

# History: slavery and haitian revolution essay sample

[History](#), [Revolution](#)



History is a subject which allows someone to think and analyse things & this topic brought out that ability. The Haitian Revolution was a slave revolt in the French colony of Saint-Domingue, which occurred on August 23, 1791 to 1804. This Revolt was the only slave revolt which led to the elimination of slavery and the founding of the Haitian republic. In this SBA the reader should have a clear understanding of the reasons why the Haitian Revolution started, the effectiveness of the leaders that emerged during the Revolution and also the social, economic & political consequences of the Haitian revolution on Haiti and the wider Caribbean.

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#### Research Question

What social, economic and political consequences did the Haitian Revolution have on Haiti and the wider Caribbean?

#### Aims

1. To investigate the reasons for the Haitian Revolution. 2. To examine the effectiveness of the leaders that emerged during the Revolution. 3. To analyse the impact of the Haitian Revolution on Haiti and the wider Caribbean.

## The Haitian Revolution

Haiti was a French colony of the Caribbean and was said to be the most productive colonial economy in the world because it was dominated by agricultural plantation which primarily supplied sugar and coffee to the markets worldwide. African slaves were brought to the island and this then allowed the island to obtain a slave population of nearly 90 percent, the population now consisted of peoples of European ancestry and of mixed heritage which was defined in the law of the colony as gens de couleur (people of colour). The Haitian Revolution started in 1791 shortly after the French administrators governed the island and this was because of the long struggles the slaves went through in the French colony, but was later freed by the Mulattoes who faced the trials of being denoted as semi-citizens. However this revolt was not like any other revolt because it had to do mostly with the influence of the French Revolution as it helped to contribute to the events that occurred but it was the most successful with the help of Vincent Oge who led the Mulattoes, Toussaint L'Ouverture who was the main leader of this revolt with the help of Boukman and Jean Jacques Dessalines.

The French revolution of 1789 impacted the wealth of the French colony (St. Domingue) and this caused the country to split into two groups: the revolutionary forces of the middle and lower classes which got support from various revolutionaries against the nobility which represented the ancient regime. The lower-class whites took the opportunity to rebel against the elite first-class whites but also managed to maintain their profits and status because they felt that freedom and rights were noble for everyone. The top

whites however introduced royalism to the low class whites to minimize revolution in St. Domingue and keep the order of colonization intact. The mulattoes however realized that an excellent way to improve their living standards was to adapt to the revolutionary idea to fight for their rights without considerations for the black slaves which later made them sent a delegation to Paris to be included in the rights of man. The declaration of “all men are born free and equal in rights” created an issue among the white colonists.

Freed mulattoes saw this as a victory and a motivation to keep fighting for their rights. To maintain their brutal rule, the white colonists, especially the elite first-class did everything in their position to frustrate this decree from France. By 1789, the slave population in the Caribbean increased to more than 500, 000 and due to the economic importance of the region it was occupied by the rich upper-class white colonist, who wanted economical monopoly of the region and also the region was led by the upper-class whites while the middle class whites were scattered in other regions of St. Domingue and this isolation allowed trade between freed blacks and Jamaica to flourish and by the second half of the 18th century the wealth of the region increased.

Despite all the problems the French revolution caused, Haiti managed to gain independence from France in 1804. The Haitian revolution abolished slavery on the island and was the first major successful slave revolt in the Atlantic world and this made L'Ouverture among a liberating hero. However the whites wanted to hold on to white privilege and the gens de couleur

wanted to keep the right to own slaves but both were taken off the slave property even though some of them stayed and retained economic and social power and with this being a success all of the groups except the slaves even though none of them supported the abolition of slavery.

### Leaders involved in the Haitian Revolution

#### Toussaint L'Ouverture

In the eighteenth century, Toussaint L'Ouverture led a revolution in St. Domingue and was successful in carrying out that task from the colonial tyranny to the declaration towards the end of slavery. Toussaint who was a self-educated former slave along with his revolutionary army of self-emancipated slaves defeated the three main empires of the eighteenth century England, Spain and France and after securing its independence's Domingue renamed itself to Haiti and became the first Republic in the world to declare all men and women free and equally entitled to govern their own lives. Toussaint faced various obstacles during this revolt and in 1802 Napoleon Bonaparte a French political leader re-establish both slavery and the slave trade in colonies that were still under the control of the French and denied the right to free the blacks he then sent an military force to capture Toussaint and was sent back to France where he died in prison in 1803.

