprooting of slavery. But as long as these societies continue to battle with the adverse legacies of slavery and to idealize this notion of “up from slavery”, the process of emancipation cannot be considered to be complete. For, even today blacks remain economically marginalized and racially discriminated against in many parts of the Americas and Europe, even though forms of political democracy and social openness have been established. The ownership of economic resources and access to financial networks continue to marginalize most blacks. In addition, black men, especially in the US criminal justice system, continue to be disproportionately incarcerated, and there is considerable evidence to suggest that black communities also suffer disproportionately from crime in Europe and in parts of Latin America, even a century after the dismantling of the slave system.

Yet, despite these disadvantages and challenges blacks in Africa and in the African Diaspora communities continue to pursue their advancement, making important contributions to the development of humanity as a whole. The cultural

space we call the “West”, for example, is in large part a creation of contributions made by African peoples, with their contributions, both in terms of labour power and in terms of cultural and technological know-how, having been well documented. Less well understood, however, has been the importance of the black peoples’ ongoing demands for equality and justice, together with the various political expressions of their humanist philosophical worldviews. In these ways, as well as in many others, black people have contributed to the shaping of the Atlantic world that is the site of Western modernity.

Finally, it is important to note that Africans have paid a high price in building modern societies. Their continuing contestation with the past, and their desire for a more secure future, will continue to mean the rejection of all notions of slavery and the denial of human rights. The lesson to be learned by societies throughout the world from the terrible, but in some ways also inspiring, history of the slave trade and of its abolition is the importance of never repeating the kind of human tragedy that the transatlantic slave trade and slavery itself represented.

## **Summary**

The overarching lesson of the transatlantic slave trade is that it made a victim of humanity as a whole. The legacies of this crime against humanity continue to impact the contemporary world. Societies have tried different ways of coping with this legacy and with the challenges of racial oppression and inhumanity that it has bred in all areas of social life. But what all of them have had to cope with in common has been the often crippling and self-defeating sense of shame and guilt left in the aftermath of the slave trade.

Reaching beyond this shame-guilt cycle remains a primary challenge for all societies within the Atlantic World and beyond, and it is necessary to do so in order to eradicate any desire for revenge, on the one hand, and continuing racial oppression, on the other. Undoubtedly African peoples have carried the greater burden of the legacy of the slave trade, as they alone suffered the indignities of it for centuries.

European and American societies having large African Diaspora communities continue to find themselves torn by the legacies of the slave trade, and Africans are also still assessing the ill-effects of the traumatic experience. Within this context, activities such as the UNESCO Slave Route Project can serve as a catalyst in finding the will for social healing and reconciliation, promoting the search for better understanding and greater tolerance within our collective humanity.

## **Educational Framework**

### **A. CONCEPTS**

- Diaspora;
- Civil Rights;
- Racism and scientific racism;
- Racial discrimination;
- Ethnic chauvinism;
- Apartheid;
- Disenfranchised;
- Underdevelopment;
- “Negrophobia”;
- Pan-African;
- The Shame-Guilt Cycle.

## **B. CONTENT**

1. The quest for equality and the journey “up from slavery”;
2. The ideology of racism and its expressions in the 20<sup>th</sup> century;
3. The legacy of “ethnic chauvinism” in post-slavery society;
4. European opposition to Haiti and Haiti’s eventual impoverishment;
5. The political, economic and social exclusion of blacks in the Caribbean and in Latin America;
6. Apartheid;
7. Increase in civil-rights organizations and labour movements.

## **C. OBJECTIVES**

### **Knowledge**

Students should be able to:

- a. locate African Diaspora communities on a map;
- b. give reasons for the legacy or continuity of racism in black contemporary experience;
- c. describe the ways in which racism has survived in the Americas and Europe;
- d. distinguish between “racism” and “scientific racism”;
- e. identify attempts at black advancement in the Americas;
- f. identify and explain the contributions of African peoples to the development of the West;
- g. examine and assess the lives and contributions of various personalities, such as Marcus Garvey, C.L.R. James and others, to the development of new African identities.

### **Attitudes**

Students will be encouraged to:

- a. develop tolerance and respect for other people;
- b. be optimistic for the future, while learning from the past;
- c. desire to make a positive contribution to society and to promote

positive attitudes.

### **Skills**

Students will develop the ability to:

- a. use maps;
- b. use various research techniques to gather information;
- c. present information in various ways.

## **D. TEACHING STRATEGIES**

Visual media, such as maps and photographs;

Role play;

Drama;

Film and audio-visual aids;

Group discussions;

Class visits to historical sites;

Interviews;

Networking.

## **E. STUDENT/LEARNER ACTIVITIES**

- Compare and contrast maps of places and photographs of personalities from different time periods;
- Highlight national and international days related to the slave trade, such as days commemorating indigenous peoples, the abolition of slavery, emancipation, the eradication of racism, black history, etc., in the form of posters, classroom displays, charts, art, poetry, etc;
- Write a report on what you consider to be the most important contribution made to the eradication of racism by any personality or group;
- Conduct interviews with any personality, leader of a labour movement, or NGO in your country that has been associated with improving the quality of life of any dispossessed group. Interpret the information



collected;

- Watch the films *Eye on the Prize* and *Mr. and Mrs. Loving*. How are the characters portrayed? How are the issues dealt with?
- Visit historical sites and places of memory within your country and abroad. Relate experiences and impressions to the class;
- Write letters to other students abroad, inquiring into the legacy of the transatlantic slave trade in their respective countries (Teachers can network among schools participating in the Transatlantic Slave Trade Education Project).

## **F. EVALUATION**

1. Essay:  
“Those who do not know history are doomed to repeat the mistakes of the past.”  
Discuss with reference to slavery and modern society;
2. Assessment of visual displays, with structured evaluation using previously agreed criteria;
3. Presentation of work from research and from the various exercises suggested above.

## **G. RESOURCE MATERIALS**

Films;  
Maps and photographs;  
Supplementary readings;  
The Internet.

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**AN ANNOTATED LISTING OF PHOTOGRAPHS AND OTHER**

**VISUALS**

**FOR**

**PROPOSED TEXT : SLAVE VOYAGES**

**BY**

**DR. HILARY BECKLES**

**PROJECT: Transatlantic Slave Trade (TST) Education Project**

**(UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet))**

An annotated listing of photographs and other visuals for proposed text entitled "Slave Voyages" by Dr. Hilary Beckles.

**PROJECT:** Transatlantic Slave Trade (TST) Education Project  
UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet)

**SOURCE NO. 1**

**TEXT: SLAVERY – THE ANGLO-AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT**

**Authors:** Plimmer, Charlotte and Denis

**Publishers:** David and Charles (Holdings) Ltd.  
Newton Abbot Devon in the U.S.A. by Harper and Row Publishers Inc.  
Barnes and Noble Import Division  
@ Charlotte and Denis Plimmer, 1973

**TITLES:**

- a. SIR JOHN HAWKINS (1532-95) ENGLAND'S FIRST SLAVER. He captured 300 blacks in West Africa, sold them to the Spanish in Hispaniola and returned home 'with prosperous success and much gaine.'

Chapter 5 -  
Chapter 8 -

- b. WEST AFRICAN COAST MOST FREQUENTED BY EUROPEAN SLAVE-BUYERS. This bulge was the easiest to reach and its Negroes the most prized. The Gold Coast (now Ghana) was the busiest section of all.

Chapter 3 -  
Chapter 1 -



- c. A DEVICE TO STOP A CAPTIVE FROM ESCAPING IN THE AFRICAN JUNGLE: the hooks would entangle him in the vegetation. Also used as a punishment in the West Indies to prevent his lying down and sleeping.

Chapter 7

- d. AFRICAN DEALERS SELLING SLAVES TO WHITES ON THE GUINEA COAST. The recumbent Negro (center) is being examined by a purchaser. The woman (left center) has been bought and is being branded.

Chapter 7 --

- e. SLAVES BEING MARCHED FROM THE AFRICAN INTERIOR TO THE COAST often died from disease or attacks from wild beasts. Some committed suicide by eating earth.

Chapter 9

- f. FACE MUZZLE AND IRON COLLAR USED BY OWNERS TO PUNISH SLAVES. Physical restraints were standard Male slaves in transit from Africa were shackled to prevent insurrection or leaping overboard.

Chapter 4-

Chapter 9 --

- g. PLAN AND SECTION OF A SLAVE SHIP.

Chapter 7

- h. A SALE OF SLAVES ADVERTISEMENT.

Chapter 8

## SOURCE NO. 2

**TEXT:** SEVEN SLAVES AND SLAVERY – TRINIDAD, 1777 – 1838

**Author:** De Verteuil, Anthony  
ISBN – 01 – 592 – 2 – 02 – 69281

**Publishers:** Scrip – J. Printers Ltd  
187B Tragarete Road, Port of Spain, Trinidad  
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

### **TITLES:**

- a. ON TO THE SLAVER - This drawing was made in 1844. The captives were rowed out from the Baracoons on shore to the slave ships. Apart from those seen in the sketch, others would be laid flat in the bilge of the row boat.

Chapter 7

- b. MODERN WEST AFRICA – (with Tribes brought to Trinidad).

