

THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

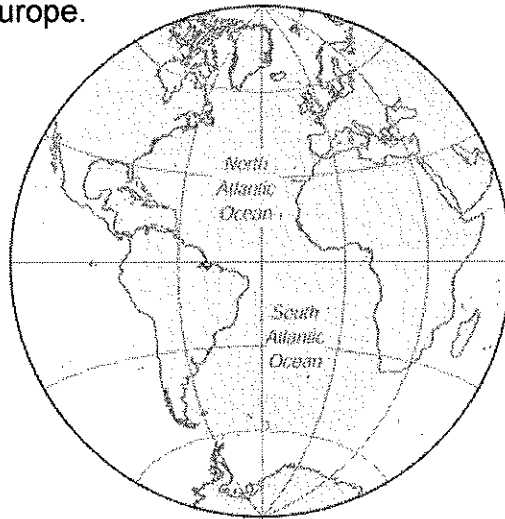
England – West Africa - 13 Colonies

The Slave Trade started in the 1700's when European merchants began going to Africa to "capture slaves" to take the New World to trade for other goods. The profits made from the global trade of sugar, tea and coffee were the major driving force behind the triangular trade. For centuries it provided substantial quantities of venture capital for the industrial revolution and the development of the western European economy. These trade goods were being grown and produced in the 13 Colonies.

The Triangle of Trade

The Transatlantic Slave Trade consisted of three journeys:

- 1 The outward passage from Europe to Africa carrying manufactured goods.
- 2 The middle passage from Africa to the Americas or the Caribbean carrying African captives and other 'commodities'.
- 3 The homeward passage carrying sugar, tobacco, rum, rice, cotton and other goods back to Europe.



By the 1790s there were 480,000 enslaved people in British Caribbean colonies. It is estimated that 11-12 million Africans were transported across the Atlantic into slavery. Many more had died during capture and transportation.

In the first third of the 18th century, Britain's involvement in the slave trade grew enormously. During the 1720s nearly 200,000 enslaved Africans were transported across the Atlantic in British ships.

The Middle Passage

The middle passage across the Atlantic was brutal. Enslaved Africans were packed into tight spaces and given barely enough food and water to stay alive.

It is estimated that on average 10% died en route rising to 30% on a bad voyage. European sailors who crewed the ships also stood a high chance of not returning due to sickness during the voyage.

One of the most graphic and well-known images connected with the slave trade is the plan of the *Brookes*. This shows how overcrowded a slave ship could be and yet still remain within the legally permitted capacity.

How did the merchants get away with it?

Sailors who did return brought back tales of what they had seen during their voyages. However, only a few spoke about it publicly for fear of being refused further work by the powerful merchants, ship owners and captains engaged in the trade.

It was a very profitable business often making a high rate of return on investment, as account books from the period show. Powerful trading interests tried to prevent any regulation or abolition of the slave trade using a fierce campaign of misinformation, lies and delaying tactics.

Telling the truth

In order to expose the truth publicly about the triangular trade it was necessary to show conditions on the ships and plantations.

To counter the historical European notion that African people were 'little more than savages', African and British abolitionists worked tirelessly to demonstrate the truth.

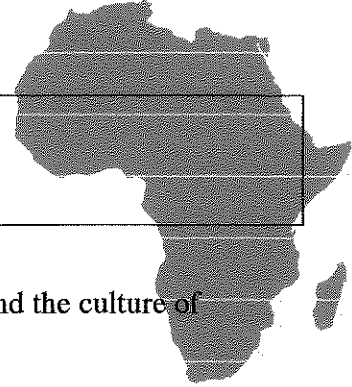
- They showed objects illustrating the great cruelty and suffering caused by the trade.
- They revealed images showing the degrading treatment of enslaved people.
- They also displayed the sophisticated African artifacts.

These items shocked the British public, and educated them about Africa, plantation life and enslavement.



SLAVE TRADE IN AMERICA

Life of a Slave



Life of an enslaved person

The Transatlantic Slave Trade was dehumanizing and degrading, and the culture of plantations was one of oppression.

Capture in Africa

In Africa people were captured from wide areas by African traders. Such raids would result in the selection of those who would sell at market – the young and the fit. From the earliest stages families were torn apart and this was reinforced on the plantations where members of a family could be separated or sold on at any time.

People as 'property'

People were regarded as 'property' and were often marked with branding irons or made to wear signs or symbols to identify who they 'belonged' to.

Impact on Africa

It is estimated that 11-12 million Africans were carried across the Atlantic to a life of slavery but this does not take into account the numbers who died before reaching the slave ships.

The effect on African societies was long-lasting. Although some African traders profited, communities were disrupted as men and women were taken from their homes and separated from their families. This displacement had a devastating effect for generations thereafter.

Working as a slave

The majority of enslaved people sold were destined to work on Caribbean or American plantations. Hundreds of people might be housed in huts in slave villages, living in very poor and unsanitary conditions. The plantation owners lived in vastly different and much more comfortable surroundings – often mansions on the plantation or as absentee landlords in Britain.