Nevertheless, Jean-Jacques Dessalines continued the Haitian Revolution with the help of former slaves and by 1804 Haiti was independent. Jean-Jacques Dessalines

Jean-Jacques Dessalines was a leader of the Haitian Revolution and he is known as a founding father of Haiti. Dessalines was an officer in the French

army when the colony was trying to withstand Spanish and British movements; he later became a commander in the revolt against France. In 1791, he joined the slave rebellion of the northern plains and this was the first action of what would become the Haitian Revolution. Dessalines later became a lieutenant in Papillon's army and followed him to Santo Domingo, where he was recruited to aid Spain's military forces against the French colony of Saint-Domingue in which he met Toussaint Louverture and they all wanted to end of slavery. After the capture of Toussaint L'Ouverture in 1802, Dessalines became the leader of the revolution , he defeated Napoleon's forces in 1803 and declared Haiti an independent nation in 1804 and by September 1804, he became an Emperor and ruled the until being assassinated in 1806. Boukman

Boukman was a Jamaican voodoo priest who was sold by the British to a French plantation owner. He helped in the uprising of the Haitian Revolution because of a ceremony and this made him an effective leader and helped spark the Haitian Revolution but after the uprising began, French authorities captured and executed him by beheading him then publicly displayed his head in an attempt to change the image that Boukman had made but this was a fail because his well recognized in Haiti and his ceremony is known as the reason of Haiti's Independence. Vincent Ogé

He was a free man of colour and also the instigator of a revolt against the white colony in Saint-Domingue that lasted from October to December 1790 and this foretold the massive slave uprising of August 1791 that began the Haitian Revolution. Ogé returned to Saint-Domingue in October 1790 and the

French governor refused to grant the rights, the only difference was that he tried to start a revolt amongst the mixed race population and not the blacks. He was involve in the enslaved population but failed because he only had a limited army of supporters and was easily defeated.

The impact of the Haitian Revolution

Social Impact

The Haitian revolution increased the racial conflicts between the white, free mullatoes and slaves. The French government preferred the mullatoes therefore allowing jealousy to occur. The circumstances in Haiti just before the French Revolution were mainly for an insurrection to occur because they couldn't define the political authority and the White colonists were unable to contain adequate information on the rebellion that they had been forcing upon themselves for years. The treatment of Negroes and Mulattoes in Haiti increased the cause of the abolition of slavery in Haiti and the treatment of slaves and Mulattoes in Haiti was so bad that it forced the most violent and ultimately therefore allowing the revolution to be a success. The Haitian Revolution also caused an issues between the wider Caribbean, who at the time refused to recognize the independence of Haiti because they didn't want to encourage the enslaved population of Haiti's' successful Revolution. However, Jamaican planters also wanted to terminate the links with Haiti because they didn't want to have anything to do with the black republic because that would encourage their entry and expose the enslaved ones of Jamaica. Political Impact

Haiti elected their own government which led to political uncertainty. This resulted because everybody wanted to lead the island. So there were conflicts with leaders and their Generals because there was a sense of dictatorship from the leader Toussaint L'ouverture at the time and the two Generals Jean Jacques Dessalines & Henry Christophe who didn't appreciate it so they ratted to Napoleon Bonaparte, the then ruler of France, who then sent his brother Jacques-Philippe Leclerc to remove Haiti's leader to restore slavery. Political chaos started in Haiti, black slaves fought white masters, mulattoes fought white administrators and black royalist fought white republicans and mulatto republicans. The revolution's impact on white political leaders in Jamaica, Puerto Rico, and Cuba. Jamaican planter Bryan Edwards elaborated a white West Indian counter-ideology to metropolitan abolitionism; he attacked abolitionists for instigating slave rebellions, and promoted amelioration of slavery as a gradual and more practical way forward. Some of the complex ways in which the Haitian Revolution presented Cuban and Puerto Rican patricians was with a choice between continuing an intensive plantation economy based on slavery or diversifying the economy with a free labour force. The Haitian revolution allowed the people to elect their own system and government, which made Haiti the first independent black state. This also led to diplomatic isolation; countries did not want to associate with Haiti. Economic Impact