Chapter 12 -

- c. SLAVE COFFLE – A nineteenth century engraving of captives being marched to the coast for export. The slaves carried their food on their heads. Young children were usually killed as being too small for the market and the journey to it.

Chapter 6 -

- d. WAR CANOE – King Koko’s War Canoe in the River Niger. As the slave trade grew, the city states of the Niger Delta established the “canoe house” system with trading canoes to carry the slaves and war canoes to defend them.

Chapter 8  
Chapter 10

**SOURCE NO. 3**

**TEXT: THE SLAVE TRADE AND SLAVERY –THE STORY OF  
TRANSATLANTIC SLAVERY**

**Author:** Ransford, Oliver

**Publishers:** John Murray (Publishers) Ltd.  
50, Albemarle Street, London W1 X4 BD

**TITLES:**

- a. DIAGRAM SHOWING HOW SLAVES WERE STOWED ON SHIPS.  
Chapter 7
- b. THE SLAVERS' COAST OF AFRICA.  
Chapter 5  
Chapter 11
- c. SLAVES BEING DRIVEN TO THE COAST  
Chapter 7
- d. CUDJO LEWIS. THE LAST SURVIVOR OF SLAVE CARGO  
Chapter 13

**SOURCE NO. 4**

**TEXT:**       **BLACK IVORY – A HISTORY OF BRITISH SLAVERY**

**Author:**     WALVIN, James

**Publishers:** Fontana Press, 1993  
An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers  
77 – 85 Fulham Palace Road  
Hammersmith London W6 8JB  
Copyright © James Walvin 1992

**TITLES:**

- a.     A CARGO OF MAINLY YOUNG MALE SLAVES BEING SHIPPED TO THE AMERICAS.

Chapter 6

- b.     OLAUDAH EQUIANO. 1745 – 97. EX-SLAVE AND SPOKESMAN FOR BRITISH BLACKS IN THE 1780S'

Chapter 12

- c.     THE DUCHESS OF PORTSMOUTH WITH A BLACK CHILD: blacks were a popular form of servant among the prosperous in 18<sup>th</sup> century Britain.

Chapter 11

## SOURCE NO. 5

The Internet

website:[http://hitchcock itc.virginia.edu/Slave Trade/collection](http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/Slave%20Trade/collection)

### TITLES:

- a. DESTINATION OF THE ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE From Curtin, 1969)  
(Adapted from: Philip D. Curtin, the Atlantic Slave Trade (Madison, 1969)

Four maps showing numbers of slaves transported from Africa to New World areas over the period 1451-1870. Thickness of arrows indicates numbers of slaves to each major area.

Chapter 6

- b. MAP. WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA. SLAVING REGIONS.  
(Adapted from: Theresa Singleton, the Archaeology of the African Diaspora in the Americas. Glassboro, New Jersey: Society for Historical Archaeology, 1995).

Chapter 2

Chapter 12

- c. BODY POSITIONS OF SLAVES ON THE SLAVE SHIP. AURORE 1784.  
(Adapted from: Jean Boudriot, Traite et Navire Negrier l'Aurore, 1784, Paris – published by author, 1984 pg. 87).

Chapter 7

- d. BRITISH SLAVE SHIP. BROOKES. 1789.  
(Adapted from: Broadside Collection, Rare Book and Special Collection DIVISION; Library of Congress (PORTFOLIO 282 – 43).

Chapter 8

- e. THE SLAVE DECK ON THE BARK "WILDFIRE" 1860 - emaciated survivors of the Middle Passage on top deck of a slave ship.

(Engraved from daguerreotype, published in Harper's weekly, June 2, 1860. Volume 4 p. 344)

Chapter 6

- f. SLAVE COFFLE, EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY.

Four African men joined by a wooden yoke around their necks.

(Adapted from: Isabelle Aguet; a Pictorial History of the Slave Trade. Geneva: Editions MINERVA, 1971; plate 31 pg. 44)

Chapter 13

### SOURCE NO. 6

#### **TEXT: OBJECTIONS TO THE ABOLITION OF THE SLAVE TRADE, WITH ANSWERS, 1797**

**Author:** RAMSAY, JAMES

(Photocopied from the University of the West Indies, WEST INDIANA COLLECTION. A RARE book. No copyright or publishers).

**Description:** Even though written in 'old English', this excerpt taken from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, allows for extensive student discussion, related to Chapters 12 and 13, on the question "Should the Slave Trade be abolished?"

James Ramsay, British humanitarian and member of the "Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade," gives an insight into the thinking of the day.

◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇  
◇◇◇◇◇

TITLES.

- a. Objection 37 - Africa will gain nothing by our abandoning the trade.
- b. Objection 39 - Negroes are happier in the colonies than in Africa.
- c. Objection 45 - Free Negroes are miserable.
- d. Objection 56 - Guinea captains, surgeons, and officers, alone gain annually £50,000 in this trade, and one particular dealer in Guinea ships made an immense fortune.
- e. Objection 91 - The trade should be regulated, not abolished.

XXXXX XXXXX XXXXX XXXXX XXXXX XXXXX XXXXX

*Source No. 1*





*Qui vicit totiens ins Eructis clausibus B. flos  
 Alle Dugis HAWKINS vitam reliquit in vndis.*

3 Sir John Hawkins (1532-95), England's first slaver. He captured 300 blacks in West Africa, sold them to the Spanish in Hispaniola and returned home 'with prosperous succeſſe and much gaine'

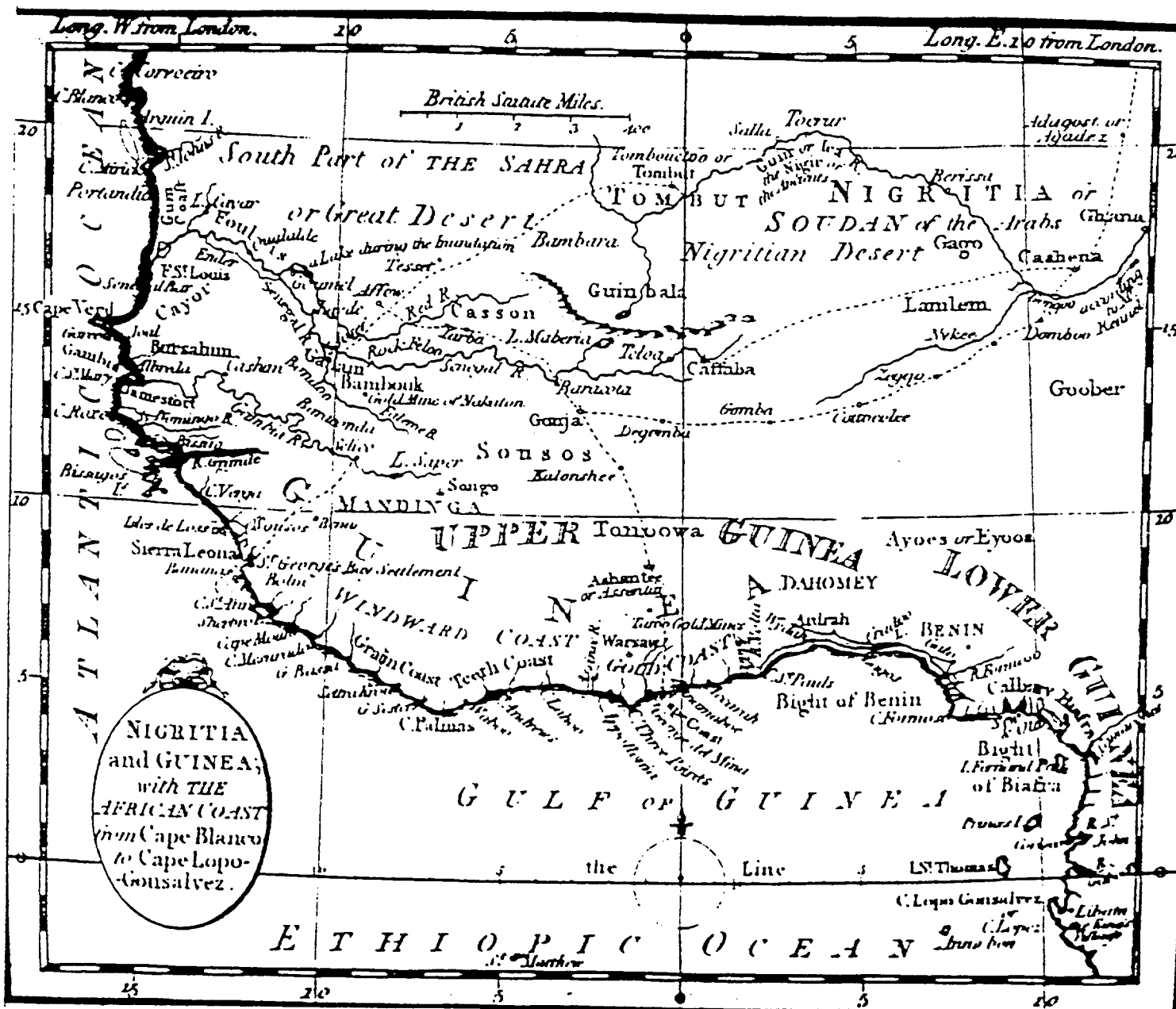
**TITLE:** SIR JOHN HAWKINS (1532-95) ENGLAND'S FIRST SLAVER.

