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Exploring Primary Sources— Slavery in America

This sample includes the following:

Teacher's Guide Cover (1 page)
Teacher's Guide Table of Contents (1 page)
How to Use This Resource (5 pages)
Card Lesson Plan (4 pages)
Card (2 pages)
Document Lesson Plan (12 pages)
Document (1 page)

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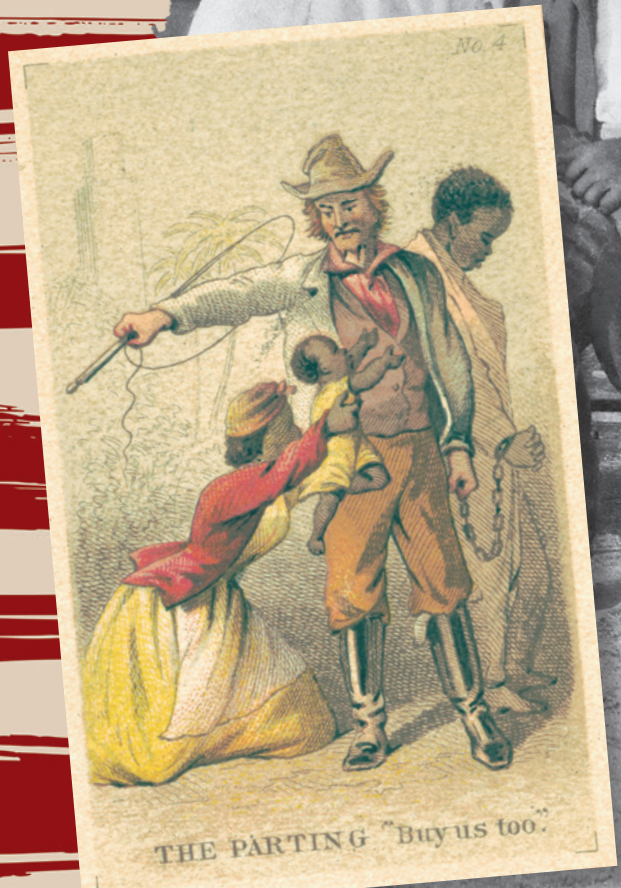
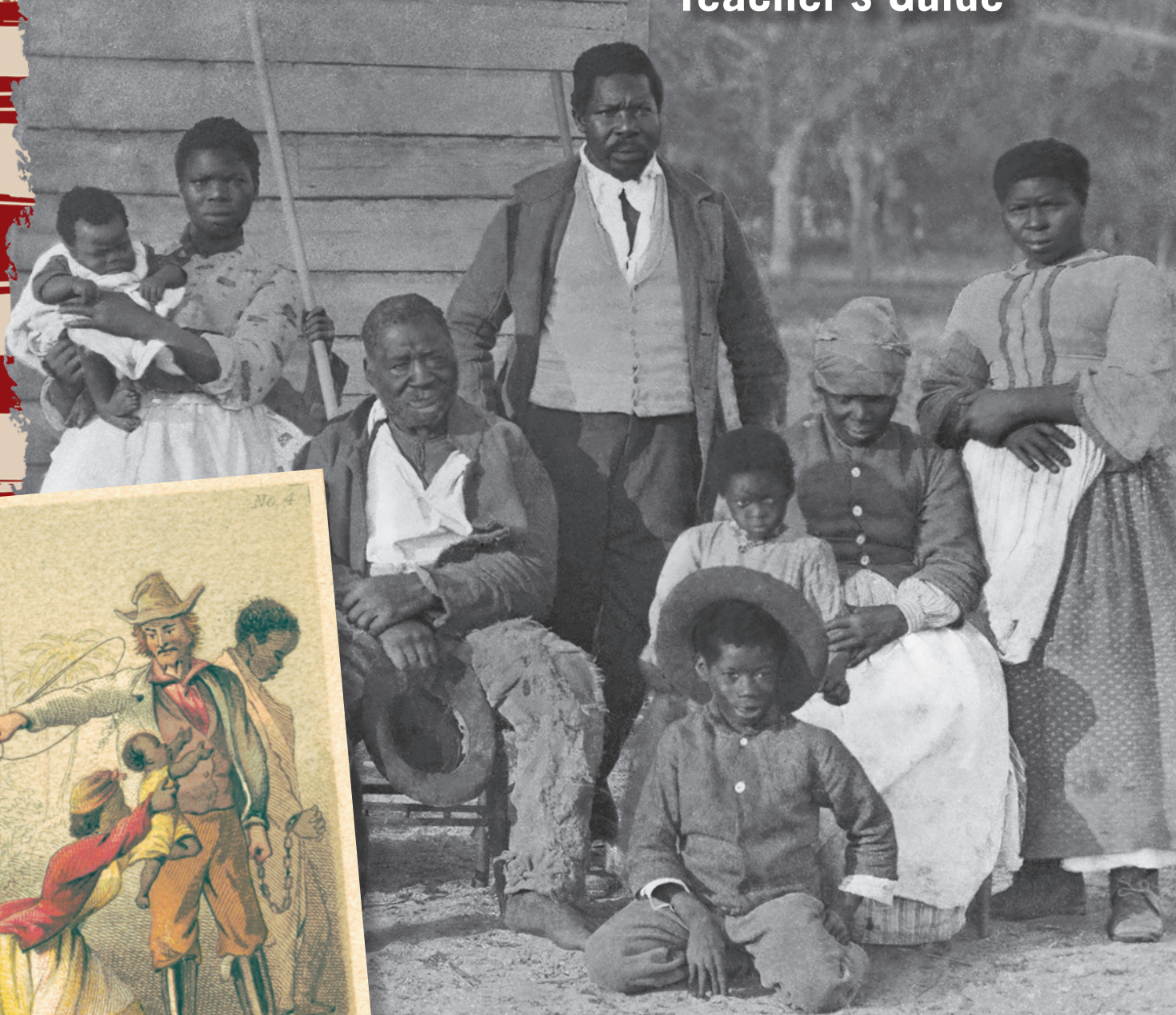
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EXPLORING
PRIMARY
SOURCES

Slavery in America

Teacher's Guide



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How to Use This Resource

Lesson Plans

The learning outcomes are the focus throughout each lesson.

For digital-only reproducibles, digital filenames are provided.

Page references and digital filenames make lesson preparation easy.

The guiding questions help support development of inquiry by focusing on the primary source being studied.

Essential questions provide inquiry anchors for students as they investigate enduring understandings.

The *Amistad*

Revolts and Uprisings

Learning Outcomes

- Students will be able to describe what happened during the Amistad revolt.
- Students will research other slave rebellions in early America.

Materials

- copies of The Amistad primary source card (amistad.pdf)
- copies of Revolt on the Amistad (page 41; bgamistad1.pdf)
- copies of the Kile's Letter document-based assessment (page 42; kileletter.pdf)

Essential Question

- How can standing up for your rights affect greater change?

Guiding Questions

- Why should the men on the Amistad be free?
- If you could give this image a title, what would it be?
- Why is it important to know about this revolt?
- How do you think the artist felt about slavery? Why?

Introducing the Primary Source

- Lead a brief discussion about the meaning of the word revolt. Ask students to draw pictures of what they think of when they hear the word.
- Show the image on the primary source card. Give students a few minutes to look closely. What do they notice?
- Introduce the essential question, and use the provided guiding questions to discuss the image. Encourage students to ask their own questions to facilitate further inquiry.

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Students collaborate to interact with the primary source through inquiry, textual analysis, and engaging activities.

These assessments provide opportunities for students to independently practice primary source analysis.

Key content vocabulary from the historical background information is bolded in student texts and defined here for reference.

The *Amistad*

Revolts and Uprisings (cont.)

Analyzing the Primary Source

- Have small groups of students read the background information, *Revolt on the Amistad* (A copy of this text at a lower reading level is provided in the Digital Resources—bgamistad2.pdf.) Review the key words with students as necessary. As students read, they should annotate the text by writing exclamation points next to information they find shocking or interesting.
- Provide time for students to complete at least two of the activities from the back of the primary source card.
- Have students research another slave revolt or rebellion from the United States. Then, have them compare and contrast the Amistad revolt and the rebellion they researched in a short essay. Have students share their essays in small groups.
- To learn more about the Amistad, see page 120 for a technology-based extension activity.

