

## Slavery in America

### The Triangular Trade

*Introduction: The origins of the African Slave Trade can be traced back to the Age of Exploration in the 15th Century. Europeans had become quite addicted to the luxuries of exotic spices, silks and porcelain that could only be found in Asia. Unfortunately for them, Muslim traders had a complete monopoly over the trade routes to the Far East.*

*Unsuccessful in the attempt to break that monopoly, they started to explore water routes that would enable them to bypass the Muslims. The Portuguese took the lead in that exploration and sent voyages down the west coast of Africa in hopes of finding a new route to the source of traded goods. On those voyages they found a new type of good- human beings.*

### Why did the Slave Trade Begin?

Mercantilism in Europe drove European countries to explore the world, establish an empire of colonies, and bring back raw and produced goods to export from the mother country to be used or exported. As European empires expanded to the New World, however, they lacked one major resource - a work force. In most cases the indigenous (native) peoples had proved unreliable (most of them were dying from diseases brought over from Europe), and Europeans were unsuited to the climate and suffered under tropical diseases. Africans, on the other hand, were excellent workers: they often had experience of agriculture and keeping cattle, they were used to a tropical climate, resistant to tropical diseases, and they could be "worked very hard" on plantations or in mines.

#### The Slave Trade:

- Between 10 and 28 million people taken from
  - Africa • 17 million Africans sold into slavery on the coast
  - of the Indian Ocean, the Middle East, and North Africa
  - 12 million Africans taken to the Americas • 5 million Africans taken across the Sahara and East Africa into slavery in other parts of the world
- BBC News

### Was Slavery New to Africa?

Africans had been traded as slaves for centuries - reaching Europe via the Islamic-run, trans-Saharan, trade routes. Slaves obtained from the Muslim dominated North African coast however proved to be too well educated to be trusted and had a tendency to rebellion.

Slavery was also a traditional part of African society - various states and kingdoms in Africa operated one or more of the following: chattel slavery, debt bondage, forced labor, and serfdom.

### What was the Triangular Trade?

All three stages of the Triangular Trade proved lucrative for merchants.

The first stage of the Triangular Trade involved taking manufactured goods from Europe to Africa: cloth, spirit, tobacco, beads, cowrie shells, metal goods, and guns. The guns were used to help expand empires and obtain more slaves (until they were finally used against European colonizers). These goods were exchanged for African slaves.

The second stage of the Triangular Trade, The Middle Passage, involved shipping the slaves to the Americas.

The third, and final, stage of the Triangular Trade involved the return to Europe with the produce from the slave-labor plantations: cotton, sugar, tobacco, molasses and rum.

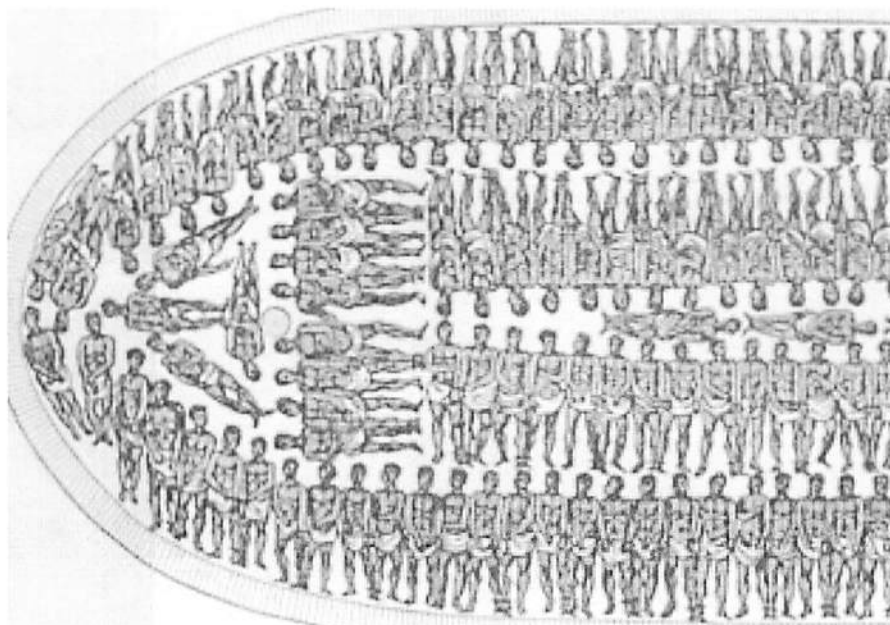
## Who Started the Triangular Trade?