**TEXT:** SLAVERY – THE ANGLO-AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT

**Authors:** Plimmer, Charlotte and Denis

**Publishers:** David and Charles (Holdings) Ltd.  
 Newton Abbot Devon in the U.S.A. by Harper and row Publishers Inc.  
 Barnes and Noble Import Division  
 @ Charlotte and Denis Plimmer, 1973

b.



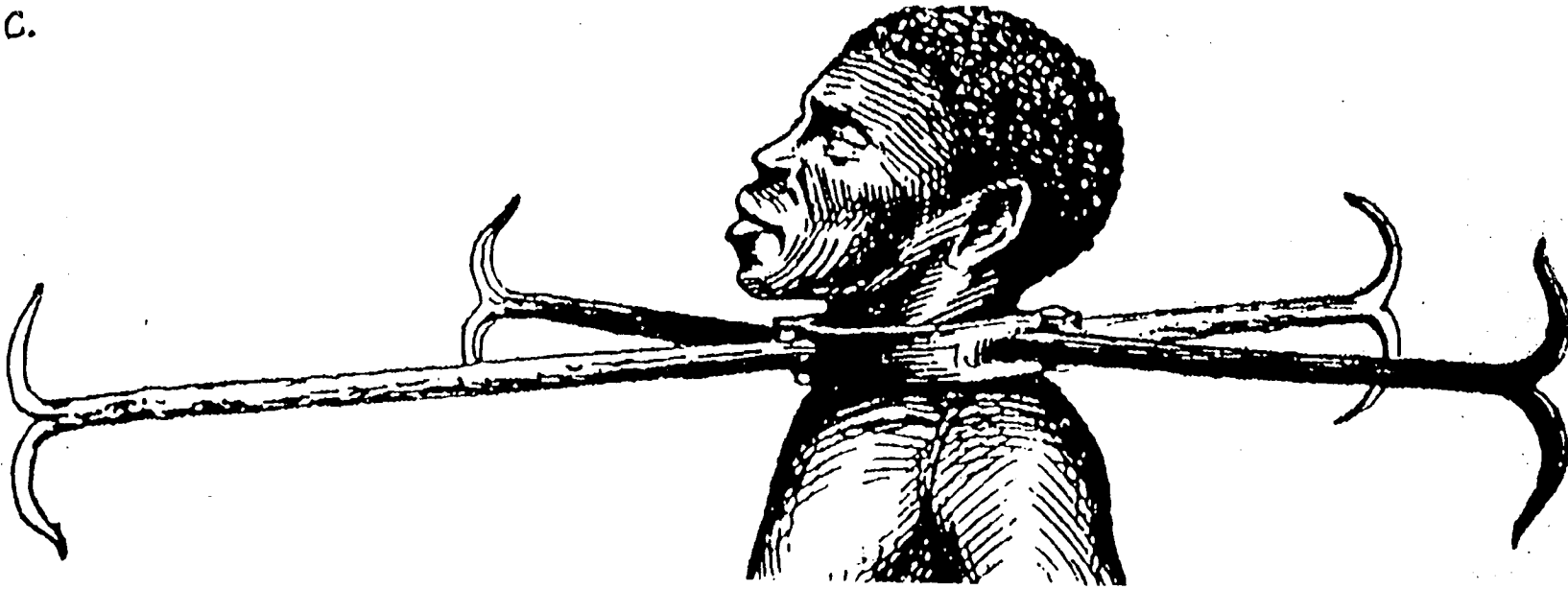
**TITLE:** WEST AFRICAN COAST MOST FREQUENTED BY EUROPEAN SLAVE-BUYERS

**TEXT:** SLAVERY – THE ANGLO-AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT

**Authors:** Plimmer, Charlotte and Denis

**Publishers:** David and Charles (Holdings) Ltd.  
Newton Abbot Devon in the U.S.A. by Harper and row Publishers Inc.  
Barnes and Noble Import Division  
@ Charlotte and Denis Plimmer, 1973

C.



**TITLE:** A DEVICE TO STOP A CAPTIVE FROM ESCAPING IN THE AFRICAN JUNGLE  
**TEXT:** SLAVERY - THE ANGLO-AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT

**Authors:** Plimmer, Charlotte and Denis

**Publishers:** David and Charles (Holdings) Ltd.  
Newton Abbot Devon in the U.S.A. by Harper and Row Publishers Inc.  
Barnes and Noble Import Division  
(@) Charlotte and Denis Plimmer, 1973

d.



**TITLE**     AFRICAN DEALERS SELLING SLAVES TO WHITES ON THE GUINEA COAST.

**TEXT:**       **SLAVERY – THE ANGLO-AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT**

**Authors:**    Plimmer, Charlotte and Denis

**Publishers:** David and Charles (Holdings) Ltd.  
Newton Abbot Devon in the U.S.A. by Harper and row Publishers Inc.  
Barnes and Noble Import Division  
@ Charlotte and Denis Plimmer, 1973



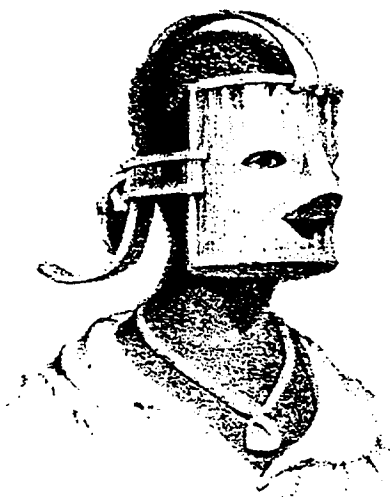
**TITLE:** SLAVES BEING MARCHED FROM THE AFRICAN INTERIOR TO THE COAST

**TEXT:** SLAVERY – THE ANGLO-AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT

**Authors:** Plimmer, Charlotte and Denis

**Publishers:** David and Charles (Holdings) Ltd.  
Newton Abbot Devon in the U.S.A. by Harper and row Publishers Inc.  
Barnes and Noble Import Division  
@ Charlotte and Denis Plimmer, 1973

f.



**TITLE:** FACE MUZZLE AND IRON COLLAR USED BY OWNERS TO PUNISH SLAVES.

**TEXT:** SLAVERY – THE ANGLO-AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT

**Authors:** Plimmer, Charlotte and Denis

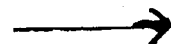
**Publishers:** David and Charles (Holdings) Ltd.  
Newton Abbot Devon in the U.S.A. by Harper and row Publishers Inc.  
Barnes and Noble Import Division  
@ Charlotte and Denis Plimmer, 1973

**TITLE:** PLAN AND SECTION OF A SLAVE SHIP.

**TEXT:** SLAVERY – THE ANGLO-AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT

**Authors:** Plimmer, Charlotte and Denis

**Publishers:** David and Charles (Holdings) Ltd.  
Newton Abbot Devon in the U.S.A. by Harper and row Publishers Inc.  
Barnes and Noble Import Division  
@ Charlotte and Denis Plimmer, 1973



# PLAN AND SECTIONS OF A SLAVE SHIP.

g.

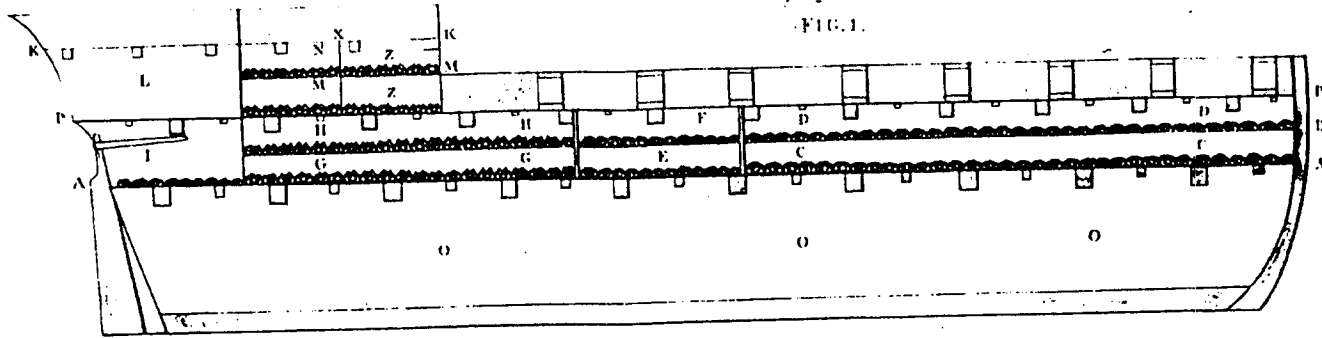


FIG. I.

## SCALE

of Twenty Feet

One Eighth of an Inch to a Foot

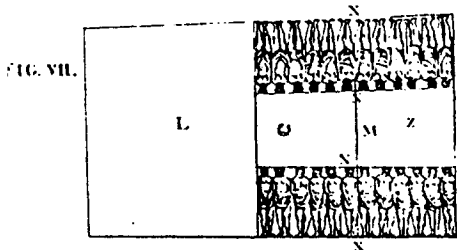


FIG. VII.

