

Caribbean history sba essay sample

[Parts of the World](#), [Africa](#)



The Transatlantic Slave Trade, which commenced in 1510, was one of the most important times in the Caribbean history. These were the times where Africans were captured and taken from their own homes aboard European ships to be sold like cattle in the West Indies. It has to be known that just a hundred years ago, our ancestors were enslaved by Europeans and were treated inhumanly. The conditions of the slaves were abysmal; however the Europeans only sought them to be nothing but profit from business trades. The Africans were torn apart from their families without a second glance and were put into an entirely different culture that changed their lives forever. This research therefore seeks to examine the transatlantic slave trade and how it has impacted on the West African society.

RESEARCH TOPIC

To what extent has the Transatlantic Slave Trade Impacted on West Africa and what are the experiences of its victims?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Many related key research questions outlined this study, these are as follows:

1. What factors led to the Transatlantic Slave Trade?
2. How was the Slave Trade organized?
3. How were the slaves treated aboard the ships?
4. To what extent was West Africa affected by the Slave Trade? RATIONALE

It has been estimated that over a million Africans died between the times they were captured and forced onto ships. The Transatlantic slave trade impacted West Africa in such ways, it was written into history. Africa, where

slavery was practiced for centuries, was a major source of slaves. Between 1550 and 1905, around 18 million black slaves were exported from Africa to countries throughout the Caribbean. The reason for this topic being chosen was to better identify, analyze, interpret and understand how much impact the Transatlantic Slave Trade had on Western Africa. The topic itself was a very interesting one which played a big part for me choosing it.

WHAT FACTORS LED TO THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE?

According to Library Think Quest (2002) the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade was the most abominable and cruel form of slavery, which went on from the sixteenth century to the nineteenth century. The majority of slaves transported to the Caribbean were Africans from the western parts of the continent. They were sold by other Africans to European slave traders for goods who then transported them to the West Indies. The Portuguese, English, French and Dutch all held Asientos, which was a license that permitted slaves to be sold, so that they could bring enslaved persons to the West Indies. There were a number of factors that led to the Slave Trade.

Economic

By this time, the sugar industry was in high demand and the manual labor was lacking. Europeans needed cheap sources of manual labor. The African continent was an excellent source of labor at a low price. Because of the cheap source of labor, the Europeans would earn a big profit trading the slaves in for cotton, gold, silks and other merchants. They would pay little to nothing for the Africans to be captured and enslaved. Then they were auctioned at high prices by plantation owners which made the Europeans

very rich. Plus before the slave trade, plantation owners had to pay for their slaves to work and they could only last for several years. The African slaves were free, disposable and were enslaved for life. Encyclopedia of Caribbean History Vol. 3 (Leslie Alexander - 2010)

Geographic

The indigenous peoples were unreliable, most of them were dying from diseases brought over from Europe, and Europeans were unsuited to the climate and suffered under tropical diseases. However Africans were excellent workers due to the fact that slavery already existed in their continent. They often had experience of agriculture and keeping cattle, they were used to a tropical climate, resistant to tropical diseases, and they could be overworked on plantations. The African Slave Trade, Basil Davidson (1991)

Social

Africans were already slaves in their continent. Slavery existed in Africa, but not the animalistic slavery introduced by Europeans. Africans usually enslaved other people and were taken as prisoners of war, in payment for debt or as a punishment for a crime. However some were bought to do domestic labor, to serve as wives or concubines, or to enhance the status of the slave owner. Bristol and slavery, G. Campion (2007)

FLOWCHART SHOWING FACTORS THAT LED TO THE SLAVE TRADE

Figure 1.

HOW WAS THE TRADE ORGANISED?

The Transatlantic Slave Trade was also known as the “triangular” trade because the voyages would start off from Europe, travel down to West Africa, sail across to the West Indies then head back up to Europe. Thus making the voyage into a full triangle.

The Triangular Trade by Egou M. Shilah 1996

A typical trip in the Transatlantic Slave Trade began in Western Europe, in one of the many ports, Liverpool. From there, ships sailed to the West African ports (Gold Coast, Ivory Coast, Slave Coast, Grain Coast) with trinkets, manufactured goods, cloths, swords and other items so that they could purchase captured West Africans. They would pay Africans from enemy tribes to raid the villages at night while everyone slept, so it would be easier to capture the disorientated villagers. The raiders would light the huts and capture the unsuspecting persons as they ran to safety.

They would be chained by the neck and legs and fastened to other victims, in a slave coffle and lead them for days with no food or water through the African terrain until they would reach the coast. Slaves who did not make the journey, by sickness or old age would be unchained and left stranded.