Punishment

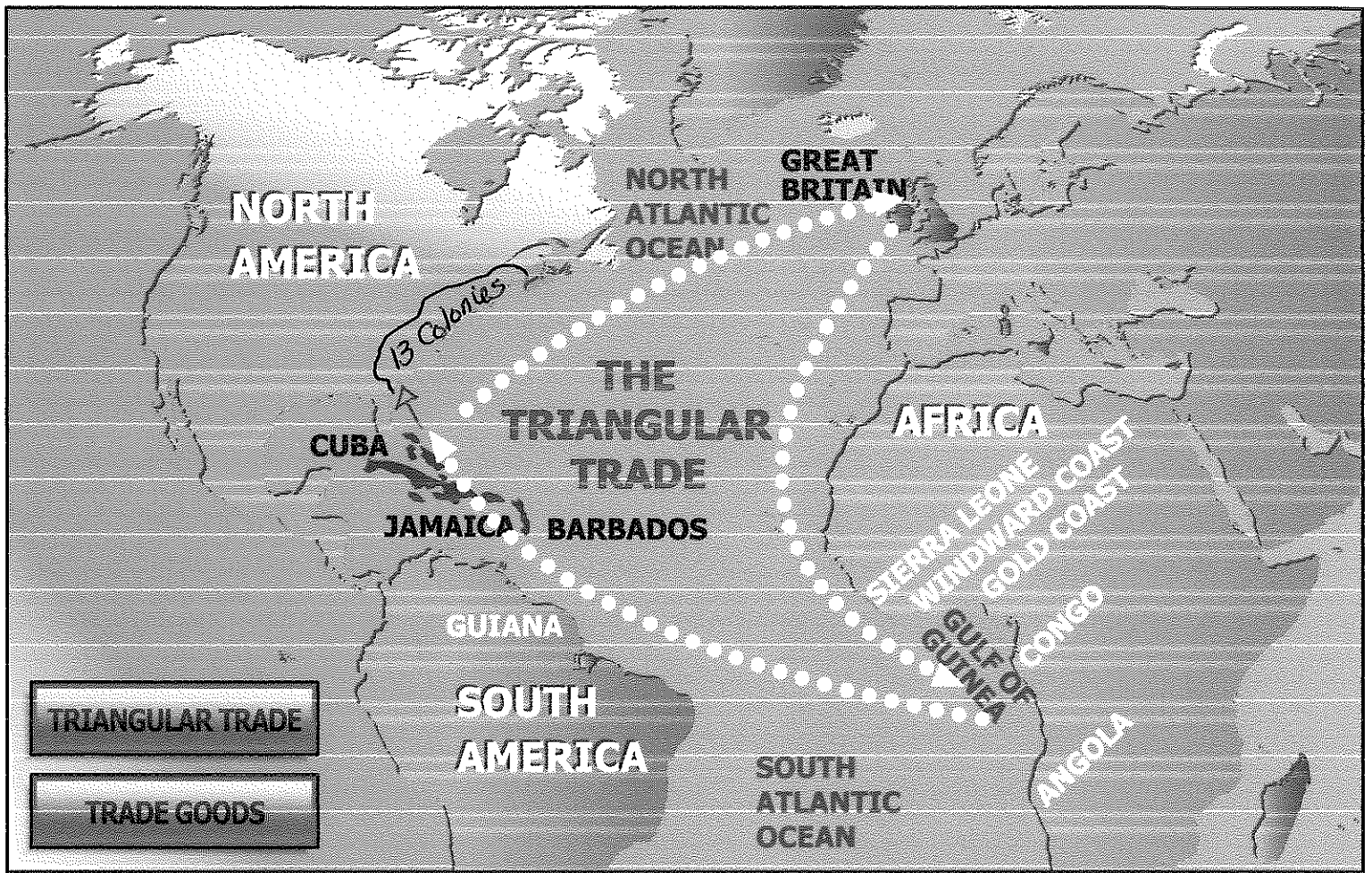
Cruel and severe punishments were used to keep order and ensure a steady pace of work. For many slaves floggings and beatings were part of daily life. Other systems of control included houses of correction.

Domestic and skilled work

The vast majority of Africans were treated like cattle and worked in the fields but a minority were ordered to become domestic slaves, taken on as sailors or soldiers, or taught crafts and skills, such as carpentry and metalwork.

Maintaining an identity

Despite the cruelty experienced daily by many enslaved people on the plantations, they managed to maintain some of their cultural traditions such as language, religious beliefs, oral traditions and crafts.



THE TRIANGULAR TRADE:

- ①
- ②
- ③

WHAT GOODS WERE TRADED?

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------|
| ① Copper | ⑥ Coffee |
| ② Manufactured Cloth | ⑦ Tobacco |
| ③ Sugar | ⑧ Cotton |
| ④ Rum | ⑨ Guns |
| ⑤ Rice | ⑩ SLAVES |