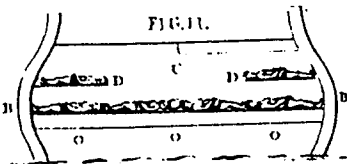


FIG. II.

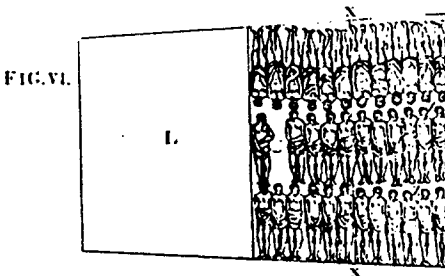


FIG. VI.

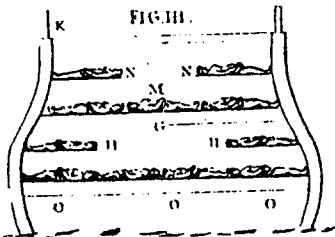


FIG. III.

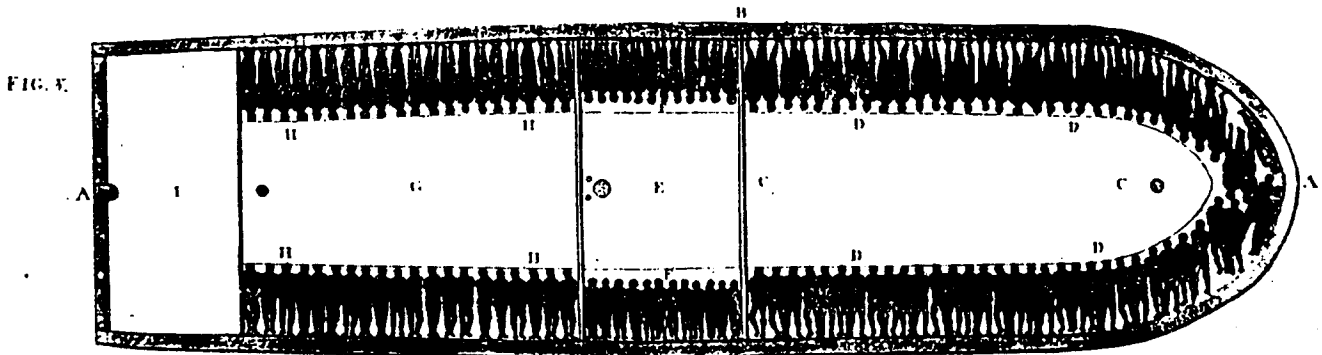


FIG. V.

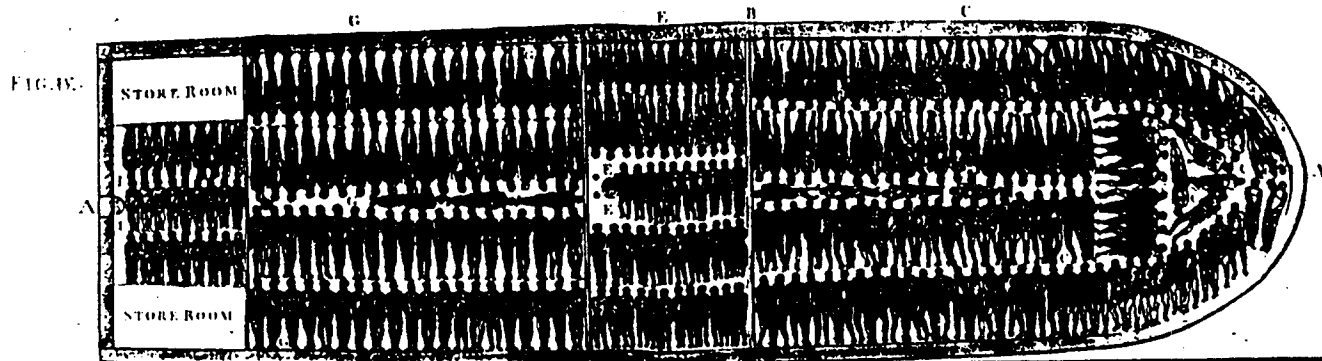


FIG. IV.

h.

# TO BE SOLD & LET

BY PUBLIC AUCTION,

On *MONDAY* the 18th of *MAY*, 1829,  
UNDER THE TREES.

FOR SALE,

THE THREE FOLLOWING

# SLAVES,

viz.

**HANNIBAL**, about 30 Years old, an excellent House Servant, of Good Character.  
**WILLIAM**, about 35 Years old, a Labourer.  
**NANCY**, an excellent House Servant and Nurse.

The MEN belonging to "LEECH'S" Estate, and the WOMAN to Mrs. D. SMYTH

TO BE LET,

On the usual conditions of the Hire finding them in Food, Clothing and Medical Attendance.

THE FOLLOWING

MALE and FEMALE

# SLAVES,

OF GOOD CHARACTER.

**ROBERT BAGLEY**, about 20 Years old, a good House Servant.  
**WILLIAM BAGLEY**, about 18 Years old, a Labourer.  
**JOHN ARMS**, about 18 Years old.  
**JACK ANTONIA**, about 40 Years old, a Labourer.  
**PHILIP**, an Excellent Fisherman.  
**HARRY**, about 27 Years old, a good House Servant.  
**LUCY**, a Young Woman of good Character, used to House Work and the Nursery.  
**ELIZA**, an Excellent Washerwoman.  
**CLARA**, an Excellent Washerwoman.  
**FANNY**, about 14 Years old, House Servant.  
**SARAH**, about 14 Years old, House Servant.

Also for Sale; at Eleven o'Clock,

Fine Rice, Gram, Paddy, Books, Muslins,  
Needles, Pins, Ribbons, &c, &c.

AT ONE O'CLOCK, THAT CELEBRATED ENGLISH HORSE,

# BLUCHER,

TITLE: A SALE OF SLAVES ADVERTISEMENT.

TEXT: SLAVERY - THE ANGLO-AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT

Authors: Plimmer, Charlotte and Denis

Publishers: David and Charles (Holdings) Ltd.  
Newton Abbot Devon in the U.S.A. by Harper and row Publishers Inc.  
Barnes and Noble Import Division  
@ Charlotte and Denis Plimmer, 1973



