

# The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade - Part 3

If you are able, please view the videos below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1B3V9wKeNUI>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y6N9JVWH0k0>

### Key word

- **brutal** – violent or cruel

## Unit 2: Reasons for using slave labour

The plantation owners in America did not have enough people to work on their vast plantations. So slave traders brought slaves from West Africa to do the hard work on the plantations in the American South.

### What was slavery?

Slavery is an example of extremely **brutal** behaviour. We have seen that slavery existed in Africa long before the continent had any contact with Europe.

But when Europeans began to colonise different parts of the world, the nature of slavery and the slave trade changed. The form of slavery, introduced by Europeans, was called chattel slavery. Chattel slaves could be bought and sold just like cattle (from which the word chattel comes).

Slaves that were taken from West Africa to the Americas where they:

- were treated as a piece of property that belonged to their owner
- were treated as if they were not human beings
- were treated with extreme brutality
- were slaves for life and their children became slaves too
- were forced to work for their owner
- did not receive wages
- had no rights
- weren't allowed to learn how to read or write.

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Slaves had no rights and were treated as property that belonged to their owner.

## How slaves were captured, sold and transported from West Africa

European slave traders kidnapped people from their homes or local West African chiefs sold them to these slave traders. Africans were often kidnapped by fellow Africans. They would sell them to European slave traders for things like guns, whisky, cloth and metal goods like knives and basins.

European slave traders set up **bases** on the coast of West Africa. Africans would bring African **captives** to these bases and would exchange them for guns and other goods. Those Africans captured by the slave traders themselves were marched to the coastal trading centres. The captives were kept in prisons called **barracoons** at the coastal bases until they were sold.

Once the slaves were sold, the slave traders used a red-hot iron to **brand** them with the mark of the particular European company that had bought them.

The slaves were then taken by ship across the Atlantic Ocean.

### Key words

- **bases** – headquarters or centres from which slave traders worked
- **captives** – people who have been captured
- **barracoons** – a slave warehouse, an enclosure where slaves were kept temporarily
- **brand** – to burn with a hot iron to show ownership

'One day, when only I and my dear sister were left behind to mind the house, two men and a woman got over our walls and in a moment, seized us both... They stopped our mouths and ran off with us into the nearest woods... The next day proved to be a day of great sorrow... for my sister and I were separated while we lay clasped in each other's arms.'



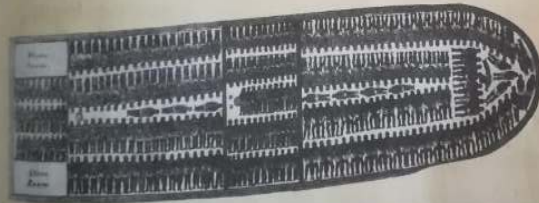
Equiano was enslaved as a young man. He bought his freedom, and worked as an author and explorer in America.

*The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, 1789*



Source D: A drawing of a slave barracoon

Source C: A slave tells his story of capture



Source E: A plan of a slave ship

## Slave market

When the slaves reached America, they were sold at slave markets. Slave sales were advertised in newspapers and on posters. Slaves were bought and sold at slave markets called **auctions**.

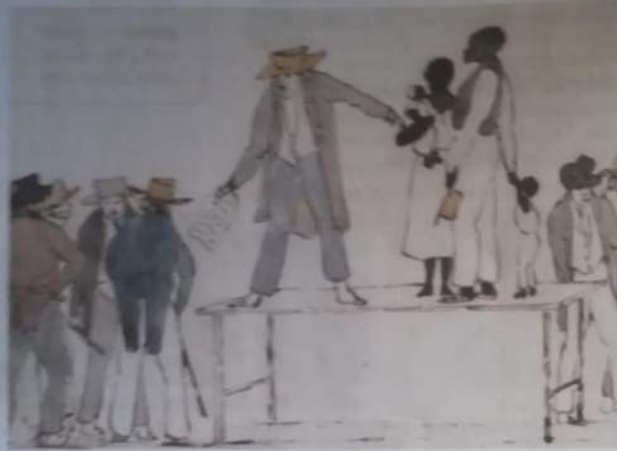
When slaves were to be auctioned, a small red flag was hoisted on a pole outside the auction room. In the auction room, slaves were made to stand in a line, facing the bidders. Once the auction began, **bidders** shouted out the price they were prepared to pay for the slave being sold. The bidder who offered the most money got the slave.