Document-Based Assessment

- Distribute copies of *Kile's Letter*.
- Have students think about what they've learned throughout this lesson, carefully analyze the primary source, and respond thoughtfully to the questions.

Key Words

These key content words are included in both levels of the background information.

- decreed**—someone in authority demanded or ordered something else
- distress**—great suffering of body or mind
- intercepted**—taken or seized before arrival
- revolt**—to rise up in protest against something else

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How to Use This Resource *(cont.)*

Background Information

The historical background information provides students with key information about both the time period and the primary source. It is provided at two different reading levels to support differentiation. When preparing for a lesson, decide which level best meets the needs of your students. Use one level for all students, or differentiate the reading levels by student need.

- Encourage students to write strong questions they have as they read these texts. The *Creating Strong Questions* lesson on pages 28–30 will prepare students for this important aspect of the inquiry arc.
- Suggestions for annotations students could make while reading are provided in each lesson plan.

Living Conditions in the North and South

Enslaved African Americans gained freedom in different ways. It was rare, but some enslavers allowed enslaved people to buy their freedom. Others gave freedom without conditions. Some enslaved people ran away to live in the North where they could be free. However, many people considered runaways to be **fugitives**. Free African Americans lived in both the North and the South.

White people had more opportunities than free African Americans. They also had a better quality of life. In the North, African Americans worked in construction and metalworking. They also worked as laborers and house servants. **Racism** prevented African Americans from having better jobs. At that time, many white people thought that African Americans were **inferior** to them. Several states and many towns even passed laws preventing free African Americans from moving there.

Living conditions in the South were harsh. They were often worse than in the North. In many areas, white people were paid more money than free African Americans. It did not matter that some African Americans were skilled laborers. Many African Americans were barred from work as skilled laborers once freed. White people competed for their jobs and were usually paid more.

Southern states passed unfair laws. These laws forced African Americans to be separated from white people. This is called **segregation**. In the South, it was difficult for free African Americans to form churches and schools. White people did not want free African Americans to become integrated. Before the Civil War, some Southern cities required free African Americans to wear tags. A tag was decorated with a liberty crown to show that they were not slaves. In a similar manner, some towns in northern New England forced African Americans to have passes to enter them. Even in the North, white people did not want African Americans to become integrated.

Southern white people thought free African Americans were **investigators** of unrest or unhappiness among enslaved people. To them, free African Americans represented the freedom that their own enslaved people wanted. Southern white people wanted to keep slavery. They thought that free African Americans put that in danger.

In 1816, the American Colonization Society was formed. This group was worried about the growing number of free African Americans. Most white people at that time believed that free African Americans should not be integrated. So, this group sent former enslaved people to Africa. However, many African Americans were actually born in America. America was their home. They did not want to go to Africa. The Society started the first African American colony in Liberia. About 10,000 African Americans moved there to join others. Some of these people had been rescued from slave ships.

Within the Teacher's Guide, the texts are leveled at a seventh- to eighth-grade reading level and are denoted by a triangle in the top right of each page.

Living Conditions in the North and South

Enslaved African Americans gained freedom in different ways. Some enslavers sold them their freedom. This was very rare. Some gave them freedom live in the North. They could be free in the North. People called runaways **fugitives**. Free African Americans lived both in the North and in the South.

White people had more opportunities than free African Americans. They also had a better quality of life. In the North, African Americans worked in metalworking. Some of them found jobs as laborers and house servants. **Racism** stopped African Americans from having better jobs. Many white people thought African Americans were **inferior** to them. Many states passed laws. Free African Americans could not move to those states.

Living conditions in the South were harsh. They were often worse than in the North. In many areas, white people were paid more money than African Americans. It did not matter that some African Americans were skilled as their work. Many African Americans were not allowed to work as skilled laborers once freed. White people now had to compete for their jobs.

Southern states passed unfair laws. These laws forced African Americans to be separated from white people. This is called **segregation**. In the South, it was difficult for free African Americans to form churches and schools. White people did not want free African Americans to become integrated. Before the Civil War, some southern cities required free African Americans to wear tags. The tags were decorated with a liberty crown. These tags showed that they were not slaves. In a similar manner, some towns in northern New England forced African Americans to have passes to enter them. Even in the North, white people did not want African Americans to become integrated.

Southern white people thought free African Americans were **investigators** of unhappiness among enslaved people. To them, free African Americans represented the freedom that their own enslaved people wanted. Southern white people wanted to keep slavery. They thought that free African Americans put that in danger.

In 1816, the American Colonization Society was formed. The society was worried about the growing number of free African Americans in America. Most Americans should not be integrated into society. So, the society sent former free African Americans to Africa. But many African Americans were born in their home. They did not want to go to Africa. The society started the first African American colony in Liberia, Africa. About 10,000 African Americans joined other free African Americans in Africa. Some of these people had been rescued from slave ships.

Texts leveled at a fifth- to sixth-grade reading level are denoted by a square and are only provided in the Digital Resources.

Glossary terms are bolded to highlight their importance to the content. All glossary words are included in both levels of the information.

A Student Glossary is provided in the digital resources. This document includes the vocabulary words and definitions from all 16 lessons.

How to Use This Resource *(cont.)*

Student Activity Pages

Life as an Enslaved Person

About the Illustrations
These illustrated cards depict the life of an enslaved person. They are from a set of 1863 antislavery prints created by James Fuller Queen. He based them off drawings by Henry Louis Stephens. Enslaved men, women, and children worked long hours, had little food and clothing, and lived in primitive homes. Most enslaved people in the South worked on plantations. Those who lived in cities had more opportunities to develop trade skills, such as masonry. At times, their enslavers hired them out, and they had a chance to earn small amounts of money. The enslavers took most of the money, but some enslaved people were able to keep small amounts.

Analyzing History

- How are the four images similar to one another?
- How are the four images different from one another?
- Why would the artist choose to draw these images?
- How does the last card show how enslavers used violence to control the people they enslaved?

Historical Writing

Fiction
Use the four images to describe the life of an enslaved person. Include information about how enslaved people had to be strong to survive.

Nonfiction
Imagine you were an abolitionist during this time. These cards have been offered for you to use to further your cause against slavery. How would you use them?

Writing Challenge
About 2,300 slave narratives were collected during the Great Depression as part of the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Find narrative #242 about Luke Towns, WPA, and Florida. Read Mr. Towns's account of his time as an enslaved man. Then, write a response poem based on that narrative.

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Background information provides a concise description of the primary source image students will study.

Activities for students increase in complexity, providing scaffolded opportunities for student engagement.

Fiction and nonfiction writing prompts promote deeper connections to the primary source.

An inquiry-driven writing task challenges students to take their learning to the next level.

Key information about the primary source reproduction prepares students for the activity.

Engaging activities encourage students to use higher-order thinking skills as they analyze the primary source.

Extension challenges are provided to engage students in more complex tasks.

Name _____ Date _____

Antislavery Cartoon

About the Cartoon
This pro-slavery cartoon was published in 1850. It challenged the Northern abolitionists' views of slavery. This cartoon compares American slaves with workers in England. The workers in England are very similar to factory workers in the North. It portrays the slaves in England as happy because they are joyfully dancing and playing. The Northerners see this and wonder why they have caused so many problems for enslavers in the South. On the other hand, workers in factories are sad and depressed. They toil long and hard and find it difficult to make ends meet.

Directions: You have studied the pro-slavery cartoon and know the theories behind it. Now it is your turn to debunk the idea that slavery was a good system. Draw a two-frame cartoon to show how slavery was not a good system.

Challenge
Was it rare to see pro-slavery cartoons? See if you can find other cartoons and compare them to this one. How are they similar and different?

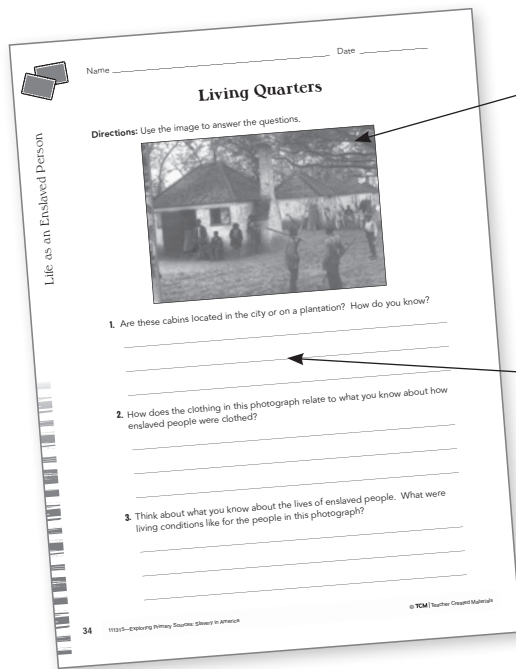
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- **Hint:** Find and use the photograph button on your copier when copying student reproducibles, including document-based assessments. This will produce clearer images that will be easier to analyze.