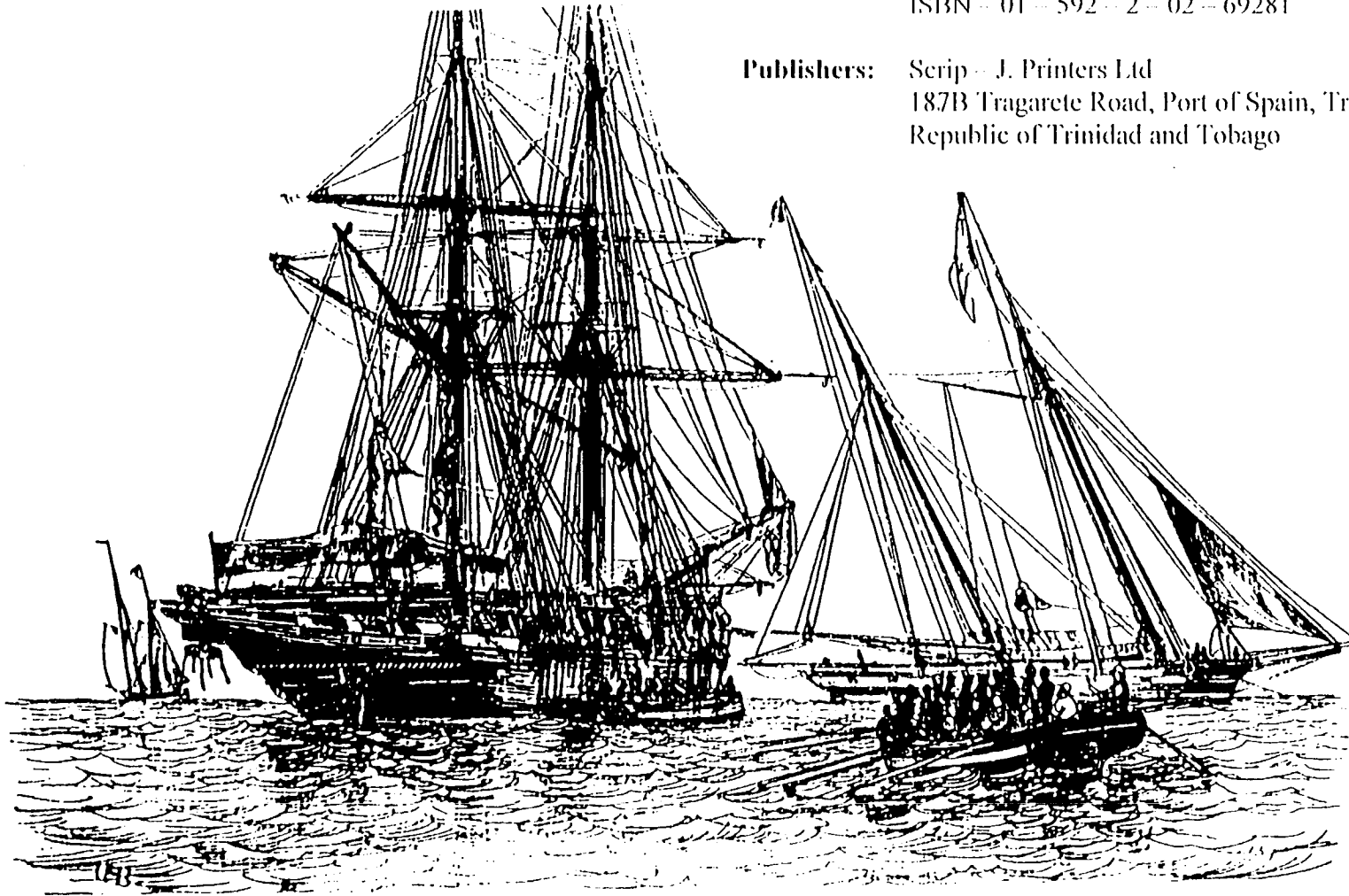
*Source No. 2*

**TITLE:** ON TO THE SLAVER

**TEXT:** SEVEN SLAVES AND SLAVERY – TRINIDAD, 1777 – 1838

**Author:** De Verteuil, Anthony  
ISBN – 01 – 592 – 2 – 02 – 69281

**Publishers:** Scrip – J. Printers Ltd  
187B Fragarete Road, Port of Spain, Trinidad  
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago



**ON TO THE SLAVER.** This drawing was made in 1844. The captives were rowed out from the Baracoons (enclosures) on shore to the slave ships. Apart from those seen in the sketch, others would be laid flat in the bilge of the row boat.

b.

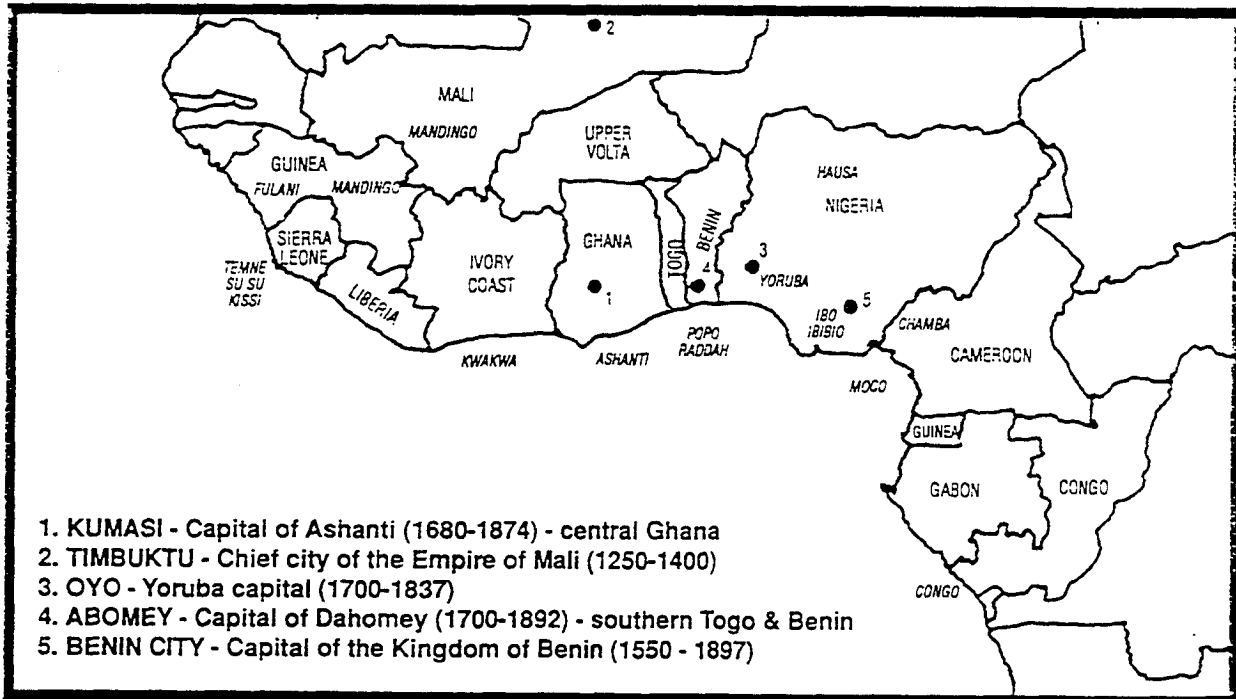
**TITLE:** MODERN WEST AFRICA

**TEXT:** SEVEN SLAVES AND SLAVERY - TRINIDAD, 1777 - 1838

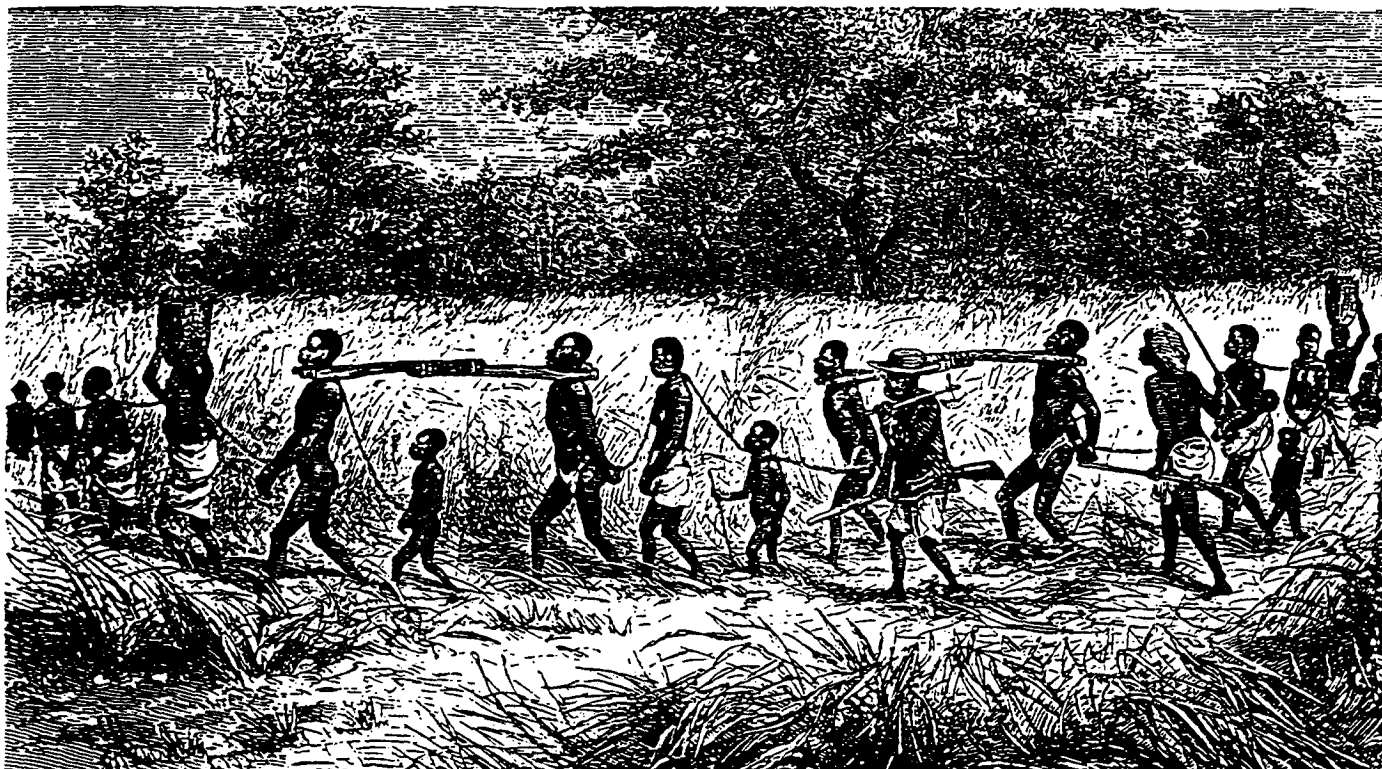
**Author:** De Verteuil. Anthony  
ISBN - 01 - 592 - 2 - 02 - 69281

**Publishers:** Scrip - J. Printers Ltd  
187B Tragarete Road. Port of Spain. Trinidad  
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

**MODERN WEST AFRICA**  
(WITH TRIBES BROUGHT TO TRINIDAD)



C.



2. **SLAVE COFFLE.** A nineteenth century engraving of captives being marched to the coast for export. The slaves carried their food on their heads. Young children were usually killed as being too small for the market and the journey to it.

