

LESSON ONE

What Was the Slave Trade?

INTRODUCTION

The slave trade developed to supply a sufficient labor force in European-controlled colonies in North and South America and in the Caribbean. As slavery became entrenched in the economic systems of these colonies, lawmakers enacted legal codes to control slaves and to protect slave owners. Mining precious metals and cultivating labor-intensive crops such as sugarcane and tobacco created demand for more and more slaves. The international trade in enslaved Africans became a profitable, if dangerous, business. In this lesson, students look at the big picture, learning the difference between slavery and the slave trade, why the trade developed, where enslaved Africans originated, and where they were taken.

OBJECTIVES

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Define slavery and the slave trade.
2. Articulate the connection between slave labor and colonial economies.
3. Develop inferences about a topic and use research materials (e.g. maps) to test those inferences.
4. Analyze visual resources (eg. maps, charts) and articulate the information they convey.

STANDARDS OF LEARNING

This lesson meets the national Standards of Learning in the areas of historical comprehension, historical analysis and interpretation, and historical research capabilities.

MATERIALS

Map of the Transatlantic Slave Trade
Worksheet: The Transatlantic Slave Trade

STRATEGY

1. Ask students what they know about slavery. Write the word “slavery” on the board. What does this word mean? Write their answers on the board. Be sure students raise certain points. Use the following list as a guide:
 - Slaves are not paid or rewarded for their work.
 - Slaves are not free to travel or work for themselves without permission from their owners.
 - Slaves obey orders or risk severe physical punishment.
 - In Europe and the Americas from about 1500 to the late 1800s, slavery was race based. Enslavement of Africans and people of African descent became the rule.
 - In the United States in 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation freed a large number of slaves in Confederate states, but slavery was not officially ended until 1865 with the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

2. When the class has arrived at an understanding of slavery, write the words “slave trade” on the board. Ask students these questions:
 - Where did enslaved people come from?
 - Where were they taken?
 - Who was involved in the slave trade?
 As a class, brainstorm answers to these and other questions, and write students’ responses on the board.

3. Divide the class into small groups. Distribute to each group a copy of the Map of the Transatlantic Slave Trade (or you may use a transparency to project the image) and copies of the Worksheet: The Transatlantic Slave Trade. Instruct students that each group will examine the map and answer the questions on the worksheet. Circulate through the class to answer questions or clarify issues.

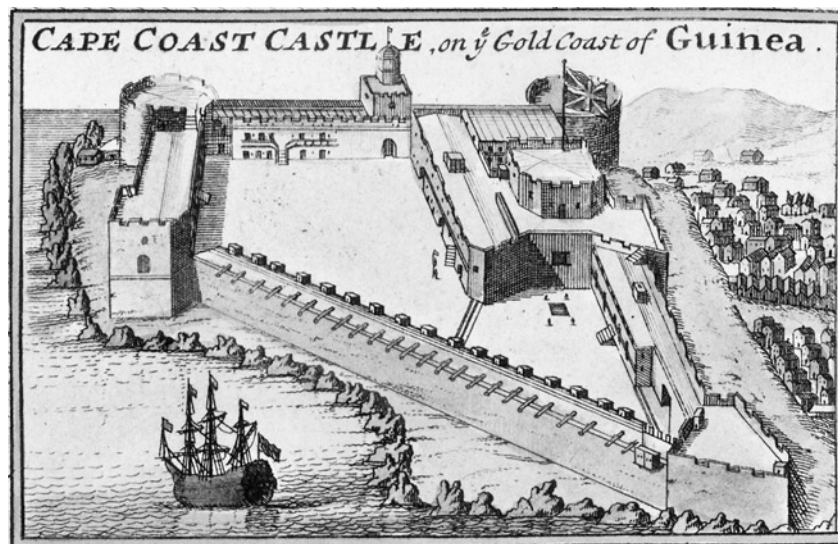
4. Reconvene the class, and begin a class discussion about the information on the map. Does the information match what the class brainstormed about the slave trade in step 2? What facts did students learn about the slave trade? What questions do they have? [Note: Be sure that students are able to differentiate between the slave trade and slavery itself.]

LESSON EXTENSION ONE

Research activity: Using the Internet, the school’s media center, or the public library, look for information about the “triangular trade.” What was it? Describe the triangular trade in a paragraph, or draw a map indicating what was traded and where. Why was the journey of captive Africans from Africa to the New World known as the “middle passage”?

LESSON EXTENSION TWO

Research activity: Using the Internet, the school’s media center, or the public library, look for information about Brazil, the West Indies, Central America, and the United States during the period of the transatlantic slave trade. What kinds of work were kidnapped Africans forced to do in those places? Why was labor needed there? What did people living there produce?



Detail from *Africa*, by John Bowles, London, England, ca. 1740. From the collections of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

MAP OF THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