How to Use This Resource *(cont.)*

Document-Based Assessments

A document-based assessment (DBA) connected to the content of each lesson gives students an opportunity to practice primary source analysis. These DBAs practice key skills needed for many social studies assessments in middle school and high school.



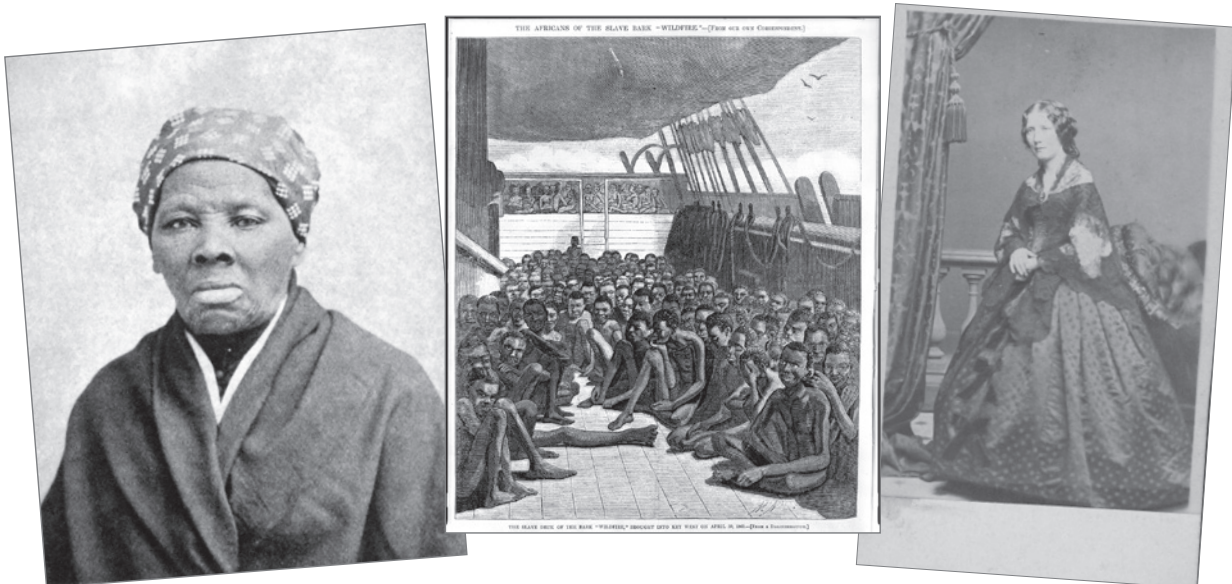
Each DBA includes a visual or textual primary source.

Students use general knowledge of the time period, what they learned in the lesson, and details in the primary source to respond to the constructed-response questions.

Digital Resources

Projecting primary sources while students are analyzing them allows for whole-class discussions.

At times, projecting full-color versions of a primary source may be more beneficial than copying them on black-and-white copiers.



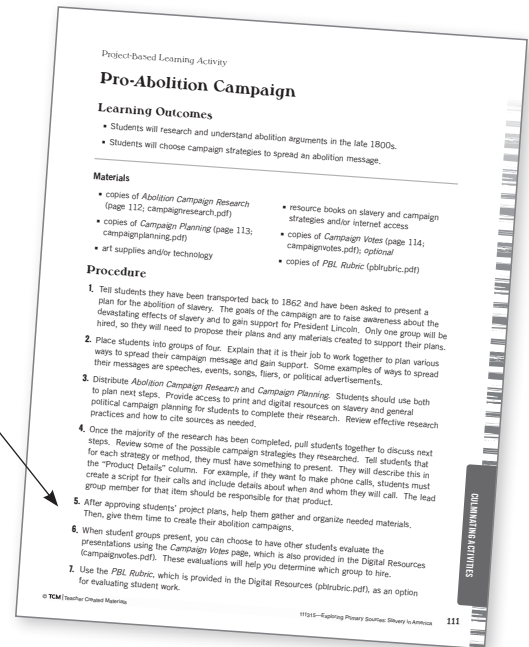
How to Use This Resource *(cont.)*

Culminating Activities

Project-Based Learning Activity

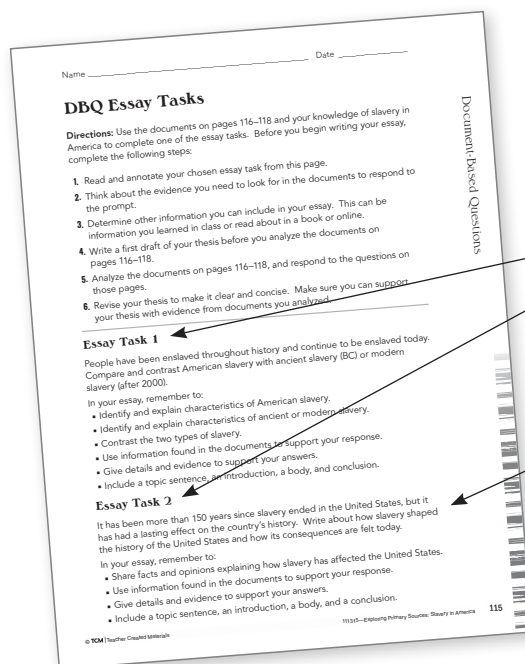
Engaging project-based learning (PBL) activities provide opportunities for students to work collaboratively and share what they've learned about the content.

Student presentations of PBL work are excellent for inviting guests to visit and see what students are doing.



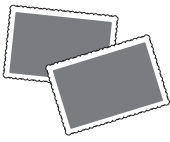
Document-Based Questions

Document-based questions (DBQs) require students to analyze multiple DBAs and then respond to essay tasks in cohesive, well-supported essays.



Two essay tasks allow students to choose which DBQ they'd like to answer.

Each has a specific question and indicators to guide student responses.



Life as a Free African American

Learning Outcomes

- Students will compare life in the North and the South before the Civil War.
- Students will be able to describe some of the effects of racism on African Americans in the North and South before the Civil War.



Materials

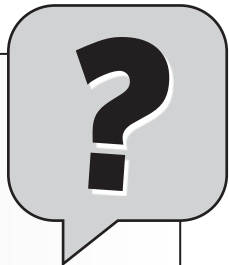
- copies of *Caesar, a Free African American* primary source card (caesar.pdf)
- copies of *Living Conditions in the North and South* (page 45; bgcaesar1.pdf)
- copies of the *Susie Bruce* document-based assessment (page 46; susiebruce.pdf)

Essential Question

- How do belief systems affect different regions?

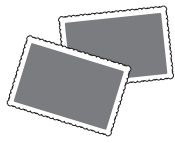
Guiding Questions

- Who do you think the man in this photograph is?
- What can you learn or infer about this man from his physical appearance?
- How does this photograph of Caesar match how you pictured a free African American man living in the North?
- How did racism affect the lives of free and enslaved African Americans in the North?



Introducing the Primary Source

1. Ask students to describe what they already know about America before the Civil War. Guide students to think about the differences between the North and the South.
2. Share the photograph of Caesar on the primary source card. Give students a few minutes to make observations about him.
3. Introduce the essential question, and use the provided guiding questions to discuss the photograph. Encourage students to ask their own questions to facilitate further inquiry.



Caesar, a Free African American

Life as a Free African American *(cont.)*

Analyzing the Primary Source

1. Have small groups of students read the background information, *Living Conditions in the North and South*. (A copy of this text at a lower reading level is provided in the Digital Resources—bgcaesar2.pdf.) Review the key words with students as necessary. As students read, they should take notes on separate sheets of paper, specifically the similarities and differences between living in the North and living in the South.
2. Provide time for students to complete at least two of the activities from the back of the photograph card.
3. Place students into pairs. Have them create lists of effects racism had on African Americans before the Civil War (e.g., few people would give free African Americans good jobs, cities required free African Americans to wear tags).
4. You may choose to discuss with students and make connections to some of the effects of racism today.