A slave could be bought and sold many times in his or her lifetime.

### Key words

- **auctions** – a public sale in which goods are bought and sold
- **bidders** – people who place bids in an auction

A slave could be bought and sold many times in his or her lifetime.



Source F: A drawing of a slave market

TO BE SOLD,  
A CARGO  
OF  
NINETY-FOUR  
PRIME HEALTHY  
**NEGROES,**  
CONSISTING OF  
Thirty-nine MEN, Fifteen BOYS,  
Twenty-four WOMEN, and  
Sixteen GIRLS  
JUST ARRIVED  
In the Brigantine *DEMIA*, *Francis Barr*, Master, from SIERRA  
LEON, by  
DAVID & JOHN DEAS.

Source G: A newspaper advertisement for a slave market

Freeman [the white slave broker] would make us hold up our heads, walk briskly back and forth, while customers would feel of our heads and arms and bodies, turn us about, ask us what we could do, make us

open our mouths and show our teeth.... Sometimes a man or woman was taken back to the small house in the yard, stripped, and inspected more minutely [closely].

*Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup, 1853*

Source H: Story of a slave market

#### About our world

The word 'Negro' was used to describe black people. The word is no longer used today.

## Numbers of slaves that were taken to America

The actual number of men, women and children who were snatched from their homes in Africa and transported in slave ships across the Atlantic, either to the Caribbean islands or to North and South America, will never be known. Writers vary in their estimates, but there is no doubt that their numbers run into millions. Historians say that about 12 million Africans were transported to North America through the Trans-Atlantic slave trade.

## What happened to the raw materials that slaves produced?

The cash crops were harvested and were packed onto ships and taken to England, where they were made into products in factories. Cotton was woven into material, which was made into clothes. Sugar cane was turned into sugar to sweeten foods and drinks. Tobacco was made into pipe tobacco and chewing tobacco.

These products were sold to people in Britain and exported to British colonies to be sold there at big profits.

1666 - 1776	3 million (250 000 died on the voyage)
1680 - 1786	2 130 000
1716 - 1756	3,5 million
1776 - 1800	A yearly average of 1 850 000

The above statistics are from the following article by Jose Luciano Franco:

*'The Slave Trade in the Caribbean and Latin America.'* in *The African Slave Trade from the Fifteenth to the Nineteenth Century Reports and papers of the meeting of experts organized by Unesco at Port-au-Prince, Haiti, 31 January to 4 February 1978.*

**Source I:** Table showing numbers of slaves taken across the Atlantic to North America, South America and the Caribbean



## ACTIVITY 2 Understand, recall, deduct from and interpret information

(Assessment aims and skills: 1, 2, 3, 6, 7)

- Read Source C on page 137 and explain how Equiano was captured.
  - What feelings did Equiano have at the time?
  - Look at Source D on page 137 and explain what happened at a barracoon.
- Look at Source E on page 137 and explain how slaves were taken to America.
- From Sources D and E, what feelings do you think slaves had?
- Why do you think so many slaves died on board the ship?
- What is being sold in Source F on page 138?
- What word is used in Source G on page 138 to indicate that slaves were regarded in the same way as goods?
- Read Source H on page 138 very carefully. With a partner, write down a list of words which describe how slaves must have felt when being sold at an auction.
- According to Source I above, how many slaves were taken to America?
- Use all the sources in this section to write a paragraph which explains how slaves were captured, sold and transported to America, and how they were sold again once in America. Your paragraph will be marked with the rubric on page 227.