For two hundred years, 1440-1640, Portugal had a monopoly on the export of slaves from Africa. It is notable that they were also the last European country to abolish the institution - although, like France, it still continued to work former slaves as contract laborers, which they called *libertos* or *engagés à temps*. It is estimated that during the 4 1/2 centuries of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, Portugal was responsible for transporting over 4.5 million Africans (roughly 40% of the total).

**Directions: Draw and Label the Triangular Trade Route and The Middle Passage.**



**Diagram of a Slave Ship Traveling on the Middle Passage**



Source 1:

**A Speech by Frederick Douglass (1850)**

*A master is a person who claims and exercises a right of property in the person of his fellow man. He does this with the force of law and the blessing of Southern religion. The law gives the master absolute power over the slave. He may work him, hire him out, sell him, and in certain circumstances, kill him ... The slave is a person without any rights ... his name is disrespectfully inserted in the master's account book, with horses, sheep and pigs. In law, the slave has no wife, no children, and no home. He can own nothing, possess nothing, acquire nothing, but what must belong to another. To eat the fruit of his own labor is considered stealing ...*

*To ensure good behavior, the slaveholder relies on the whip; to make the slave humble, he relies on the whip; to take the place of wages as motivation to work, he relies on the whip; to destroy his manhood he relies on the whip, the chain, the gag, the thumb-screw, the pillory, the knife, the pistol and the bloodhound. These are the necessary parts of the system ...*