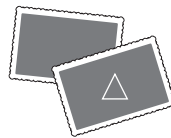
Document-Based Assessment

- Distribute copies of *Susie Bruce*. A digital copy of the primary source is provided in the Digital Resources (susiebruce.jpg).
- Have students think about what they've learned throughout this lesson, carefully analyze the primary source, and respond thoughtfully to the questions.

Key Words

These key content words are included in both levels of the background information.

- **fugitives**—people who run away to try to escape
- **inferior**—of lesser importance
- **instigators**—people who incite or provoke
- **racism**—discrimination, or treating people badly, because of their race



Living Conditions in the North and South

Enslaved African Americans gained freedom in different ways. It was rare, but some enslavers allowed enslaved people to buy their freedom. Others gave freedom without conditions. Some enslaved people ran away to the North where they could be free. However, many people thought of runaways as **fugitives**. Free African Americans lived in both the North and the South.

White people had more opportunities than free African Americans. They also had a better quality of life. In the North, African Americans worked in construction and metalworking. They also worked as laborers and house servants. **Racism** prevented African Americans from having better jobs. At that time, many white people thought African Americans were **inferior** to them. Several states and many towns even passed laws. They stopped free African Americans from moving there.

Living conditions in the South were harsh for enslaved people. They were often worse than in the North. In many areas, white people were paid more money than free African Americans. It did not matter that some African Americans were skilled laborers. People in society did not want free African Americans to work as skilled laborers. White people competed for their jobs and were usually paid more.

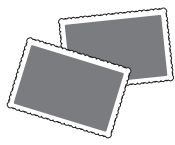
Southern states passed unfair laws. These laws forced African Americans to be separated from white people. This is called *segregation*. In the South, it was difficult for free African Americans to form churches and schools. White people did not want free African

Americans to become integrated. Before the Civil War, some Southern cities required free African Americans to wear tags. Tags were decorated with liberty crowns to show that they were not slaves. In a similar manner, some towns in northern New England forced African Americans to have passes to enter them. Even in the North, some white people did not want African Americans to become integrated.

Many Southern white people did not like free African Americans. They thought they were **instigators** of unrest or unhappiness among enslaved people. To them, free African Americans represented the freedom that their own enslaved people wanted. Numerous Southern white people wanted to keep slavery. They thought that free African Americans put that in danger.

In 1816, the American Colonization Society was formed. This group was worried about the growing number of free African Americans. Most white people at that time believed that free African Americans should not be integrated. So, this group sent former enslaved people to Africa. But, many African Americans were born in America. It was their home. They did not want to go to Africa. The Society started the first African American colony in Liberia. About 10,000 African Americans moved there. Some of them had been rescued from slave ships.





Name _____ Date _____

Susie Bruce

Directions: Susie Bruce was a young woman who learned at a school for free African American students. Use the image to answer the questions.

Caesar, a Free African American

1. What do you notice about Bruce?



2. What can you infer about Bruce from the photograph?

3. Before and during the Civil War, many children did not receive educations. How do you think Bruce's education helped her?



Caesar, a Free African American

About the Photograph

This photograph was taken around 1851. The man in the photograph is named Caesar. He is thought to be the last man freed in New York. By the early 1800s, legal slavery was almost gone in many northern states. In 1817, New York passed a law freeing all enslaved people. But the law did not take effect immediately. By 1820, approximately 95 percent of all African American people were free in New York. By 1848, almost all African American people were free.

Analyzing History



- If Caesar were to look for a job, what kinds of jobs could he expect to get?
- Why did free African Americans have trouble finding work in the North?
- How did the restrictions placed on free African Americans in the North affect their everyday lives?
- Think about the cards you saw in the *Life as an Enslaved Person* lesson. Compare and contrast the clothing worn by Caesar to the clothing worn by the enslaved people in the illustrated cards.

Historical Writing



Fiction

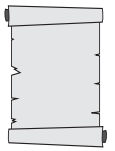
Write a story about Caesar's life as a free African American. Be sure to include how he ended up getting this picture taken.

Nonfiction

Imagine that you have been selected to give a speech arguing for equal rights in the years before the Civil War. Create an outline of your speech, and tell where and to whom you would present it.

Writing Challenge

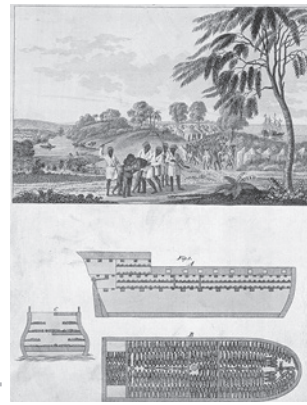
Liberia is a republic in Africa. Liberia was established for free African Americans from America. Many of the indigenous people were displaced by the African American people settling in Liberia. Describe why Liberia was set up in Africa for free African Americans.



The Middle Passage

Learning Outcomes

- Students will be able to identify the cruel conditions of the Middle Passage.
- Students will create questions based on selected scenarios.



Materials

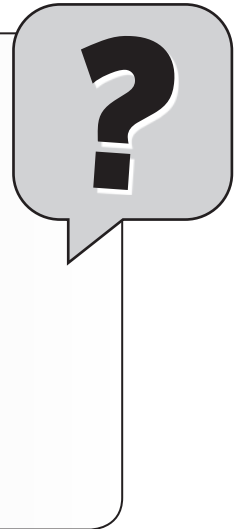
- *African Slave Trade Broadside* reproduction (broadside1.pdf)
- copies of *Ship Conditions* (page 71; bgshipconditions1.pdf)
- copies of *Slave Ship* (page 72; slaveship.pdf)
- copies of *Middle Passage* (page 73; passage.pdf)
- copies of *The Triangular Trade* document-based assessment (page 74; triangular.pdf)
- copies of *Olaudah Equiano's Narrative Excerpt* (olaudah.pdf); *Conditions on an English Slaver* (slaver.pdf); and *John Barbot Account* (barbot.pdf)

Essential Question

- What does the ability to survive inhumane conditions reveal about the human spirit?

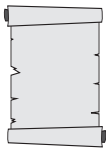
Guiding Questions

- What is happening in the top image?
- What do the three pictures at the bottom of the page show?
- Why might the people be packed so tightly into these ships?
- How are the top and bottom pictures connected to each other?



Introducing the Primary Source

1. Write the words *Middle Passage* on the board. Ask students what they think the words mean. Write students' responses around the words.
2. Share the *African Slave Trade Broadside* reproduction, and ask students to study it carefully. Then, project the digital image, and distribute copies of *Slave Ship* for students to analyze more closely. Give students a few minutes to make lists of at least five observations or questions they have about the image.
3. Introduce the essential question, and use the guiding questions to discuss the Middle Passage. Encourage students to ask their own questions to facilitate further inquiry.



The Middle Passage *(cont.)*

Analyzing the Primary Source

1. Have small groups of students read the background information, *Ship Conditions*. (A copy of this text at a lower reading level is provided in the Digital Resources—[bgshipconditions2.pdf](#).) Review the key words with students as necessary. As students read, they should annotate the text by underlining phrases related to the Middle Passage.
2. Distribute copies of *Olaudah Equiano's Narrative Excerpt, Conditions on an English Slaver*, and *John Barbot Account*, which are provided in the Digital Resources. Have small groups work together to read and annotate the different accounts of those who traveled the Middle Passage.
3. Distribute copies of *Middle Passage* to small groups. Tell students they will use what they have learned to create questions and answers about the slave trade.
4. Once students have completed their lists, have them choose one question for further research.
5. Allow time for students to complete their research. Then, have them share their learning with the class.

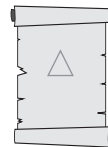
Document-Based Assessment

- Distribute copies of *The Triangular Trade*. A digital copy of the primary source is provided in the Digital Resources ([triangular.jpg](#)).
- Have students think about what they've learned throughout this lesson, carefully analyze the primary source, and respond thoughtfully to the questions.

Key Words

These key content words are included in both levels of the background information.

- **epidemics**—widespread illnesses that affect entire areas or communities
- **sanitation**—keeping free from filth, infection, or dangers to health
- **uprisings**—revolts against a ruler or authority figure
- **ventilation**—a system that provides fresh air to a room or area



Ship Conditions

Enslavers first brought enslaved people to the Americas hundreds of years ago. They took captives to areas such as Hispaniola, Cuba, and Puerto Rico. There, captives worked on sugar plantations and in gold mines. Soon, they spread slavery to new colonies in South America and North America.

