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INTRODUCTION

I. APPROACH AND RATIONALE

The Atlantic Slave Trade is one of over sixty teaching units published by the National Center for History in the Schools that are the fruits of collaborations between history professors and experienced teachers of both United States and World History. The units represent specific issues and dramatic episodes in history from which you and your students can pause to delve into the deeper meanings of these selected landmark events and explore their wider context in the great historical narrative. By studying crucial turning points in history, the student becomes aware that choices had to be made by real human beings, that those decisions were the result of specific factors, and that they set in motion a series of historical consequences. We have selected issues and dramatic moments that best bring alive that decision-making process. We hope that through this approach, your students will realize that history in an ongoing, open-ended process, and that the decisions they make today create the conditions of tomorrow's history.

Our teaching units are based on primary sources, taken from government documents, artifacts, journals, diaries, newspapers, magazines, literature, contemporary photographs, paintings, and other art from the period under study. What we hope to achieve using primary source documents in these lessons is to remove the distance that students feel from historical events and to connect them more intimately with the past. In this way we hope to recreate for your students a sense of "being there," a sense of seeing history through the eyes of the very people who were making decisions. This will help your students develop historical empathy, to realize that history is not an impersonal process divorced from real people like themselves. At the same time, by analyzing primary sources, students will actually practice the historian's craft, discovering for themselves how to analyze evidence, establish a valid interpretation and construct a coherent narrative in which all the relevant factors play a part.

II. CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION

Within this unit, you will find: Teaching Background Materials, including Unit Overview, Unit Context, Correlation to the National Standards for History, Unit Objectives, and Introduction to *The Atlantic Slave Trade*; A Dramatic Moment; and Lesson Plans with Student Resources. This unit, as we have said above, focuses on certain key moments in time and should be used as a supplement to your customary course materials. Although these lessons are recommended for use by grades 7–12, they can be adapted for other grade levels.

The Teacher Background section should provide you with a good overview of the entire unit and with the historical information and context necessary to link the **Dramatic Moment** to the larger historical narrative. You may consult it for your own use, and you may choose to share it with students if they are of a sufficient grade level to understand the materials.

The Lesson Plans include a variety of ideas and approaches for the teacher which can be elaborated upon or cut as you see the need. These lesson plans contain student resources which accompany each lesson. The resources consist of primary source documents, handouts and student background materials, and a bibliography.

In our series of teaching units, each collection can be taught in several ways. You can teach all of the lessons offered on any given topic, or you can select and adapt the ones that best support your particular course needs. We have not attempted to be comprehensive or prescriptive in our offerings, but rather to give you an array of enticing possibilities for in-depth study, at varying grade levels. We hope that you will find the lesson plans exciting and stimulating for your classes. We also hope that your students will never again see history as a boring sweep of facts and meaningless dates but rather as an endless treasure of real life stories and an exercise in analysis and reconstruction.

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

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.

One reason for emphasizing the number of distinct stages in the migration of Africans is to draw attention to the distinct rates of mortality at each stage. The mortality which is best known is that of the Atlantic crossing. The point here is that slaves who survived the crossing had then to undergo various other types of high mortality: that of further travel within the Americas, that of seasoning in the locale where they were settled, and that of daily existence in slave status, where mortality was generally higher than for equivalent persons of free status. To this list must be added the fact that most slaves were settled in low-lying tropical areas where the general level of mortality was greater than in higher, temperate regions.

Most of the work of slaves could be categorized into the occupations of mining, plantation work, artisanal work, transport, and domestic service. In Spanish America, slaves were concentrated most visibly in mining and artisanal work until the late eighteenth century, when sugar and tobacco plantation work began to dominate Cuba while slavery declined elsewhere. In Brazil, sugar plantation work dominated the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, while mining work expanded greatly in the eighteenth century. The English and French Caribbean focused on sugar production, though coffee and livestock occupied significant numbers of slaves. Tobacco production occupied large numbers of slaves in Bahia and North America; cotton production expanded from the 1760s in Maranhao, and later in the American South.

The rise to profitability of this succession of industries seems to have provided the main "pull" factor driving the movement of slaves to the Americas from Africa. The demand for sugar workers in sixteenth-century Brazil, the seventeenth-century Caribbean, and nineteenth-century Cuba brought a supply response from Africa. That is, African slave sellers made efforts to met the demand. Similarly, the demand for mine workers in eighteenth-century Minas Gerais and New Granada brought an African response. Overall, the African and African-descended population of the Americas grew steadily through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, though it went into decline for as much as several decades whenever and wherever the import of additional slaves came to a halt.

