

The middle passage assignment

[History](#)



The introduction of international trade throughout the continent provided the Americas with goods once thought unattainable. Different trade routes began to stem from the original triangle route. All of these routes had one goal; to transport the goods in high demand in the most time and cost efficient way. The different branches were trading systems between the Americas, Europe, and Africa. Through these routes, captains traded goods and services such as slaves, sugar, tobacco, cotton, textiles, and many other manufactured goods. One history changing route was the Middle Passage.

The course of this route was used to transport kidnapped Africans so they could be enslaved in the Americas. Within a three hundred year period, it is approximated that over ten million African slaves were kidnapped and trafficked to the Americas through the Middle Passage. The plights of the slaves across the middle passage were increased by the physical abuse, emotional abuse, and horrific living conditions they faced on their journey. During their trip across the Middle Passage, the African captives were subjected to despicable and inhumane physical abuse.

Slaves were stacked on top of each other during the packing process. Taken from their homes and family)/s straight into the bondage of enslavement, slaves were whipped and beaten until they complied. One slave ship physician, Dr. Thomas Trotter, described the slaves as “locked ‘spoons’ and locked to one another” (Document C). Slaves were chained together in the hold to prevent possible rebellions against their white abductors. It was very uncomfortable for the slaves in the teen decks, for there was no space for them to move, and even the slightest movements caused their shackles to cut into their skin.

While many slaves obediently complied with restraints and orders, some dissented, causing them to face the severe consequences for their behavior. As Thomas Phillips, a slave ship captain, writes in his account of traveling the Middle Passage, “ commanders [had] cut of the legs or arms of the most willful slaves” (Document B). By severing limbs of disobedient and unruly slaves, the commanders were able to display their supremacy over the slaves. These intimidation’s tactics scared the slaves into submission, allowing more control for their captors.

Throughout the Middle Passage, the African slaves were exposed to much physical abuse. The spirit-breaking journey across the Middle Passage consisted of much emotional abuse against the African captives. After capturing the slave captains wanted to break the slaves will to fight, for broken slaves had more value to future masters. Subsequently, more value on the auction block. Aloud Equiano, a captured African slave, retells of his experiences aboard the slave ship by saying, “ the shrieks of the women and the groans of the dying rendered the whole scene almost inconceivable” (Document e).

Unable to comfort one another because of the shackles that bound them, the slaves sat in humiliation and discomfort, listening to the gut wrenching cries of their companions. Autobahn Guano, a slave, once stated, “ death was more preferable than life... A plan was concerted among us that we might burn and blow up the ship... To perish together” (Document E). Living and experiencing the painful trip to the Americas took all the courage and strength the slaves could muster. Many slaves turned to thoughts of suicide, for it was the only thing that could relieve them of their despair.

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The trip across the Middle Passage was not for the faint of heart, for the emotional abuse the slaves faced on the Middle Passage was ruthless; only the strongest survived. Across the Middle Passage, captured slaves were forced to reside in unspeakable and inhumane living conditions. Slaves were forced to survive in the bowels of the ship with contaminated water and foreign, non-beneficial food. As the ship rocked, so did the "cargo" of slaves. Zambia Example, a prince turned captive slave, recounts his encounter as an onlooker to the slave transportation by saying, "The poor slaves below... Re mostly thrown to the side, where they lay heaped on top of each other... Fifteen of [the slaves] were smothered" (Document D). Made helpless because of their chains, slaves would begin to roll and pile on top of one another after large storms or waves rocked the boat. Many of these events resulted in the suffocation of those on the bottom of the piles, for they would not be relieved from their positions for many hours after the crew made their rounds, and righted all the piles. On top of this, poor ventilation compounded the problems of a slave struggling to breathe.

Aloud Equiano describes the conditions in the teen decks by commenting "[the air was] unfit for respiration, from a variety of loathsome smells and brought on a sickness among the slaves" (Document E). Because of the close quarters in the teen decks, diseases spread quickly, often plaguing entire rows at one time. Both the dead and living slaves coexisted in the teen decks, with the rotting bodies of passed slaves transferring many diseases before being found, often times, several days after the original death. Pungent, rancid smells often filled the teen decks, caused by the living, dying, dead, and human waste.

The nauseous stench lived coherently with the slaves, rendering the entire trip even more unlivable. There was no relief from the constant harsh living conditions the slaves had to endure. Across the Atlantic Ocean on the Middle Passage, captive Africans were physically abused, emotionally abused, and forced to live among the living and dead in abysmal living conditions. With the introduction of new technology, lands once uncharted became reachable. Using the neurons created from the Atlantic Trade System, trade ships revealed across the continents to trade human cargo for manufactured goods in a never ending triangle.

Throughout the three hundred years, the millions of Africans transported faced a lifetime of backbreaking work and pain. At the end of slavery, the African population greatly outnumbered the White population, creating a large income gap, and damaging an entire race as well as the entire southern economy. After the slave trade was outlawed, African ancestors were forced to pick up the pieces of a broken history and face the permanent damage with many more years of struggles to come.