Enslavers captured and traded enslaved people as part of a triangular trade among continents. First, goods were shipped from Europe to Africa. Next, traders shipped the captured men, women, and children from Africa to North and South America. Last, traders brought goods from America to Europe. These included sugar cane and coffee made by slave labor.

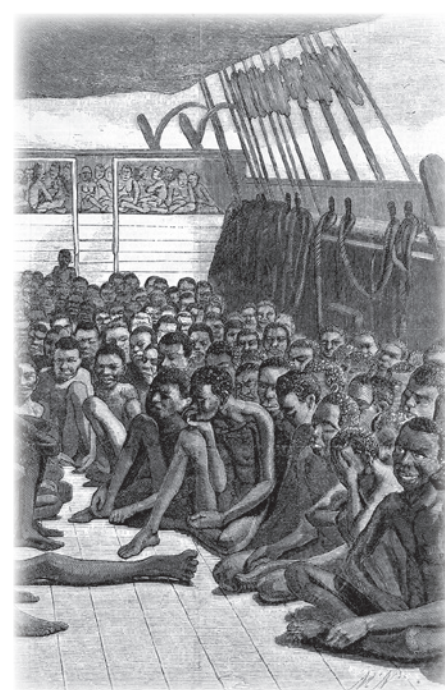
Enslavers took people from their villages in Africa. They forced Africans to spend months on the ships. They cruised along the West African coast, picking up more captives. Sometimes, there were **uprisings**. Enslaved people did not want to be kidnapped and taken away from their homeland. Some men and women jumped overboard into the shark-infested waters. They did not want to be forcibly taken from their homes. When the enslavers filled the ships, they set off to the New World. This voyage was called the *Middle Passage*. The Middle Passage was grueling and inhumane. It was 5,000 miles (8,000 km) long and very dangerous. It could take between five weeks and three months.

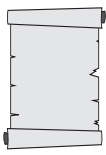
The living conditions aboard the ships were horrendous. Captains forced the captives to live below the decks of the ships. Crews wanted to transport as many people as possible. To do this,

crews piled them on top of each other. The crews stacked wooden platforms for them to lie in. The captives did not have enough space to even turn over. Below deck, there was no **ventilation** or **sanitation**. Diseases spread quickly and killed many Africans. Crew members sometimes threw sick Africans overboard to prevent **epidemics**. The ships had dirty, dark, and horrific conditions.

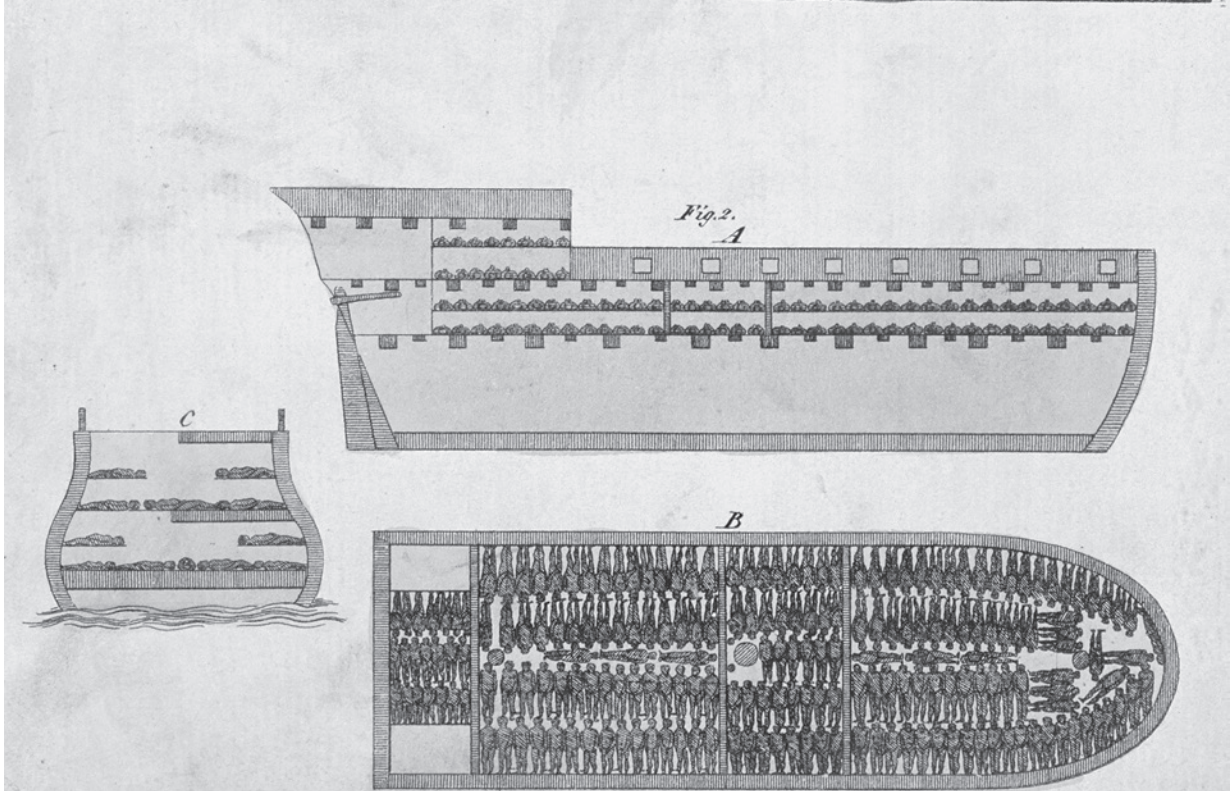
Ship captains allowed their crews to bring the captives up on deck during good weather. The crews fed them two meals a day and gave them small amounts of water to drink. Men on the crew forced the captured men, women, and children to exercise by jumping up and down. This forced them to stay in good physical condition. Enslavers made more money by selling healthy enslaved people. Crews beat the captives if they refused to jump. During bad weather, crews often kept them in the lower decks and did not give them enough food.

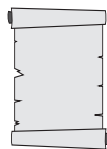
Because of these awful conditions, many captives taken from Africa never made it to the New World. However, historians cannot accurately estimate how many people died during the Middle Passage. Many records were incomplete or missing.





Slave Ship





Name _____ Date _____

Middle Passage

About the Image

The triangular slave trade consisted of three stages. The Middle Passage was the hardest part of the terrible trading system. The journey killed many Africans along the way due to suffocation, disease, and drowning. This image shows a camp for enslaved people on the top half. On the bottom are plans for a slave ship. This image was created in 1843. The original image is housed in a museum in France.

Directions: You are learning about the Middle Passage. Write a list of questions you have about the triangular slave trade. Where can you find the answers? After you have created your list of questions, share those questions with a small group. Choose one question to research further.

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- _____

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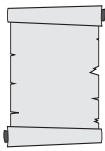
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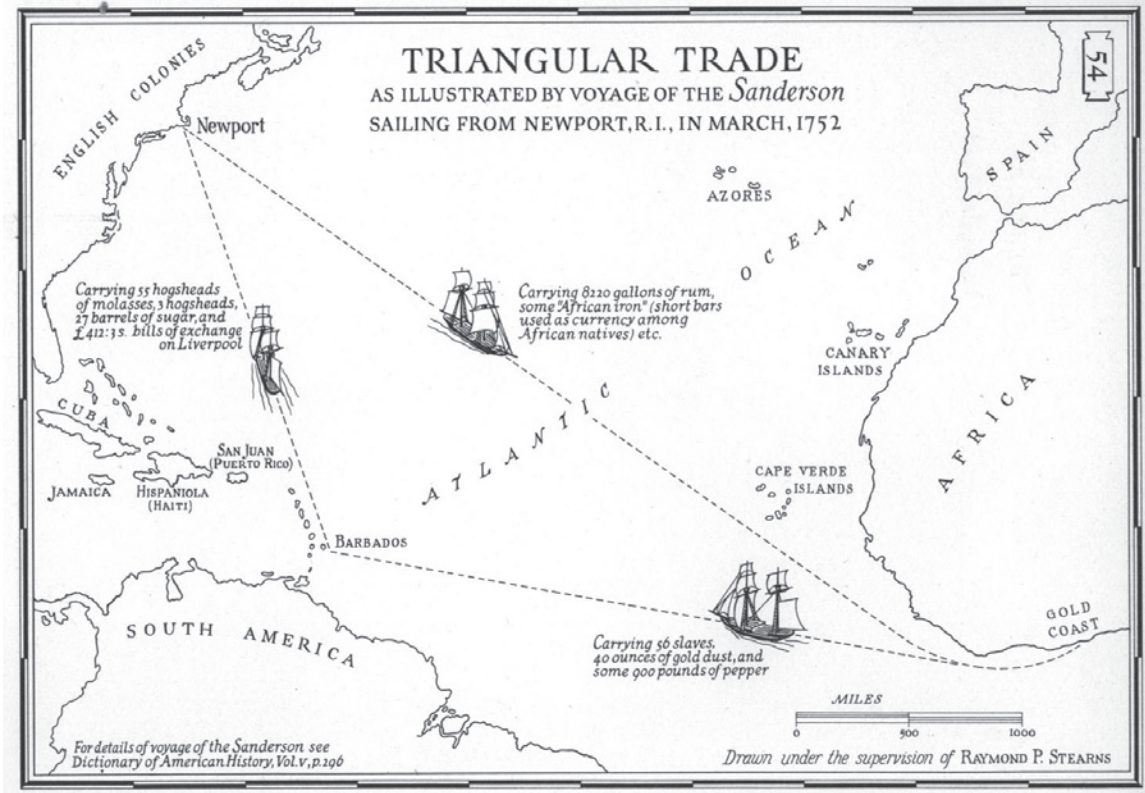
Challenge