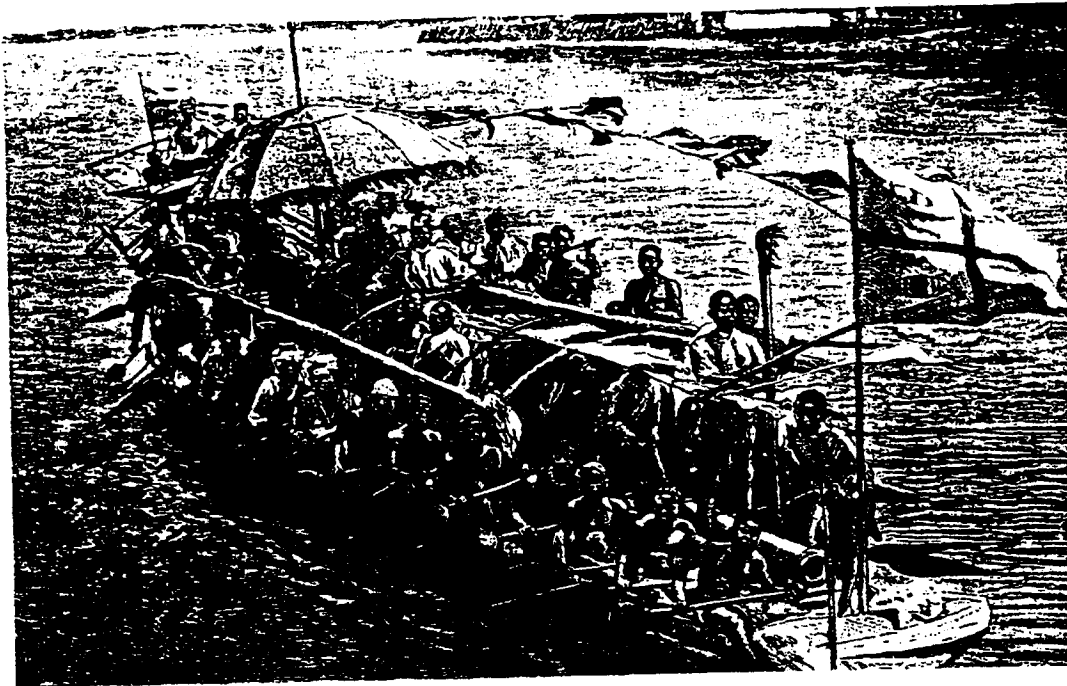
**TITLE:** SLAVE COFFLE

**TEXT:** SEVEN SLAVES AND SLAVERY - TRINIDAD, 1777 - 1838

**Author:** De Verteuil, Anthony  
ISBN - 01 - 592 - 2 - 02 - 69281

**Publishers:** Scrip - J. Printers Ltd  
187B Tragarete Road, Port of Spain, Trinidad  
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

d.



3. WAR CANOE. King Koko's War Canoe in the River Niger. As the slave trade grew, the city states of the Niger Delta established the "canoe house" system with trading canoes to carry the slaves and war canoes to defend them.

**TITLE:** WAR CANOE.

**TEXT:** SEVEN SLAVES AND SLAVERY - TRINIDAD, 1777 - 1838

**Author:** De Verteuil, Anthony  
ISBN - 01 - 592 - 2 - 02 - 69281

**Publishers:** Scrip - J. Printers Ltd  
187B Tragarete Road, Port of Spain, Trinidad  
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

*Source No. 3*

a.

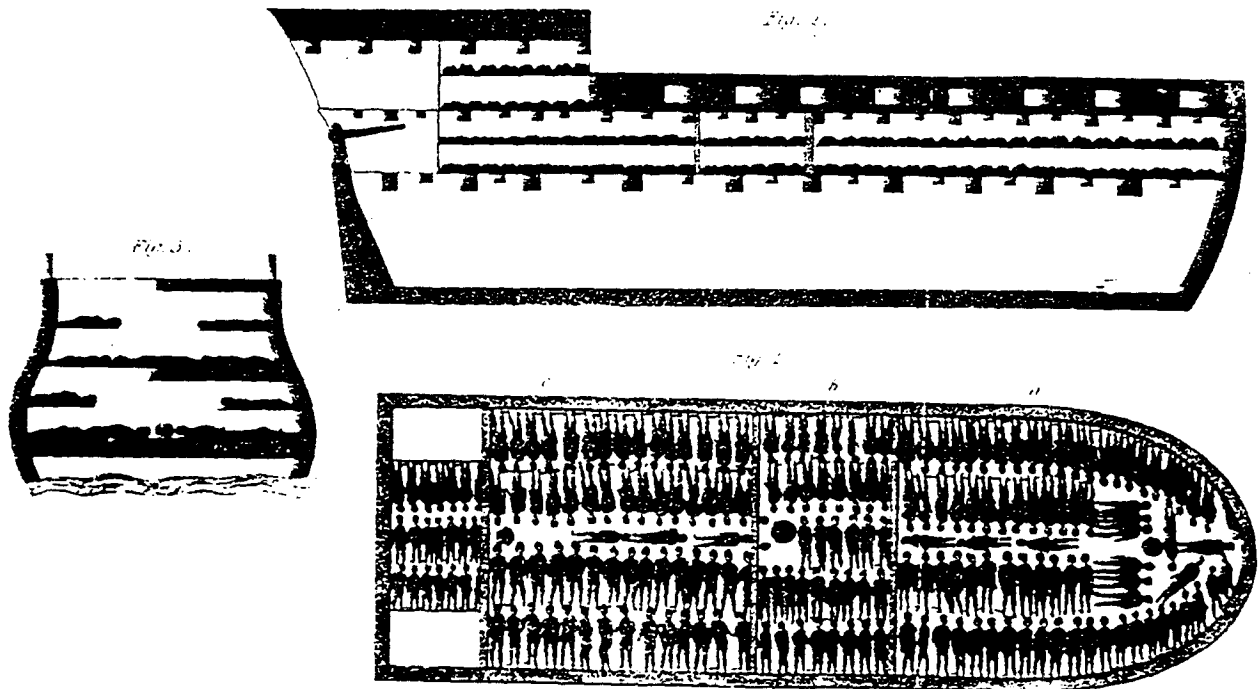


Diagram showing how slaves were stowed on ships

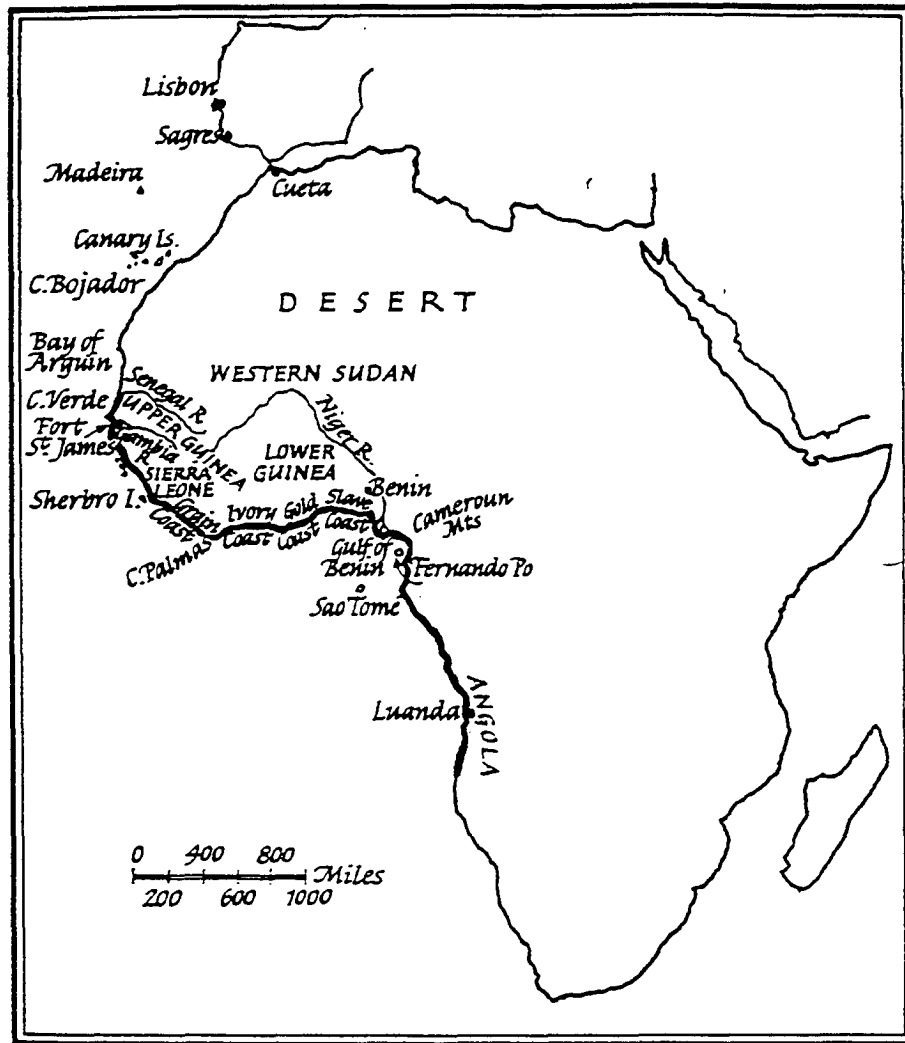
**TITLE:** DIAGRAM SHOWING HOW SLAVES WERE STOWED ON SHIPS.

**TEXT:** THE SLAVE TRADE AND SLAVERY -THE STORY OF TRANSATLANTIC SLAVERY

**Author:** Ransford. Oliver

**Publishers:** John Murray (Publishers) Ltd.  
50, Albemarle Street, London W1 X4 BD

b.



