

Document 1

Source: Merrick Whitcomb, ed., "The Gold of the Indies — 1559,"
The University of Pennsylvania

Letter about Spain's interactions with its colonies in 1559

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. Their masters are making them work too hard and giving them too little to eat, they fall sick and the greater part of them die. . . .

Student Analysis

Why do the Spanish colonies believe that the acquisition Africans is a necessity?

Document 2

Source: Offobah Cugoano describes his capture into slavery

I was early snatched away from my native country, with about eighteen or twenty more boys and girls, as we were playing in a field. We lived but a few days' journey from the coast where we were kid-napped, and consigned to Grenada... We were soon led out of the way which we knew, and towards evening, as we came in sight of a town. I was soon conducted to a prison, for three days, where I heard the groans and cries of many, and saw some of my fellow-captives.

But when a vessel arrived to conduct us away to the ship, it was a most horrible scene; there was nothing to be heard but the rattling of chains, smacking of whips, and the groans and cries of our fellow-men. Some would not stir from the ground, when they were lashed and beat in the most horrible manner

Student Analysis

Describe Cugoano's experience as he discusses his capture into slavery.

Document 3

Source: Thomas Wallace Knox *The Boy Travelers on the Congo, 1888*

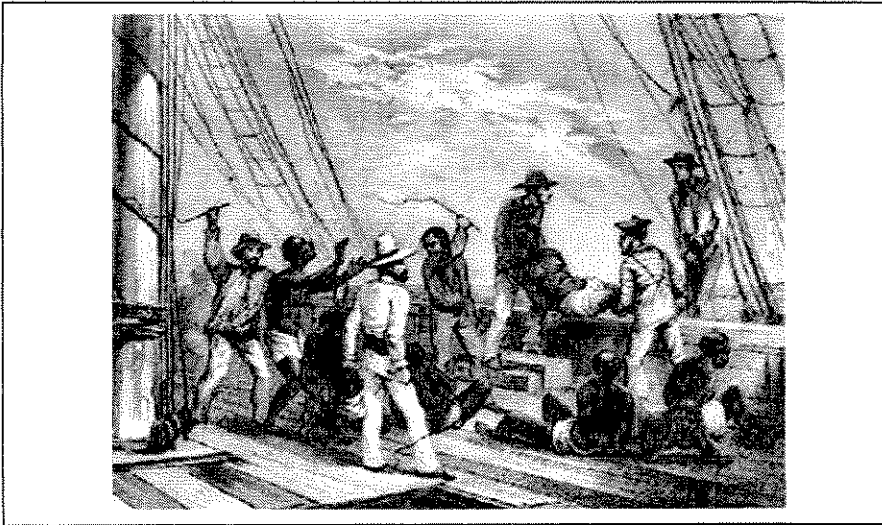


Student Analysis

According to this image, how are the slaves treated by their African captors?

Document 4

Source: *Living Africans Thrown Overboard the Slave Ship Zong 1781*

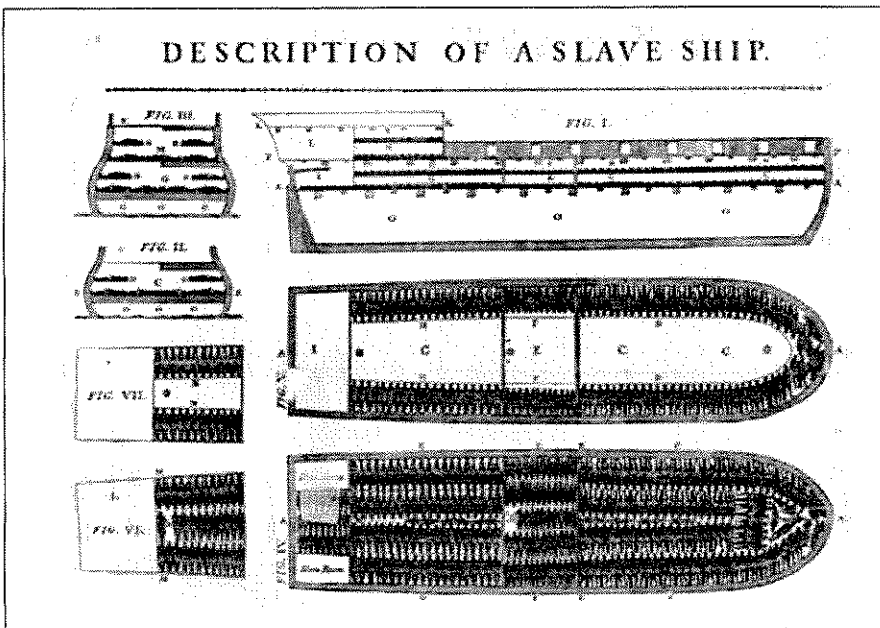


Student Analysis

It is said that the Africa and the New World are bridged from the bones of the Atlantic slave trade. How does this illustration support that notion?

Document 5

Source: The Slave Ship the *Brookes* 1789, Wilberforce House, Kingston upon Hull City Museums and Art Galleries



Student Analysis

Provide your thoughts on the conditions aboard slave ships.

Document 6

Source: Walsh, Robert, *Notices of Brazil in 1828 and 1829* (1831).

The height sometimes between decks was only eighteen inches, so that the unfortunate beings could not turn round or even on their sides, the elevation being less than the breadth of their shoulders; and here they are usually chained to the decks by the neck and legs. In such a place the sense of misery and suffocation is so great that the Negroes... are driven to a frenzy.

Student Analysis

Why would captive Africans become disoriented and mentally unstable during the middle passage?

Document 7

Source: James Ramsay, *Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies* (1784):

The ordinary punishments of slaves, for the common crimes of neglect, absence from work, eating the sugar cane, theft, are cart whipping, beating with a stick, sometimes to the breaking of bones, the chain, an iron crook about the neck... a ring about the ankle, and confinement in the dungeon. There have been instances of slitting of ears, breaking of limbs, so as to make amputation necessary, beating out of eyes, and castration...

In short, in the place of decency, sympathy, morality, and religion; slavery produces cruelty and oppression. It is true, that the unfeeling application of the ordinary punishments ruins the constitution, and shortens the life of many a poor wretch

Student Analysis

How are physical inflictions and terrorism used to control Africans?

Document 8

Source: *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* 1789

Another negro man was half hanged, and then burnt, for attempting to poison a cruel overseer. Thus, by repeated cruelties, are the wretched first urged to despair, and then murdered, because they still retain so much of human nature about them as to wish to put an end to their misery, and retaliate on their tyrants. These overseers are indeed for the most part persons of the worst character of any denomination of men in the West Indies.

Unfortunately, many humane gentlemen, but not residing on their estates, are obliged to leave the management of them in the hands of these human butchers, who cut and mangle the slaves in a shocking manner on the most trifling occasions, and altogether treat them in every respect like brutes .

Student Analysis

How is descent dealt with on plantations?

Document 9

Source: John Barbot, "A Description of the Coasts of North and South Guinea," in Thomas Astley and John Churchill, eds., *Collection of Voyages and Travels* (London, 1732).

As the slaves come down to Fida from the inland country, they are put into a booth, or prison, built for that purpose, near the beach, all of them together; and when the Europeans are to receive them, every part of every one of them, to the smallest member, men and women being all stark naked... each of the others, which have passed as good, is marked on the breast, with a red-hot iron, imprinting the mark of the French, English, or Dutch companies, that so each nation may distinguish their own.

Student Analysis

What specific act marks how an African's freedom is ultimately symbolically lost?