1. Name at least **two** human rights that are denied to slaves, according to Frederick Douglass.

2. Give **two** reasons why slaveholders would beat slaves.





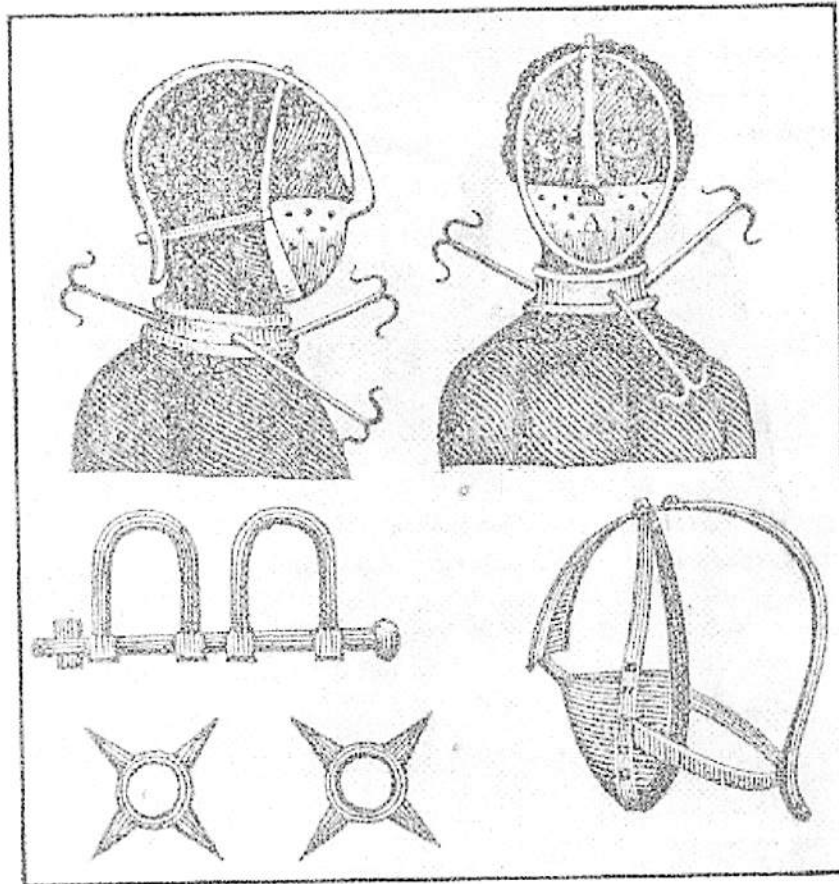
Voyage to America on a Slave Ship

*I was soon put down under the decks, where I was met with the most terrible odor. With the stench and crying together, I became so sick and low that I was not able to eat, nor had I the least desire to taste anything. But soon, to my grief, two of the white men offered me food, and upon my refusing to eat, one of them held me fast by the hands and tied my feet, while the other whipped me severely. I had never experienced anything like this before, and although I feared the water, if I were able to get over the nettings, I would have jumped over the side, but I could not ...*

*One day, when we had a smooth sea and moderate wind, two of my wearied countrymen, who were chained together, preferring death to a life of misery, somehow made it through the nettings and jumped into the sea. Immediately another quite dejected fellow, who on account of his illness was allowed to be out of irons, also followed their example. There was such a noise and confusion among the people of the ship to stop and get the boat to go after the slaves. Two of the wretches were drowned, but they got the other, and afterwards whipped him unmercifully for preferring death to slavery.*

1. Why did some people jump overboard?

### Devices of Slavery



*Courtesy Library of Congress*

The illustration above includes an iron mask and collar, which were sometimes used by slaveholders. The collar was designed to prevent field workers from running away and the mask made it impossible for them to eat the crops they were raising. All of these devices caused pain to those who were forced to wear them.

1. Name **two** reasons the slaves were forced to use the iron mask and collar.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Why were these devices unpleasant for slaves to wear?

**Source 6:**

**A Speech Defending Slavery (1835)**

The following passage is taken from a speech given by Governor George McDuffie of South Carolina. The speech was given to the state legislature in response to the growing evidence of abolitionists in that state.

*No human institution, in my opinion, is more clearly consistent with the will of God than slavery. That the African Negro is destined to occupy this condition of servitude is not less clear. It is marked on the face, stamped on the skin, and shown by the inferiority of this race. They have all the qualities that fit them to be slaves, and not one of those that would fit them to be free men. Until the "African can change his skin," it will be useless to try by any human power to make free men of those whom God has doomed to be slaves ...*

*Other consequences of freeing slaves may be shown to every abolitionist in Europe or America. It is clearly shown that the production of cotton depends, not so much on soil and climate as on the existence of slavery. In the places where it grows, not one half the quantity would be produced but for the existence of slavery; and every realistic planter will agree in the opinion that if all the slaves in these states were now freed, the American crop would be reduced the very next year from 1,200,000 to 600,000 bales.*

1. What was McDuffie's economic argument for slavery?

2. What was McDuffie's racial argument for slavery?



Source 8:

Photograph of a Slave Who Was Whipped (1863)



*Courtesy National Archives*

Beatings with a whip were a common form of punishment used on slaves. The slave shown above was unable to work for two months after receiving the beating that left these scars on his back.

1. What does this photograph suggest about how slaves were treated?

Description of a Slave Auction

*Little Randall was made to jump and run across the floor, demonstrating his activity and condition. All the time the trade was going on Eliza was crying aloud, and wringing her hands. She begged the man not to buy him, unless he also bought herself and her daughter Emily. She promised, in that case, to be the most faithful slave that ever lived. The man answered that he could not afford it, and Eliza burst into grief ... She wanted to be with her children, she said.... Over and over again she told them how she loved her boy, But it was of no avail; the man could not afford it. The bargain was agreed upon, and Randall must go alone. Then Eliza ran to him, embraced him passionately, kissed him again and again and told him to remember her--all the while her tears falling in the boy's face like rain. "Don't cry mama. I will be a good boy. Don't cry," said Randall, looking back as they passed out of the door. What became of the land, God knows.*

1. Explain why Eliza couldn't keep her family together.