The Slavers' Coast of Africa

**TITLE:** THE SLAVERS' COAST OF AFRICA.

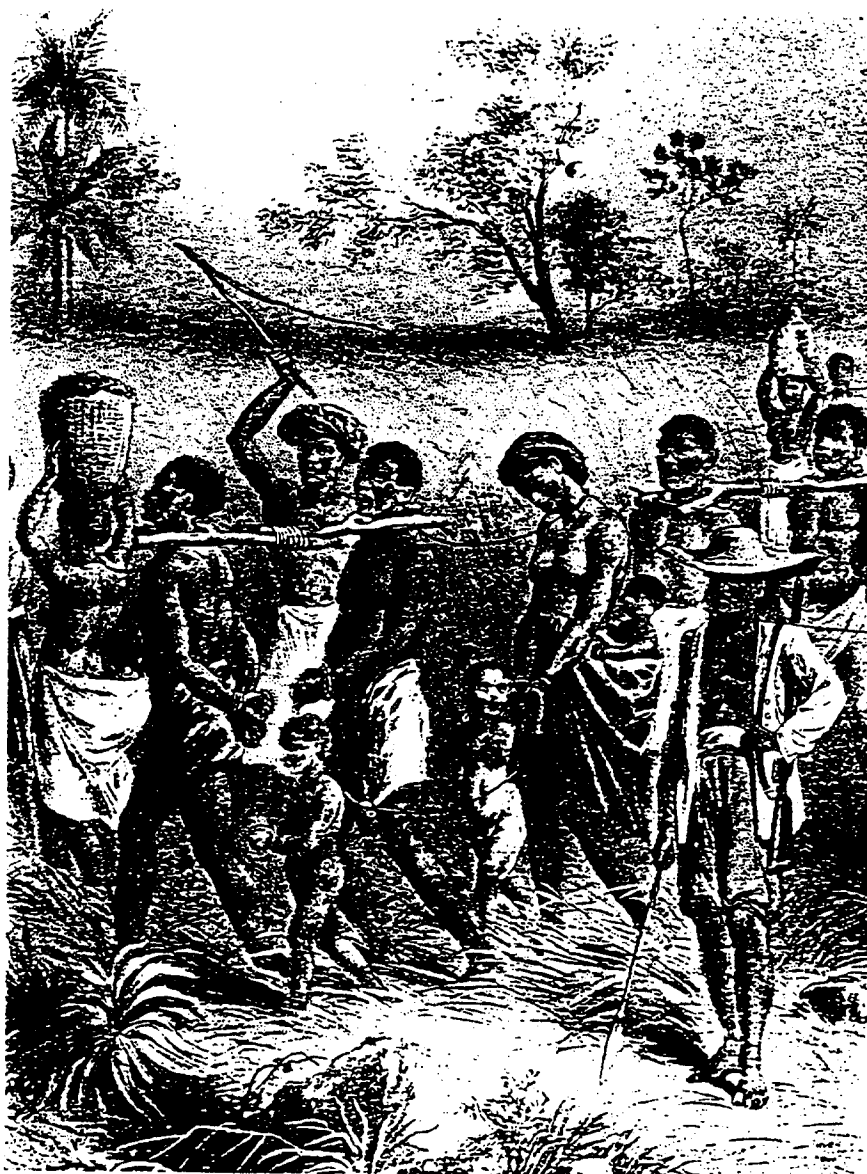
**TEXT:** THE SLAVE TRADE AND SLAVERY -THE STORY OF TRANSATLANTIC SLAVERY

**Author:** Ransford, Oliver

**Publishers:** John Murray (Publishers) Ltd.  
50, Albemarle Street, London W1 X4 BD



C.



Slaves being driven to the coast

**TITLE:** SLAVES BEING DRIVEN TO THE COAST

**TEXT:** THE SLAVE TRADE AND SLAVERY -THE STORY OF TRANSATLANTIC SLAVERY

**Author:** Ransford, Oliver

**Publishers:** John Murray (Publishers) Ltd.  
50, Albemarle Street, London W1 X4 BD

d.



Cudjo Lewis, the last survivor of slave cargo

TEXT: THE SLAVE TRADE AND SLAVERY - THE STORY OF TRANSATLANTIC SLAVERY

Author: Ransford, Oliver

Publishers: John Murray (Publishers)Ltd.  
50, Albemarle Street, London W1 X4 BD

*Source No. 4*

a.



ABOVE: A cargo of  
mainly young male slaves  
being shipped to the  
Americas

TITLE: A CARGO OF MAINLY YOUNG MALE SLAVES BEING SHIPPED TO THE AMERICAS.

TEXT: BLACK IVORY - A HISTORY OF BRITISH SLAVERY

Author: WALVIN, James

Publishers: Fontana Press, 1993

An Imprint of HarperCollins Publishers

77-85 Fulham Palace Road

Hammersmith London W6 8JB

Copyright © James Walvin 1992

b.



TITLE: OLAUDAH EQUIANO. 1745-97, EX-SLAVE AND SPOKESMAN FOR BRITISH BLACKS IN THE 1780s.

TEXT: BLACK IVORY - A HISTORY OF BRITISH SLAVERY

Author: WALVIN, James

Publishers: Fontana Press, 1993  
An Imprint of HarperCollins Publishers  
77-85 Fulham Palace Road  
Hammersmith London W6 8JB  
Copyright @ James Walvin 1992

C.



**TITLE:** THE DUCHESS OF PORTSMOUTH WITH A BLACK CHILD

**TEXT:** **BLACK IVORY – A HISTORY OF BRITISH SLAVERY**

**Author:** WALVIN, James

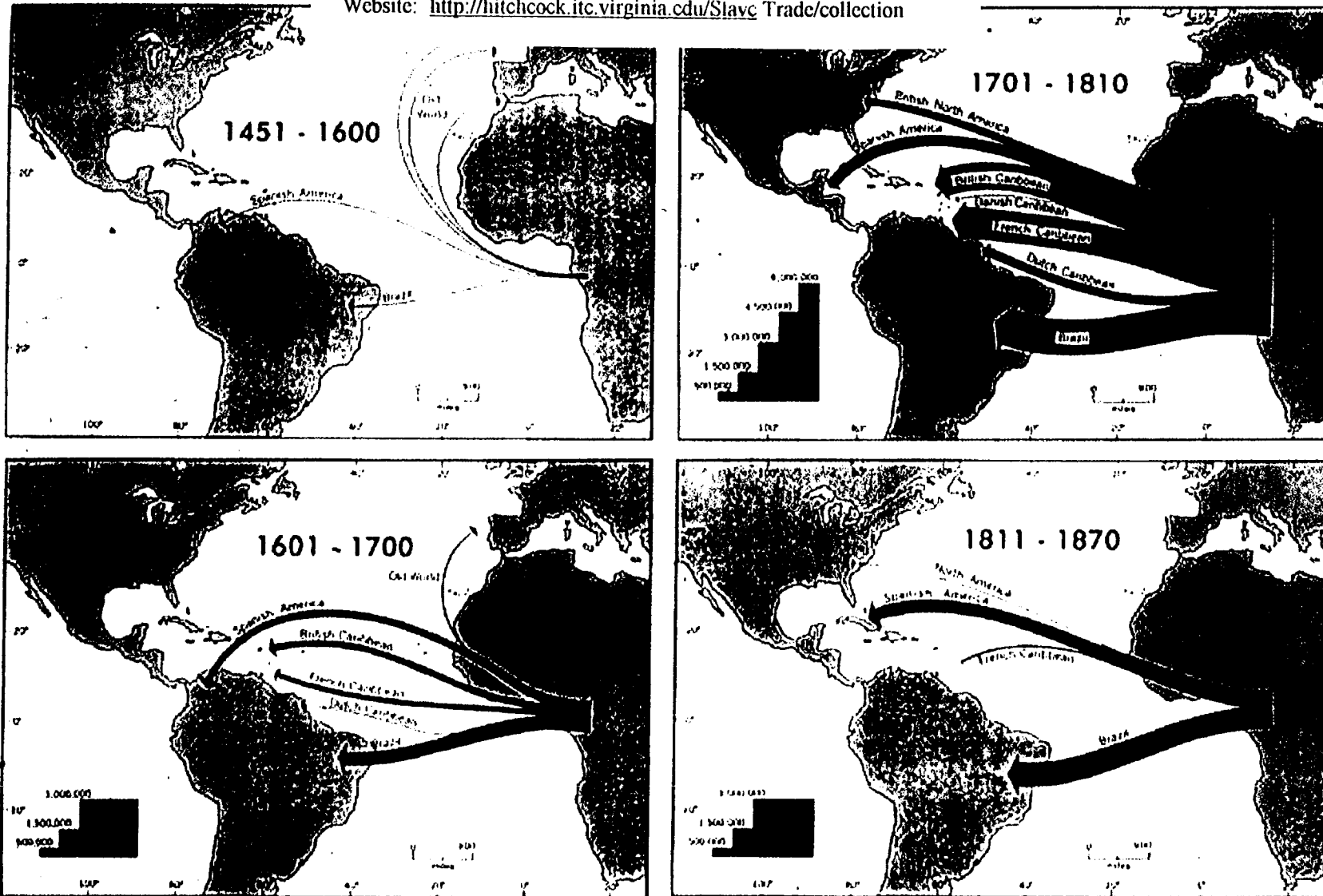
**Publishers:** Fontana Press, 1993  
An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers  
77 – 85 Fulham Palace Road  
Hammersmith London W6 8JB  
Copyright © James Walvin 1992

