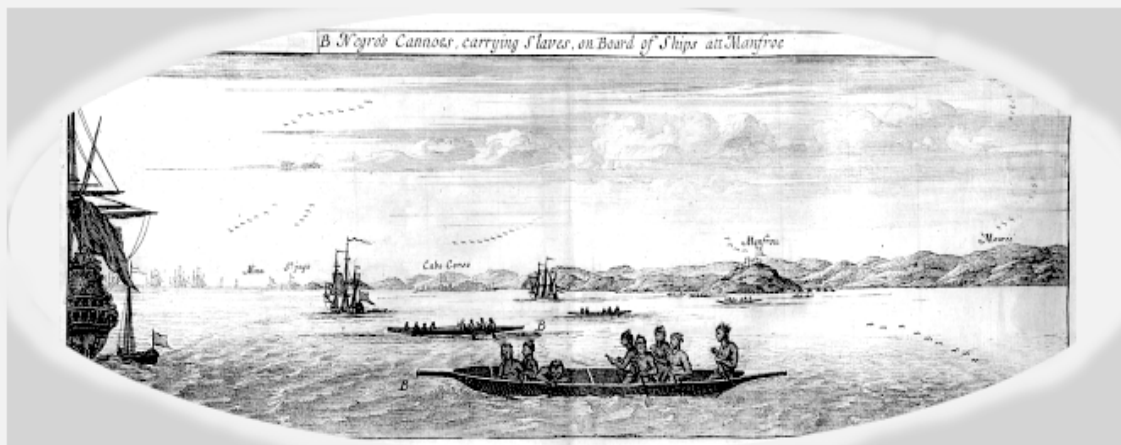


The Atlantic Slave Trade

A Unit of Study for Grades 7–12

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Approach and Rationale	1
Content and Organization	1

Teacher Background Materials

I. Unit Overview	3
II. Unit Context	3
III. Correlation with the National History Standards	3
IV. Objectives	4
V. Lesson Plans	4
VI. Introduction to <i>The Atlantic Slave Trade</i>	6

Dramatic Moment	11
----------------------------------	-----------

Unit Map	13
---------------------------	-----------

Lessons

Lesson One: Slavery: Definition, Extent, and Justifications	14
Lesson Two: Enslavement.	28
Lesson Three: The Middle Passage	39
Lesson Four: Arrival in the Americas.	57
Lesson Five: Ending the Atlantic Slave Trade.	63
.	

Bibliography	69
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TEACHER BACKGROUND

I. UNIT OVERVIEW

The Atlantic Slave Trade is divided into five lessons: **Lesson One** explores the origins of the Atlantic slave trade, **Lessons Two** and **Three** focus on the process of enslavement in West Africa and the Middle Passage, The fourth lesson deals with the arrival in the Americas, and **Lesson Five** delves into early attempts to end the slave trade. Students, using primary source materials, examine the differences and similarities between slavery as practiced in the Americas and Africa. The purposes of this unit are to explore the complexity and geographic breadth of the institution of slavery, to examine the experiences of actual participants in the Atlantic slave trade, to evaluate the role of Europe and Africa traders, and to appraise arguments for and against the abolition of the trade.

Lessons in the unit also afford students the opportunity to read and analyze documents written in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The unit also challenges students to develop the skills needed to analyze the reliability of these primary source documents. Students are encouraged to identify the source of the document, the perspective of the individual writing the document, and the recognition of clues that signal the author's purpose.

II. UNIT CONTEXT

This unit may be used in world history courses for a study of slavery and the trans-Atlantic slave trade. In addition it may be used as part of a study of the Age of Exploration in either world or United States history. The unit may be employed in either a chronological approach or as a thematic study of slavery and the slave trade.

III. CORRELATION TO NATIONAL HISTORY STANDARDS

The Atlantic Slave Trade correlates with the *National Standards for History, Basic Edition* (National Center for History in the Schools, UCLA, 1996), **Era 6** of World History, "Global Expansion and Encounter, 1450-1770." Specific standards addressed by the lessons include **Standard 1A** dealing with the origins and consequences of European overseas expansion, **1B** on encounters between Europeans and the people of Africa and the Spanish and Portuguese colonial empires in the Americas, **4B** on the origins and consequences of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and **4C** dealing with patterns of change in Africa in the era of the slave trade. The unit may also be used to help achieve several United States History standards. In **Era 1**, "Three Worlds Meet," **Standard 1C** students are to

Teacher Background Materials

analyze the varieties of slavery in Western Africa and explore the varying responses of African states to early European trading and raiding on the Atlantic African coast. **Era 2**, “Colonization and Settlement,” **Standard 1A** deals with the arrival of Africans in the European colonies in the 17th century and the rapid increase of slave importation in the 18th century and **3C** focuses on African life under slavery.

IV. OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the complexity and geographical breadth of the institution of slavery.
2. To identify the major geographical sources and destinations of slaves traded across the Atlantic between Africa and the Americas.
3. To analyze primary sources written by participants in the Atlantic Slave Trade in order to understand the process of enslavement.
4. To explore early attempts to end the slave trade.

V. LESSON PLANS

1. Slavery: Definition, Extent, and Justifications (Duration: 2 days)
2. Enslavement (Duration: 2 days)
3. Middle Passage (Duration: 2 days)
4. Arrival in the Americas (Duration: 1 day)
5. Ending the Slave Trade (Duration: 1-2 days)

VI. INTRODUCTION TO *THE ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE*

The movement of Africans to the Americas from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries may be accounted as mankind's second-largest transoceanic migration. This migration, along with the concurrent African migration to the Middle East and North Africa, was distinct from other major modern migrations in its involuntary nature, and in the high rates of mortality and social dislocation caused by the methods of capture and transportation. A related migratory pattern, the capture and settling of millions of slaves within Africa, grew up in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Africa as a consequence of the two patterns of overseas slave trade.

The American Perspective

David Eltis posed, in a 1983 article, a striking contrast in the population history of the Americas. By 1820, there had been about 8.4 million African immigrants to the Americas, and 2.4 million European immigrants. But by that date the Euro-American population of some 12 million exceeded the Afro-American population of about 11 million. The rates of survival and reproduction of African immigrants were, apparently, dramatically lower than those of European immigrants. Eltis's contrast drew attention to the demographic comparisons necessary to make sense of this puzzle: the rates of fertility and mortality, the timing and location of immigration, the sex ratios and the social identification of persons.

The migratory history of African slaves, once they landed in the Americas, continued through several further stages. The initial period of seasoning can be considered as migration through a change in status. Further, slaves were physically transshipped, often over considerable distances. Slaves brought by the Dutch to Curaçao and by the English to Jamaica were transshipped to Cartagena, Portobelo, and on to various Spanish colonies. From Cartagena, some slaves were settled in Colombia. A larger number of slaves went to Portobelo in Panama, walked overland, and then went by sea to Lima. Most remained there, but some went into the highlands. Slaves landed in the Rio de La Plata went overland for 900 kilometers to Tucuman and then on for another 600 kilometers to the silver mines at Potosi. In Brazil, with the gold rush in Minas Gerais at the turn of the eighteenth century, slaves were sent overland to the mining areas, 300 kilometers from Rio and a much longer distance overland from Bahia. Slaves entering the Chesapeake and South Carolina came, in significant proportion, after stopping in Barbados. A final stage in the migration of some slaves was their liberation – either by emancipation, self-purchase, or escape.