The captured persons would then be held in a Baracoon, those having survived the journey. The coastal trading post was crowded, dirty and noisy. Desperate slaves would try to escape and this uprising would be put down with brutality. Even though there was plenty of food and water there, what the captives didn't know was that the slave traders were trying to get them

ready for the worst part of the trade. (The Atlantic Slave Trade, Herbert S. Klein, 1999)

HOW WERE THE SLAVES TREATED ABOARD THE SHIP?

The middle passage was the worst part of the transatlantic trade journey. Around half of the slaves died at sea due to disease, starvation, lack of care and suicide. It was not uncommon for the slaves to take their own lives by jumping over board the ship, some bringing others slaves along with them too, when they were brought up on deck. The space aboard the ship was filled to the capacity of slaves. It was specifically built to maximize the number of slaves and the space was no bigger than the height and width of a male slave. Over 500 slaves could be sardine together under the ship with ankle and wrist shackles. Women were not normally chained and children were usually allowed to run free on the ship. On some ships, the kinder-hearted captains might allow some of the men to be released from their chains if they did not appear to pose a threat to the crew keeping watch on them.

The sanitary conditions were even worse. There were only a few buckets between the slaves to excrete in but some slaves preferred to relieve themselves where they were rather than to try to reach the bucket that was further away. This caused a lot of transmitted diseases such as the flux, small pox and scurvy. To prevent this, the Europeans forced the slaves to be more active to keep them healthy. They would make them participate in a dance, where they would snap and whip the slaves to make them jump up in pain. The poor conditions, brutal treatment of slaves and continual suicides

resulted in high bloodshed. *The Slave Trade and the Middle Passage*, S. Pearl Sharp and Virginia Schomp, (2006)

The crew rarely came down to wash the slaves but when they did, they would single out the female slaves to satisfy their needs. The word that they used to call them were "belly-warmers." There was hardly any food on board as the captain would find it to be too expensive, so there was not a lot to go around. The feeding of the slaves was on deck. The slaves were taken out from below deck cautiously, with sailors to feed them and many to guard them with loaded guns in order to prevent retaliation.

Africans being forced below deck before transportation to the Caribbean,
Anti-slavery International

TO WHAT EXTENT WAS THE WEST AFRICA AFFECTED BY THE SLAVE TRADE?

The slave trade affected Africa in many ways.

SOCIAL:

Many Africans became scared and went into hiding, often being separated from their family. Tribes would capture one another and trade slaves to the Europeans for money and goods. It decreased the population and scared most of the country and most stayed in their homes in case they were abducted. There were also not enough people left to farm for food and produce babies.

ECONOMIC:

The slave trade in Africa let some tribes in Africa gain power and money

while others suffered. The import and export became the important feature of the slave trade.

FLOWCHART SHOWING THE AFFECTS OF WEST AFRICA UPON THE SLAVE TRADE

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

It is possible to state that the Transatlantic Slave Trade was one of the worst eras in history and that Africa was the most affected country of the trade. Domestic slavery was common in Africa and well before European slave buyers arrived; there was slaves that were sold to the richer Africans either from criminal activity or a heavy debt. This shows that even though the Africans were not used to the ill treatment from the Europeans, slavery was not a new thing to them. According to (Africa Economic Analysis, 2000) between the four centuries, around thirty million to two hundred million Africans were captured and enslaved and brought to the ' New World' and also the West Indies. There are many reasons why the Transatlantic Slave Trade started.

One of the reasons was because the Europeans saw a mass amount of profit in the trade, but the main reason was the development of the sugar industry. After the collapse of the Tobacco production in 1614, sugar was the new cash crop revolution and was in high demand from Europe. However there was not enough manual labor to maintain the steady flow of the produce, so the Europeans had to find another cheap source of labor. (The Atlantic Slave Trade: Effects on Economies, Societies and Peoples in Africa and the

Caribbean, Joseph E. Inikori and Stanley L. Engerman, 1992) The fact that slaves had no will during the entire slave trade proves that the Europeans treated them no better than cattle, and were forced to be a part of the hard manual labor. Because of the remorseless time Africans had to go through, I strongly believe that slavery was not the right action to take during the 16th-19th century and should have been nonexistent. If slavery could not be avoided however, the Africans should have been given more humanly treatment.

CONCLUSION

The transatlantic trade has made a big impact on Africa due to the agriculture abandonment, the decrease of population and forced migration. The continent has lacked its ability to grow economically, socially and culturally. Firstly, the negative impact of the transatlantic slave trade on Africa was extreme. Because of the millions of able-bodied Africans being captured and transported, the death toll and the economic and environmental destruction caused from wars and slave raids were very high. Secondly, society had to be reorganized and traditional values were destroyed. Many communities relocated as far from the slavers' route as possible. In the process, their technological and economic development was prevented as they devoted their energy to hiding and defending themselves. In the end, the slave trade left the continent underdeveloped, disorganized, and vulnerable.

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