A man named John Newton traveled as a worker on slave ships. At one point, his life changed, and he wrote something famous. Find out about his life.



The Triangular Trade

Directions: Use the image to answer the questions.

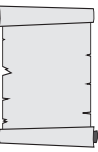


African Slave Trade Broadside

1. Why was this called a "triangular" slave trade?

2. When traders enslaved Africans and put them onto ships, where did they go first?

3. What economic forces kept the triangular slave trade in operation?



Olaudah Equiano's Narrative Excerpt

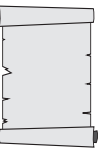
I have already acquainted the reader with the time and place of my birth. My father, besides many slaves, had a numerous family, of which seven lived to grow up, including myself and sister, who was the only daughter. As I was the youngest of the sons, I became, of course, the greatest favorite with my mother, and was always with her; and she used to take particular pains to form my mind. I was trained up from my earliest years in the art of war: my daily exercise was shooting and throwing javelins, and my mother adorned me with emblems, after the manner of our greatest warriors. In this way I grew up till I had turned the age of eleven, when an end was put to my happiness in the following manner: Generally, when the grown people in the neighborhood were gone far in the fields to labor, the children assembled together in some of the neighboring premises to play; and commonly some of us used to get up a tree to look out for any assailant, or kidnapper, that might come upon us—for they sometimes took those opportunities of our parents' absence, to attack and carry off as many as they could seize. One day as I was watching at the top of a tree in our yard, I saw one of those people come into the yard of our next neighbor but one, to kidnap, there being many stout young people in it. Immediately on this I gave the alarm of the rogue, and he was surrounded by the stoutest of them, who entangled him with cords, so that he could not escape, till some of the grown people came and secured him. But, alas! Ere long it was my fate to be thus attacked, and to be carried off, when none of the grown people were nigh.

One day, when all our people were gone out to their works as usual, and only I and my dear sister were left to mind the house, two men and a woman got over our walls, and in a moment seized us both, and, without giving us time to cry out, or make resistance, they stopped our mouths, and ran off with us into the nearest wood. Here they tied our hands, and continued to carry us as far as they could, till night came on, when we reached a small house, where the robbers halted for refreshment, and spent the night. We were then unbound, but were unable to take any food; and, being quite overpowered by fatigue and grief, our only relief was some sleep, which allayed our misfortune for a short time. The next morning we left the house, and continued traveling all the day. For a long time we had kept the woods, but at last we came into a road which I believed I knew. I had now some hopes of being delivered; for we had advanced but a little way before I discovered some people at a distance, on which I began to cry out for their assistance; but my cries had no other effect than to make them tie me faster and stop my mouth, and then they put me into a large sack. They also stopped my sister's mouth, and tied her hands; and in this manner we proceeded till we were out of sight of these people. When we went to rest the following night, they offered us some victuals, but we refused it; and the only comfort we had was in being in one another's arms all that night, and bathing each other with our tears. But alas! We were soon deprived of even the small comfort of weeping together.

The next day proved a day of greater sorrow than I had yet experienced; for my sister and I were then separated, while we lay clasped in each other's arms. It was in vain that we besought them not to part us; she was torn from me, and immediately carried away, while I was left in a state of distraction not to be described. I cried and grieved continually; and for several days did not eat anything but what they forced into my mouth.

From the time I left my own nation, I always found somebody that understood me till I came to the sea coast. The languages of different nations did not totally differ, nor were they so copious as those of the Europeans, particularly the English. They were therefore easily learned; and, while I was journeying thus through Africa, I acquired two or three different tongues. In this manner I had been traveling for a considerable time, when, one evening, to my great surprise, whom should I see brought to the house where I was but my dear sister! As soon as she saw me, she gave a loud shriek, and ran into my arms—I was quite over-powered; neither of us could speak, but, for a considerable time, clung to each other in mutual embraces, unable to do anything but weep. Our meeting affected all who saw us; and, indeed, I must acknowledge, in honor of those sable destroyers of human rights, that I never met with any ill treatment, or saw any offered to their slaves, except tying them, when necessary, to keep them from running away.

When these people knew we were brother and sister, they indulged us to be together; and the man, to whom I supposed we belonged, lay with us, he in the middle, while she and I held one another



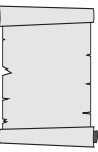
Olaudah Equiano's Narrative Excerpt

by the hands across his breast all night; and thus for a while we forgot our misfortunes, in the joy of being together; but even this small comfort was soon to have an end; for scarcely had the fatal morning appeared when she was again torn from me forever! I was now more miserable, if possible, than before. The small relief which her presence gave me from pain, was gone, and the wretched-ness of my situation was redoubled by my anxiety after her fate, and my apprehensions lest her sufferings should be greater than mine, when I could not be with her to alleviate them.

The first object which saluted my eyes when I arrived on the coast, was the sea, and a slave ship, which was then riding at anchor, and waiting for its cargo. These filled me with astonishment, which was soon converted into terror, when I was carried on board. I was immediately handled, and tossed up to see if I were sound, by some of the crew; and I was now persuaded that I had gotten into a world of bad spirits, and that they were going to kill me. Their complexions, too, differing so much from ours, their long hair, and the language they spoke (which was very different from any I had ever heard), united to confirm me in this belief. Indeed, such were the horrors of my views and fears at the moment, that, if ten thousand worlds had been my own, I would have freely parted with them all to have exchanged my condition with that of the meanest slave in my own country. When I looked round the ship too, and saw a large furnace of copper boiling, and a multitude of black people of every description chained together, every one of their countenances expressing dejection and sorrow, I no longer doubted of my fate; and, quite overpowered with horror and anguish, I fell motionless on the deck and fainted. When I recovered a little, I found some black people about me, who I believed were some of those who had brought me on board, and had been receiving their pay; they talked to me in order to cheer me, but all in vain. I asked them if we were not to be eaten by those white men with horrible looks, red faces, and long hair. They told me I was not, and one of the crew brought me a small portion of spirituous liquor in a wine glass; but being afraid of him, I would not take it out of his hand. One of the blacks therefore took it from him and gave it to me, and I took a little down my palate, which, instead of reviving me, as they thought it would, threw me into the greatest consternation at the strange feeling it produced, having never tasted any such liquor before. Soon after this, the blacks who brought me on board went off, and left me abandoned to despair.

I now saw myself deprived of all chance of returning to my native country, or even the least glimpse of hope of gaining the shore, which I now considered as friendly; and I even wished for my former slavery in preference to my present situation, which was filled with horrors of every kind, still heightened by my ignorance of what I was to undergo. I was not long suffered to indulge my grief; I was soon put down under the decks, and there I received such a salutation in my nostrils as I had never experienced in my life: so that, with the loathsomeness of 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. I now wished for the last friend, death, to relieve me; but soon, to my grief, two of the white men offered me eatables; and, on my refusing to eat, one of them held me fast by the hands, and laid me across, I think, the windlass, and tied my feet, while the other flogged me severely. I had never experienced anything of this kind before, and, although not being used to the water, I naturally feared that element the first time I saw it, yet, nevertheless, could I have got over the nettings, I would have jumped over the side, but I could not; and besides, the crew used to watch us very closely who were not chained down to the decks, lest we should leap into the water; and I have seen some of these poor African prisoners most severely cut, for attempting to do so, and hourly whipped for not eating. This indeed was often the case with myself.