The African Perspective

From the standpoint of the African continent, the slave trade to the Americas interacted with other migratory movements, including slave trading within Africa. Before the seventeenth century, sub-Saharan African societies lacked the powerful states and the lucrative trade routes necessary to support an extensive system of slavery, so that slavery in Africa was almost everywhere a marginal institution. The exceptions were the large states of the Saharan fringe, notably

the Songhai empire. The trade in slaves to Saharan oases, to North Africa, and to West Asia took an estimated ten thousand persons per year in the sixteenth century. The oceanic slave trade from Africa in the sixteenth century was dominated by the movement of slaves to Europe and to such Atlantic islands as the Canaries and São Tomé.

By the mid-seventeenth century the carrying of slaves to Europe and the Atlantic islands had declined sharply, and the trans-Atlantic trade had expanded to the point where it exceeded the volume of the Saharan trade. The expansion of the Occidental trade brought, as a by-product, the development of an Africa trade: growth in slave exports led to the creation of expanded networks of slave supply, and these permitted wealthy Africans to buy slaves in unprecedented numbers.

The movement of so many slaves to the African coast for export entailed large-scale capture and migration. Distances for the movement of slaves to the coast could be small (an average of less than 100 kilometers for the large number of slaves from the Bight of Benin in the early eighteenth century), or they could be immense (some 600 kilometers for the Bambara slaves from West Africa who formed the nucleus of the Louisiana slave population; similar distances for slaves of the Lunda who passed through Angola on their way to the Argentine). These distances, traveled slowly and over long periods, brought high mortality with them.

This grim tale of slave mortality is not the whole of the story, of course, in that the purpose of the slave trade was to deliver live workers to the purchasers. We should therefore mention, at least, the economic network developed for supply of the trade in Africa. Considerable labor and investment were required to provide transport, finance, food, clothing, lodging, guards, and medicine for the slaves. These systems of slave delivery, though they differed from region to region, became a significant element in the African economic landscape.

The most obvious "push" factors sending African slaves across the Atlantic were war and famine. The savanna areas of marginal rainfall—Angola and the grasslands extending from Senegambia east to Cameroon—underwent periodic drought and famine, and in these times desperate families sold both children and adults. The relation between warfare and enslavement is obvious, but on the other hand there have been two centuries of debate over whether the African wars broke out for purely domestic reasons, or whether the European demand for slaves stimulated additional wars.

Overall, the export of slaves from Africa halted and then reversed growth of the continent's population. During the seventeenth century, such population decline took place in restricted areas of coastal Senegambia, Upper Guinea, and

Angola. After about 1730, the decline became general for the coast from Senegal to Angola, and continued to about 1850. The decline was slow rather than precipitous. Even though the number of slaves exported averaged little more than three per thousand of the African regional population, and even though the trade took more males than females, the combination of the mortality of capture and transportation with the concentration of captures on young adults meant that Africa lost enough young women to reverse a growth rate of five per thousand. The same processes transformed the structure of the population, causing the adult sex ratio to decline to an average of 80 men per 100 women.

A Global Perspective

Despite the immigration of Europeans and Africans, the total population of the Americas declined in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. While estimates of the pre-Columbian populations must remain speculative, the population of the Americas fell from perhaps 80 million to as little as five million persons during the seventeenth century. The chief reason for this massive mortality was the introduction of new infectious diseases from Eurasia and Africa.

The threatened void of population in the Americas encouraged the transformation of African slavery from a marginal institution to a central element in a global system of population and labor. The global market for slaves encompassed the Americas, Africa, the Indian Ocean and Western Asia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; it interacted more broadly with the systems of population and labor in the Americas, Europe, and Western Asia. When slave prices rose sharply (as they did at the turn of the eighteenth century) or fell significantly (as they did in the eastern hemisphere in the early nineteenth century), slave laborers were moved in new directions in response to economic incentives. Similarly, free workers on every continent moved in response to these changes in the value of labor.