The Haitian revolution caused the levels of production in the island to decline, despite the number of attempts that were put in place to produce goods they still failed. They lost profits because their main surplus of trade



(sugar) began losing value and steadily decreasing because of other foreign competitors in the market. Although sugar was becoming unprofitable in Haiti, many of the St. Domingue refugees contributed to the economic development of other Caribbean islands which they had stayed on, by working on the coffee and sugar plantations. The original economic basis for the Spanish colonies on Hispaniola was sugar plantations but even though French continued the sugar economy they introduced coffee by the 20th century tourism became an important element of the economic base of Haiti but the public's association of Haiti with AIDS severely destroyed the Haitian tourism industry.

The Haitian revolution affected the wider Caribbean in various ways as many countries benefited greatly from the Haitian revolution economically. Haiti had depended mostly on estate work which produced crops such as coffee and sugar cane in order to keep economic stability, but during the war leading up to the independence of the country, many of the estates were destroyed and production of export crops declined and this caused an economic impact on the Caribbean region as the decline of Haitian exports created a high demand for sugar cane. This demand was met by surrounding countries but was led by countries such as Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago who excelled in the export of sugar cane after Haiti lost its market. In conjunction with spreading skills, the individuals that fled Haiti during the war period diffused their culture throughout many Caribbean countries.

## Conclusion

The Haitian Revolution was a successful revolution which occurred on August

23, 1791 to 1804. This slave revolt was in the French colony of Saint-Domingue, which led to the elimination of slavery and the founding of the Haitian republic. This started because of the long struggles the slaves went through in the French colony, but was later freed by the Mulattoes who faced the trials of being denoted as semi-citizens. However this revolt was not like any other revolt because it had to do mostly with the influence of the French Revolution as it helped to contribute to the events that occurred but it was the most successful with the help of Vincent Oge who led the Mulattoes, Toussaint L'Ouverture who was the main leader of this revolt with the help of Boukman and Jean Jacques Dessalines. Toussaint L'Ouverture who was a self-educated former slave along with his revolutionary army of self-emancipated slaves led a revolution in St. Domingue and was successful in carrying out that task by defeating the three main empires of the eighteenth century England, Spain and France. Jean Dessalines took over from L'Ouverture after he died in prison and he defeated Napoleon's forces in 1803 and declared Haiti an independent nation in 1804, Vincent Oge on the other hand tried to get involved to help the mixed race population and not the blacks and failed because he only had a limited army of supporters and was easily defeated.

Socially, in Haiti at the time of the revolution the slaves were classified as the lowest order of society then the whites became free and equal to the dominating order of society. The control of politics and economics after the revolution created another problem because most Haitians were rural farmers and most of the state's future was practically sent to the banks in

France so they were then forced to make massive change to the slaveholders in France in order to receive the recognition they need in order for them to end the political and economic issue.

Politically, the slaves got the right to form a second independent state in the Western Hemisphere and later they became the first free black nation worldwide while economically, the citizens of Haiti were able to do some adjustments to the economic system of the conventional plantations then further transformed the small-scales into system based producers so that their products would be sold locally instead of exporting the goods. Despite all the challenges they faced this revolution was the only slave revolt which led to the founding of a new state also it was one of the two successful attempts, along with the American Revolution to obtain permanent independence from the European colonial power for an American state before the 19th century.

## Appendix

Toussaint Louverture , main leader of the Haitian Revolution

Jean Jacques Dessalines , leader who took over after Louverture died

Vincent Oge , leader who fought for the mixed population

Boukman , performed a ceremony to up rise the Haitian Revolution

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