In a little time after, amongst the poor chained men, I found some of my own nation, which in a small degree gave ease to my mind. I inquired of these what was to be done with us? They gave me to understand, we were to be carried to these white people's country to work for them. I then was a little revived, and thought, if it were no worse than working, my situation was not so desperate; but still I feared I should be put to death, the white people looked and acted, as I thought, in so savage a manner; for I had never seen among any people such instances of brutal cruelty; and this not only shown towards us blacks, but also to some of the whites themselves. One white man in particular I saw, when we were permitted to be on deck, flogged so unmercifully with a large rope near the foremast, that he died in



Olaudah Equiano's Narrative Excerpt

consequence of it; and they tossed him over the side as they would have done a brute. This made me fear these people the more; and I expected nothing less than to be treated in the same manner. I could not help expressing my fears and apprehensions to some of my countrymen; I asked them if these people had no country, but lived in this hollow place (the ship)? They told me they did not, but came from a distant one. "Then," said I, "how comes it in all our country we never heard of them?" They told me because they lived so very far off. I then asked where were their women? Had they any like themselves? I was told they had. "And why," said I, "do we not see them?" They answered, because they were left behind. I asked how the vessel could go? They told me they could not tell; but that there was cloth put upon the masts by the help of the ropes I saw, and then the vessel went on; and the white men had some spell or magic they put in the water when they liked, in order to stop the vessel. I was exceedingly amazed at this account, and really thought they were spirits. I therefore wished much to be from amongst them, for I expected they would sacrifice me; but my wishes were vain—for we were so quartered that it was impossible for any of us to make our escape.

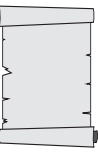
While we stayed on the coast I was mostly on deck; and one day, to my great astonishment, I saw one of these vessels coming in with the sails up. As soon as the whites saw it, they gave a great shout, at which we were amazed; and the more so, as the vessel appeared larger by approaching nearer. At last, she came to an anchor in my sight, and when the anchor was let go, I and my countrymen who saw it, were lost in astonishment to observe the vessel stop—and were now convinced it was done by magic. Soon after this the other ship got her boats out, and they came on board of us, and the people of both ships seemed very glad to see each other. Several of the strangers also shook hands with us black people, and made motions with their hands, signifying I suppose, we were to go to their country, but we did not understand them.

At last, when the ship we were in, had got in all her cargo, they made ready with many fearful noises, and we were all put under deck, so that we could not see how they managed the vessel. But this disappointment was the least of my sorrow. The stench of the hold while we were on the coast was so intolerably loathsome, that it was dangerous to remain there for any time, and some of us had been permitted to stay on the deck for the fresh air; but now that the whole ship's cargo were confined together, it became absolutely pestilential. The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us. This produced copious perspirations, so that the air soon became unfit for respiration, from a variety of loathsome smells, and brought on a sickness among the slaves, of which many died—thus falling victims to the improvident avarice, as I may call it, of their purchasers.

This wretched situation was again aggravated by the gaffing of the chains, now became insupportable, and the filth of the necessary tubs, into which the children often fell, and were almost suffocated. The shrieks of the women, and the groans of the dying, rendered the whole a scene of horror almost inconceivable. Happily perhaps, for myself, I was soon reduced so low here that it was thought necessary to keep me almost always on deck; and from my extreme youth I was not put in fetters. In this situation I expected every hour to share the fate of my companions, some of whom were almost daily brought upon deck at the point of death, which I began to hope would soon put an end to my miseries. Often did I think many of the inhabitants of the deep much more happy than myself. I envied them the freedom they enjoyed, and as often wished I could change my condition for theirs. Every circumstance I met with, served only to render my state more painful, and heightened my apprehensions, and my opinion of the cruelty of the whites.

One day they had taken a number of fishes; and when they had killed and satisfied themselves with as many as they thought fit, to our astonishment who were on deck, rather than give any of them to us to eat, as we expected, they tossed the remaining fish into the sea again, although we begged and prayed for some as well as we could, but in vain; and some of my countrymen, being pressed by hunger, took an opportunity, when they thought no one saw them, of trying to get a little privately; but they were discovered, and the attempt procured them some very severe floggings.

One day, when we had a smooth sea and moderate wind, two of my wearied countrymen who were chained together (I was near them at the time), preferring death to such a life of misery, somehow made



Olaudah Equiano's Narrative Excerpt

through the nettings and jumped into the sea; immediately, another quite dejected fellow, who, on account of his illness, was suffered to be out of irons, also followed their example; and I believe many more would very soon have done the same, if they had not been prevented by the ship's crew, who were instantly alarmed. Those of us that were the most active, were in a moment put down under the deck; and there was such a noise and confusion amongst the people of the ship as I never heard before, to stop her, and get the boat out to go after the slaves. However, two of the wretches were drowned, but they got the other, and afterwards flogged him unmercifully, for thus attempting to prefer death to slavery. In this manner we continued to undergo more hardships than I can now relate, hardships which are inseparable from this accursed trade. Many a time we were near suffocation from the want of fresh air, which we were often without for whole days together. This, and the stench of the necessary tubs, carried off many.

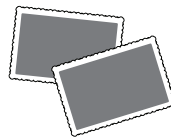
At last we came in sight of the island of Barbadoes, at which the whites on board gave a great shout, and made many signs of joy to us. We did not know what to think of this; but as the vessel drew nearer, we plainly saw the harbor, and other ships of different kinds and sizes, and we soon anchored amongst them, off Bridgetown. Many merchants and planters now came on board, though it was in the evening. They put us in separate parcels, and examined us attentively. They also made us jump, and pointed to the land, signifying we were to go there. We thought by this, we should be eaten by these ugly men, as they appeared to us; and, when soon after we were all put down under the deck again, there was much dread and trembling among us, and nothing but bitter cries to be heard all the night from these apprehensions, insomuch, that at last the white people got some old slaves from the land to pacify us. They told us we were not to be eaten, but to work, and were soon to go on land, where we should see many of our country people. This report eased us much. And sure enough, soon after we were landed, there came to us Africans of all languages.

We were conducted immediately to the merchant's yard, where we were all pent up together, like so many sheep in a fold, without regard to sex or age. As every object was new to me, everything I saw filled me with surprise. What struck me first, was, that the houses were built with bricks and stories, and in every other respect different from those I had seen in Africa; but I was still more astonished on seeing people on horseback. I did not know what this could mean; and, indeed, I thought these people were full of nothing but magical arts. While I was in this astonishment, one of my fellow prisoners spoke to a countryman of his, about the horses, who said they were the same kind they had in their country. I understood them, though they were from a distant part of Africa; and I thought it odd I had not seen any horses there; but afterwards, when I came to converse with different Africans, I found they had many horses amongst them, and much larger than those I then saw.

We were not many days in the merchant's custody, before we were sold after their usual manner, which is this: On a signal given (as the beat of a drum), the buyers rush at once into the yard where the slaves are confined, and make choice of that parcel they like best. The noise and clamor with which this is attended, and the eagerness visible in the countenances of the buyers, serve not a little to increase the apprehension of terrified Africans, who may well be supposed to consider them as the ministers of that destruction to which they think themselves devoted. In this manner, without scruple, are relations and friends separated, most of them never to see each other again.

I remember, in the vessel in which I was brought over, in the men's apartment, there were several brothers, who, in the sale, were sold in different lots; and it was very moving on this occasion, to see and hear their cries at parting. O, ye nominal Christians! Might not an African ask you—Learned you this from your God, who says unto you, Do unto all men as you would men should do unto you? Is it not enough that we are torn from our country and friends, to toil for your luxury and lust of gain? Must every tender feeling be likewise sacrificed to your avarice? Are the dearest friends and relations, now rendered more dear by their separation from their kindred, still to be parted from each other, and thus prevented from cheering the gloom of slavery, with the small comfort of being together, and mingling their sufferings and sorrows? Why are parents to lose their children, brothers their sisters, or husbands their wives? Surely, this is a new refinement in cruelty, which, while it has no advantage to atone for it, thus aggravates distress, and adds fresh horrors even to the wretchedness of slavery.