Before 1600, African migration to the Americas, while it may have exceeded European migration, was small in magnitude. During the time when the Indian population was declining but still large, Africans in the Americas, while usually in slave status, were nonetheless often persons of relatively high value, serving in the military and in artisanal tasks. In Brazil, large-scale enslavement of Indians for work on sugar plantations characterized the late sixteenth century. African laborers, concentrated at first in the skilled occupations on the plantations, gradually displaced the disappearing Indians at all levels of work.

In the seventeenth century, the scarcity of Indian laborers made Africans appear, by comparison, more plentiful. Still, for much if not all of the century,

the addition of African and European immigrants and their progeny was insufficient to offset the decline in Indian population.

By the eighteenth century, all the major population groups—those of Indian, European, African, and mestizo or mulatto ancestry—were growing, though from a very sparse base. However, in this period the large-scale removal of Africans from their homes to serve as slaves in the Americas, with all its attendant carnage, brought population decline for region after region in Africa, and finally for the western African coast as a whole. Consequently, the African addition to the population of the Americas (both by immigration and by natural reproduction) was insufficient to make up for the loss of population in Africa. The centrality of African labor was costly to the slaves, and was costly in the longer run to their societies of origin. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the populations of Europe, the Americas, and Asia grew at unprecedented rates, apparently as a result of certain social changes and perhaps improved public health conditions. In the nineteenth century these rapidly growing populations spun off millions of migrants, who searched near and far for the means to make a better living. For Africa, in contrast, the population remained stagnant or in decline, and labor migration mostly took place, even within the continent, by the forcible means which interfered with population growth.

The transatlantic migration of slaves brought a rich African contribution to the culture of the Americas—in religion, cuisine, pharmacopia, agricultural techniques, dress, language and philosophy. In language the African impact can be seen in two ways. First is in the development of the Creole languages, such as Haitian Creole, Jamaican Patois, Papiamento of the Dutch West Indies, and Gullah of South Carolina. In these languages the vocabulary is both European and African, and the grammar is mostly African. Haitian Kreyol is now a written official language of the country, and the similar Creole of the French Antilles is becoming the leading language of a new wave of multicultural music. Second is the impact of African speech on English, Spanish, French, and Portuguese as spoken in the Americas. The single biggest reason for the differences in these languages on the two sides of the Atlantic is the contribution of African expressions in the Americas.

These and other cultural patterns of the migration can be looked at in two ways. The first is in terms of survivals: that is, the continuity of West African religion in the vodou of Haiti, or of West African cuisine in the gumbo or hot barbecue sauce of the American South. But we can also set African contributions to New World culture in patterns of change and innovation. Here the obvious example is in jazz music, which by definition is always in change, but where the rules for musical innovation can be traced back to Africa.

In addition to the heritage from Africa, the heritage of slavery created distinct patterns of community for Africans in the Americas. Other immigrants, arriving as free persons, had the opportunity to establish their own communities, in which people of similar linguistic and cultural background built up strong local units, usually maintaining some contact with the homeland. These ranged from Swiss farming towns in the American Midwest to Cantonese merchant communities to rural Japanese communities in Brazil. African communities in the Americas were largely prevented from recreating their home societies in this way because they were not free to move, and people of varying ethnic groups were often mixed purposely by their owners to reduce solidarity. As a result, inhabitants of African settlements in the Americas tended to refer back to Africa in general rather than to particular African regions. They thought of a romanticized African past rather than of the latest news because they were cut off from home. Hence, they constructed a new, creolized culture out of the traditions available to them rather than maintain the traditions of a particular Old World region. Quite logically, therefore, the idea of the unity of Africa grew up in the Americas.

Most of the slaves died early and without progeny. In the Americas, much of their produce was exported, consumed, and soon forgotten. Still, ample evidence remains of how slaves constructed cities and cleared farms. Particular emphasis should be given to the value of the work done by African slaves—in the Americas, in Africa, and in the Orient—because the racist ideology in the last 150 years has denied their importance in constructing the world we live in, as well as denying the underdevelopment of Africa that resulted in part from their forced migration. The very term "Western Civilization," which is used to describe the continents of Europe, North and sometimes South America, reflects this denial of Africa's role in the modern world. The term carries with it the implication that the wealth and the achievement of these continents springs solely from the heritage of Europe. The migration discussed above is one of many ways to demonstrate that there is more to the modern world than the expansion of Europe.

Adapted from Patrick Manning, "Migrations of Africans to the Americas: The Impact of Africans, Africa, and the new World," *The History Teacher* 26 (May 1993): 279–296.
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