

Slave-Trade DBQ

55 minutes (15 min. reading & 40 min. writing)

Prompt: Using the documents provided and your knowledge of world history, analyze the impacts of the Atlantic slave trade from the 15th through the 19th centuries.

Document 1

Source: Merrick Whitcomb, letter regarding Spain's interactions with its colonies in 1559. "The Gold of the Indies — 1559." The University of Pennsylvania.

From New Spain are obtained gold, silver and other things. One fifth of all profits go to the king. Great quantities of gold and silver used to be out in the open; with all of it gone, now gold and silver have to be mined. The work is hard and the Spaniards are not willing to do the work, Natives who have become Christians are not allowed to be forced to do the work because the Emperor freed them. So now it is necessary to acquire negro slaves [enslaved Africans], who are brought from the coasts of Africa.

Document 2

Source: Hans Sloan, from his *Voyage to the Islands*, describing conditions on the island of Barbados, 1706.

The punishments for crimes of slaves are usually for rebellions [and include] burning them, by nailing them down on the ground with crooked sticks on every limb, and then applying the fire by degrees from the feet and hands, burning them gradually up to the head, whereby their pains are extravagant. For crimes of a lesser nature gelding (castration) or cropping off half of the foot with an axe are common. These punishments are suffered by them with great constancy. For running away they put iron rings of great weight on their ankles. For negligence they are usually whipped by the overseers with hard-wood switches, till they be all bloody. After they are whipped till they are raw, some put on their skins pepper and salt to make them smart. These punishments are sometimes merited by the slaves, who are a very perverse generation of people, and though they appear harsh, yet are scarce equal to their crimes, and inferior to what punishments other European nations inflict on their slaves in the East Indies.

Document 3

Source: Johann Peter Oettinger, a surgeon who took a position with the Brandenburg (Prussia) Africa Company and made the voyage described in this journal in 1692-93.

As soon as a sufficient number of the unfortunate victims were collected, they were examined by me: the healthy and strong ones were bought, whereas the magrones - those who had fingers or teeth missing or were disabled - were rejected. The slaves who had been bought then had to kneel down, twenty or thirty at a time; their right shoulder was smeared with palm oil and branded with an iron which bore the initials CABC (Churfürstlich-Afrikanisch-Brandenburgische Compagnie). Then those who had thus been marked were strictly guarded in the quarters allotted to them. When about fifty or a hundred slaves were present, they were tied together in twos and threes and driven to the coast under escort. The task of guarding the transport was given to me, and for that purpose I was carried in the rear in a hammock, so that I could survey the column. Some of these poor people obeyed their leaders without a will of their own or any resistance, even when they were hurried on with a whip; others, on the other hand, howled and danced. There were also many, especially women, who filled the air with heart-rending cries which could hardly be drowned by the drums or other noisy instruments and often cut me to the quick. But it did not lie in my power to alter the fate of these unfortunates. When we reached the coast, a pre-arranged signal was given and the ship's boats came ashore to take the black cargo on board.

Document 4

Source: Olaudah Equiano, in an excerpt about his capture, his journey, and his arrival in the Americas from his autobiography, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*, 1789

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.... 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....

Thus I continued to travel, sometimes by land, sometimes by water, through different countries and various nations, till, at the end of six or seven months after I had been kidnapped, I arrived at the sea coast.... 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....

At last we came in sight of the island of Barbados, at which the whites on board gave a great shout, and made many signs of joy to us.... 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 those ugly men, as they appeared to us;...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.

Document 5

Source: British North American Colonial laws, 1639-1682

Virginia, 1639

Act X. All persons except Negroes are to be provided with arms and ammunitions or be fined at the pleasure of the governor and council.

Maryland, 1664

That whatsoever free-born [English] woman shall intermarry with any slave. . . shall serve the master of such slave during the life of her husband; and that all the issue of such free-born women, so married shall be slaves as their fathers were.

Virginia, 1667

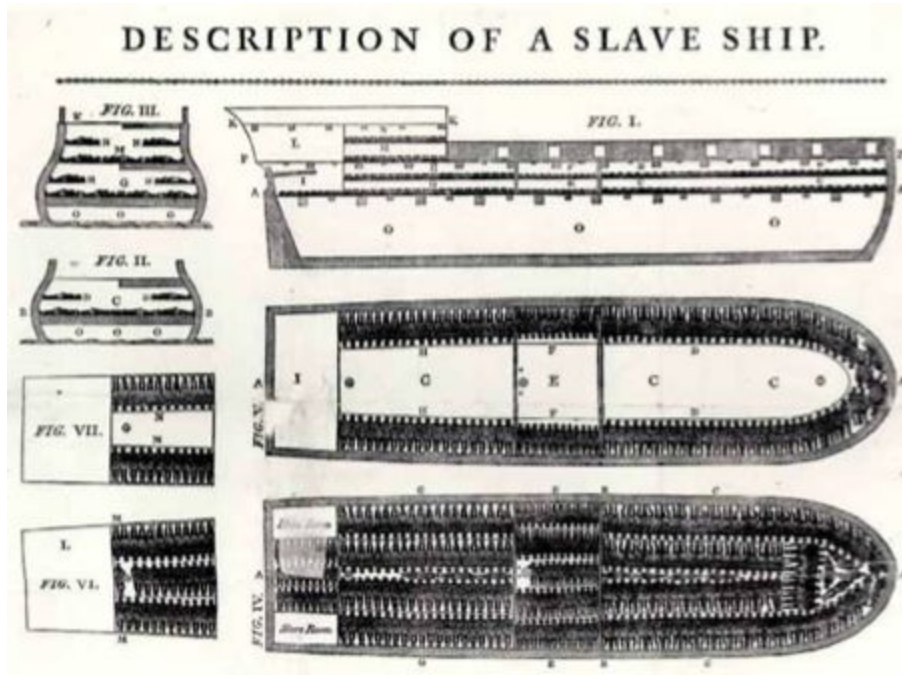
Act III. Whereas some doubts have arisen whether children that are slaves by birth. . . should by virtue of their baptism be made free, it is enacted that baptism does not alter the condition to the person as to his bondage or freedom; masters freed from this doubt may more carefully propagate Christianity by permitting slaves to be admitted to that sacrament.

Virginia, 1682

Act I. It is enacted that all servants. . . which [sic] shall be imported into this country either by sea or by land, whether Negroes, Moors [Muslim North Africans], mulattoes or Indians who and whose parentage and native countries are not Christian at the time of their first purchase by some Christian. . . and all Indians, which shall be sold by our neighboring Indians, or any other trafficking with us for slaves, are hereby adjudged, deemed and taken to be slaves to all intents and purposes any law, usage, or custom to the contrary notwithstanding.

Document 6

Source: Plan and cross-section of the slave ship "Brookes" of Liverpool. 1789, print produced from woodblocks of a model of the slave ship used by William Wilberforce (1759-1833) in the House of Commons to demonstrate conditions on the middle passage.



Document 7

Source: According to data gathered by Alexander von Humboldt, German geographer and scientist, and Ramon de la Sangra, Cuban botanist/demographer, 1825.

The Uses of Slaves in Cuba, 1825

Usage of Slaves	# of Slaves	Percentage
Sugar plantations	50,000	19.45
Coffee plantations	50,000	19.45
Small farms, cattle ranches	31,065	12.08
Tobacco farms	7,927	3.08
Diversified rural occupations	45,000	17.51
Total Rural Occupations	183,992	71.6
Various Urban Occupations	73,000	28.4
Total	256,992	100.00