Source: *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*, by Olaudah Equiano, St. Martin's Press, 1789



Conditions on an English Slaver

Alexander Falconbridge served as a surgeon on slave ships. Later, he was the governor of a British colony for freed slaves in Sierra Leone. This is his account of the Middle Passage in 1788.

From the time of the arrival of the ships to their departure, which is usually about three months, scarce a day passes without some Negroes being purchased and carried on board; sometimes in small and sometimes in large numbers. The whole number taken on board depends on circumstances. In a voyage I once made, our stock of merchandise was exhausted in the purchase of about 380 Negroes, which was expected to have procured 500.

The men Negroes, on being brought aboard the ship, are immediately fastened together, two and two, by handcuffs on their wrists and by irons riveted on their legs. They are then sent down between the decks and placed in an apartment partitioned off for that purpose. The women also are placed in a separate apartment between the decks, but without being ironed. An adjoining room on the same deck is appointed for the boys. Thus they are all placed in different apartments.

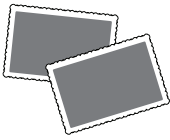
But at the same time, however, they are frequently stowed so close, as to admit of no other position than lying on their sides. Nor with the height between decks, unless directly under the grating, permit the indulgence of an erect posture; especially where there are platforms, which is generally the case. These platforms are a kind of shelf, about eight or nine feet in breadth, extending from the side of the ship toward the centre. They are placed nearly midway between the decks, at the distance of two or three feet from each deck. Upon these the Negroes are stowed in the same manner as they are on the deck underneath.

In each of the apartments are placed three or four large buckets, of a conical form, nearly two feet in diameter at the bottom and only one foot at the top and in depth of about twenty-eight inches, to which, when necessary, the Negroes have recourse. It often happens that those who are placed at a distance from the buckets, in endeavoring to get to them, tumble over their companions, in consequence of their being shackled. These accidents, although unavoidable, are productive of continual quarrels in which some of them are always bruised. In this distressed situation, unable to proceed and prevented from getting to the tubs, they desist from the attempt; and as the necessities of nature are not to be resisted, ease themselves as they lie. This becomes a fresh source of boils and disturbances and tends to render the condition of the poor captive wretches still more uncomfortable. The nuisance arising from these circumstances is not infrequently increased by the tubs being too small for the purpose intended and their being emptied but once every day. The rule for doing so, however, varies in different ships according to the attention paid to the health and convenience of the slaves by the captain.

Upon the Negroes refusing to take sustenance, I have seen coals of fire, glowing hot, put on a shovel and placed so near their lips as to scorch and burn them. And this has been accompanied with threats of forcing them to swallow the coals if they any longer persisted in refusing to eat. These means have generally had the desired effect. I have also been credibly informed that a certain captain in the slave-trade, poured melted lead on such of his Negroes as obstinately refused their food.

The hardships and inconveniences suffered by the Negroes during the passage are scarcely to be enumerated or conceived. They are far more violently affected by seasickness than Europeans. It frequently terminates in death, especially among the women. But the exclusion of fresh air is among the most intolerable. For the purpose of admitting this needful refreshment, most of the ships in the slave trade are provided, between the decks, with five or six air-ports on each side of the ship of about five inches in length and four in breadth. In addition, some ships, but not one in twenty, have what they denominate wind-sails. But whenever the sea is rough and the rain heavy it becomes necessary to shut these and every other conveyance by which the air is admitted. The fresh air being thus excluded, the Negroes' rooms soon grow intolerable hot. The confined air, rendered noxious by the effluvia exhaled from their bodies and being repeatedly breathed, soon produces fevers and fluxes which generally carries off great numbers of them.

Source: *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa* by Alexander Falconbridge, London, 1788



John Barbot Account

John Barbot was an agent for the French Royal African Company. He made at least two voyages to the West Coast of Africa in 1678 and 1682 and wrote this account in 1732.

Those sold by the Blacks are for the most part prisoners of war, taken either in fight, or pursuit, or in the incursions they make into their enemies territories; others stolen away by their own countrymen; and some there are, who will sell their own children, kindred, or neighbors. This has been often seen, and to compass it, they desire the person they intend to sell, to help them in carrying something to the factory by way of trade, and when there, the person so deluded, not understanding the language, is sold and deliver'd up as a slave, notwithstanding all his resistance, and exclaiming against the treachery.

The kings are so absolute, that upon any slight pretense of offences committed by their subjects, they order them to be sold for slaves, without regard to rank, or possession.

Abundance of little Blacks of both sexes are also stolen away by their neighbors, when found abroad on the roads, or in the woods; or else in the Cougans, or cornfields, at the time of the year, when their parents keep them there all day, to scare away the devouring small birds, that come to feed on the millet, in swarms, as has been said above.

In times of dearth and famine, abundance of those people will sell themselves, for a maintenance, and to prevent starving. When I first arriv'd at Goerree, in December, 1681, I could have bought a great number, at very easy rates, if I could have found provisions to subsist them; so great was the dearth then, in that part of Nigritia.

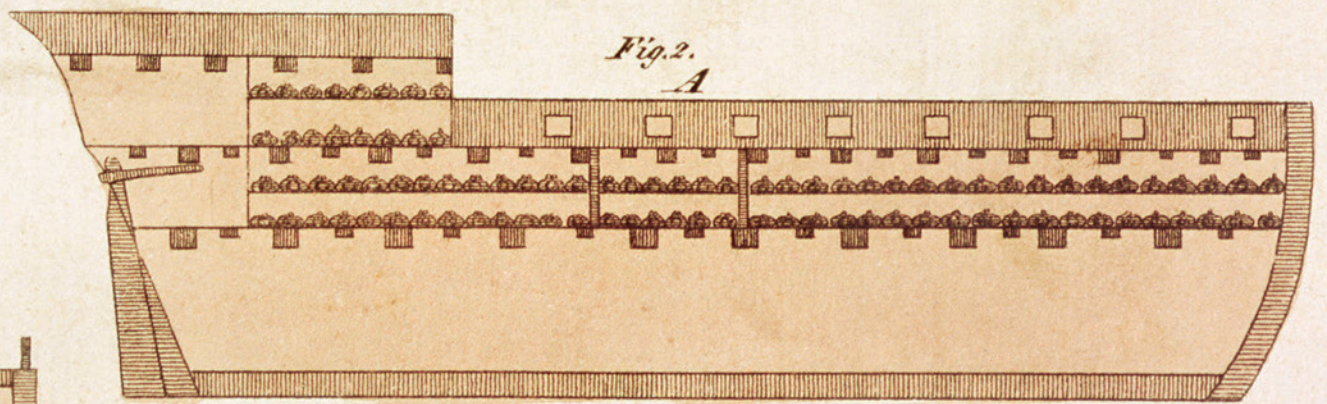
To conclude, some slaves are also brought to these Blacks, from very remote inland countries, by way of trade, and sold for things of very inconsiderable value; but these slaves are generally poor and weak, by reason of the barbarous usage they have had in traveling so far, being continually beaten, and almost famish'd; so inhuman are the Blacks to one another...

The trade of slaves is in a more peculiar manner the business of kings, rich men, and prime merchants, exclusive of the inferior sort of Blacks.

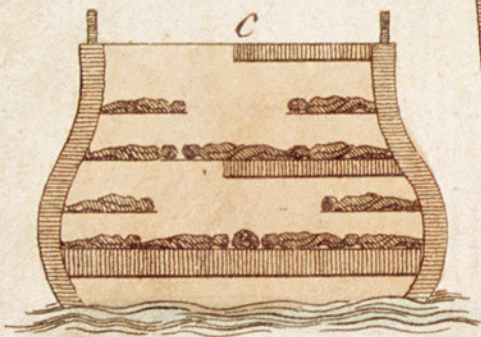
These slaves are severely and barbarously treated by their masters, who subsist them poorly, and beat them inhumanly, as may be seen by the scabs and wounds on the bodies of many of them when sold to us. They scarce allow them the least rag to cover their nakedness, which they also take off from them when sold to Europeans; and they always go bare-headed. The wives and children of slaves, are also slaves to the master under whom they are married; and when dead, they never bury them, but cast out the bodies into some by place, to be devoured by birds, or beasts of prey.



Fig. 2.
A



C



B