*Source No. 5*

TITLE: DESTINATION OF THE ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

The Internet

Website: [http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/Slave Trade/collection](http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/Slave%20Trade/collection)



DESTINATION OF THE ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE (FROM CURTIN, 1969).



map, West and Central Africa, slaving regions



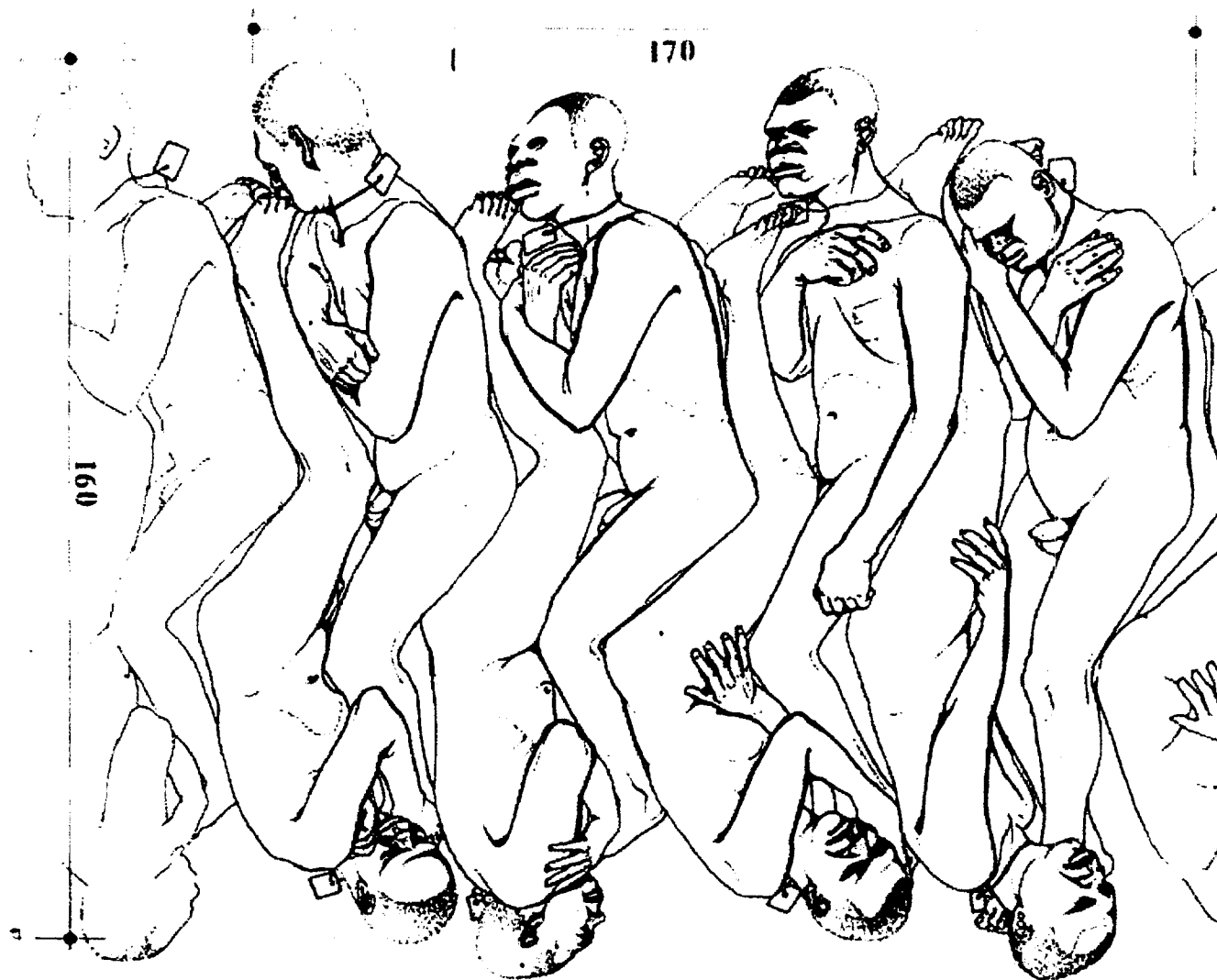
TITLE: MAP, WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA, SLAVING REGIONS.

[Return to image list](#)

The Internet

Website: <http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/SlaveTrade/collection>

body positions of slaves on the slave ship Aurore, 1784



[Return to image list](#)

TITLE: BODY POSITIONS OF SLAVES ON THE SLAVE SHIP, AURORE 1784.

The Internet

Website: [http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/Slave Trade/collection](http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/SlaveTrade/collection)



**“The Slave Deck on the Bark ‘Wildfire”, 1860**



[Return to image list](#)

TITLE: THE SLAVE DECK ON THE BARK 'WILDFIRE' 1860.

The Internet

Website: [http://hitchcock.itcvirginia.edu/Slave Trade/collection](http://hitchcock.itcvirginia.edu/Slave%20Trade/collection)

slave coffle, early 20th cent. (?)



[Return to image list](#)

TITLE: SLAVE COFFLE, EARLY 20<sup>th</sup>.CENTURY.

The Internet

Website: [http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/Slave Trade/collection](http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/Slave%20Trade/collection)

*Source No. 6*

*Object. 37. Africa will gain nothing by our abandoning the trade.*

*Answ. 37.* Suppose this true; may we not use the same argument for going to rob and murder travellers on the high-way; because, were we to stay at home, they might probably be robbed and murdered by others? Are we to pay no regard to equity and justice, because these rules may possibly be infringed by others equally in a particular case, whether we meddle or meddle not? Is it not an insult to the national character, to attempt to impose such reasoning on the publick? Is it not declaring to all Europe, that profit is the idol to which we bow?

But while the advocates of slavery are forced to acknowledge, that this trade renders the state of Africans in their own country insecure and wretched, they must allow that a change is a thing to be desired. But some one must first begin; and who more proper than that state, which has carried on the horrid traffic with peculiar circumstances of systematic cruelty, farther than any other nation. Suppose Africa not relieved; yet by our abolition of the slave trade, we shall retrieve our reputation, we shall save the lives of our seamen, we shall prevent the mixing of innocent blood with our riches, with our revenues, to be a canker to eat into our private happiness and publick prosperity. But assuredly the benefit will be extended to Africa, will improve her manners, will civilize her tribes, and gradually exalt her state among the nations.

TITLE: OBJECTION 37 - AFRICA WILL GAIN NOTHING BY OUR ABANDONING THE TRADE.

TEXT: OBJECTIONS TO THE ABOLITION OF THE SLAVE TRADE, WITH ANSWERS, 1797

Author: RAMSAY, JAMES

Object. 91. *The trade should be regulated, not abolished.*

2.

*Ans.* 91. Regulate murder as you please, it still remains murder. Suppose a regulation. It must check the mode of loading the slave-ships. But at present, with every contrivance in the shipmaster's power, it is on the whole a losing-trade; it depending on circumstances, whether a particular ship makes a saving voyage. Regulations, which shall make it more expensive, will make that loss certain, which is now contingent. Therefore, while holding out indulgence, they will occasion a greater loss, than the abrupt abolition of it. Regulations suppose the trade honest and proper, and only abused in the management of it. But we affirm the very principle to be wrong, and every attempt in it iniquitous and unjust. To propose a law for regulating smuggling, would not be so absurd. We can explain the unreasonableness of the proposition, only by supposing parliament to enact a rule by which highwaymen should be guided, in robbing and murdering in the way of their profession.

But what regulations can be enacted in Britain, that shall take effect 1200 miles inland in Africa, that shall stop the murderer's hand, or save the devoted village; that shall in the thirsty desert offer the refreshing draught to the fainting captive, or save him from the hungry tyger, when abandoned to death in the inhospitable forest? Every possible regulation will be a mere mockery of the woe we

affect to commiserate. The friend of humanity must spurn the proposition from him, which would only rivet more firmly on Africa this galling chain, while it gave the sanction of law to a commerce that humanity must deplore, that policy cannot defend.

But the regulations will be accepted with a design to evade them. In this case, the Legislature becomes answerable for the oppression and murder connected with this trade.

## C O N C L U S I O N.

IF the subject be discussed, the trade will be found so iniquitous, that it cannot be left on its present footing, or be possibly regulated. Let the abolition then take place on the broad basis of humanity, justice, and sound policy. All particular circumstances will easily accommodate themselves to the new situation of things.

TITLE: OBJECTION 91 - THE TRADE SHOULD BE REGULATED, NOT ABOLISHED.

TEXT: OBJECTIONS TO THE ABOLITION OF THE SLAVE TRADE, WITH ANSWERS, 1797

Author: RAMSAY, JAMES