The Atlantic Slave Trade

It’s estimated that more than 10 million enslaved Africans were transported to the Americas between the 16th century (1500s) and the 19th century (1800s).
The Atlantic Slave Trade

“Slave traders set up posts along the West African coast. Africans who lived along the coast made raids into the interior, seeking captives to sell to the Europeans. Bound at the leg and neck, captives were forced to march as far as 300 miles to the coast. Half of them died along the way.” (Textbook p.113)
Middle Passage

The transportation of African slaves across the Atlantic became known as the Middle Passage.

Some ship captains crammed the max # of slaves on board
   Up to 350 could be bound together in a tight space below deck, with zero light and little air (more supply)

Other captains gave better traveling conditions to increase survival rates during transport (better quality supply)
Middle Passage

“The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us... The shrieks of the women, and the groans of the dying, rendered the whole a scene of horror almost inconceivable.”

--The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano
The Middle Passage

“Floating Coffins” – death from disease or brutal mistreatment
Middle Passage

15% - 20% of slaves died or committed suicide during Middle Passage.

Slaves were auctioned (sold to the highest bid), either individually or in groups. Many families were separated.

The majority of slaves ended up on plantations in Spanish colonies, Brazil, or the Caribbean.
Middle Passage

About 500,000 were shipped to British North America!

See MAP on page 114 of textbook!
Triangular Trade

3-way trade route between:

Colonies
Caribbean Islands
Africa
Triangular Trade

**1st Leg** – Ships from New England Colonies carried flour, fish, meat, lumber, and other goods to Caribbean Islands and West Indies.

Colonial traders bought sugar and molasses to make rum in the colonies!
Triangular Trade

2nd Leg – Ships carried rum, guns, iron products, and other goods from New England colonies to West Africa.

Traders purchased slaves for the colonies!
Health Benefits of Molasses

- Treats constipation
- Effective in reducing obesity
- Promotes healthy hair growth
- Maintains healthy bones & teeth
- Beneficial in treatment of cancer
- Helps in stabilizing blood sugar levels
- Protects from cardiovascular disorders
Triangular Trade

3rd leg – Ships carried slaves from West Africa to the West Indies for sale.

Traders purchased more molasses!

A Linen Market with enslaved Africans. West Indies, circa 1780
Triangular Trade

Colonial merchants got wealthy off the triangular trade.

Demand was very high for molasses, traders purchased from “other” non-British colonies in the West Indies, then snuck their goods into the colonies.

Colonists smuggled goods – disobeying the Navigation Acts!
A SHIP HAS BEEN SIGHTED
in this quarter
ENGAGING IN THE UNLAWFUL ACT OF
SMUGGLING
whosoever can lay information
leading to the capture of this ship
or its crew
will receive a reward of
£500

From His Majesty's Government
This 19th day of October 1782

SMUGGLERS
Five and twenty ponies
trotting through the dark-
Brandy for the parson,
baccy for the clerk,
Laces for a lady, letters for a spy
And watch the wall, my darling,
while the Gentlemen go by!
Why did colonists want slaves?

Southern plantations! Tobacco, rice, and sugar plantations needed people to work the fields – free labor was the cheapest labor!

Slaves were preferred over servants because Indentured servants were temporary – once their term was over, they were free! Also, fewer Indentured servants were coming over from England.
Slavery in the Colonies

In 1639, Maryland passed a law stating that people could be enslaved for life.

In 1663, a Virginia court ruled that any child born to a slave became a slave too.
Slavery in the Colonies

Attempts to STOP slavery...

1652 – Rhode Island passed 1st anti-slavery law.

  Didn’t last long because RI shippers made huge profits from slave trade.

Georgia had ban on slave trade until it was lifted in 1750s.

  Slavery became legal in ALL colonies!
Slavery in the Colonies

Slavery was restricted to people of African descent – linking it to “racism” (the belief that one race is superior or inferior to another).

Racism is something you learn Not something you're born with
Slavery in the Colonies

REVOLT

1st - 1663 in Gloucester, Virginia

Rebels were betrayed and uprising failed.

But, it inspired other revolts.

Colonial response – SLAVE CODES (laws restricting the rights and activities of slaves)
Slavery in the Colonies

Slave Codes

1. Slaves couldn’t meet in large numbers
2. Slaves could not own weapons
3. Slaves could not leave a plantation without permission
4. Slaves could not be taught to read/write
5. Masters were permitted to kill slaves
Slave Codes or Rules

- slave owners can whip slaves and physically punish them
- slaves cannot hit white people
- slaves cannot own property
- slaves cannot buy or sell goods
- slaves cannot leave plantation without permission
- slaves cannot learn to read & write
- slaves must get permission to marry
Slavery in the Colonies

The new laws didn’t stop resistance!

1739 – Stono Slave Rebellion in South Carolina led by enslaved Angolan named Jemmy

Killed 20+ whites before they were defeated.

Inspired greater resistance
Primary Source Document Activity

Stono Rebellion

On Sunday, 9 September 1739, a slave uprising, which was brief and quickly suppressed, alarmed white colonists across British America. About 50 enslaved African Americans, perhaps responding to the promise of freedom in Spanish Florida, stole weapons and killed about 20 white settlers as they headed south. Soon most were killed or captured, tried, and executed; the decapitated heads of several were placed on posts as a stark warning. Soon after, South Carolina enacted stricter limitations on slaves’ conduct, especially their freedom on Sundays to “work for themselves,” and also banned slaveholders from freeing their slaves. Two perspectives on the uprising – one white, one black – are presented here. The first was written by an unidentified white official soon after the uprising. The second is a long-valued family account narrated almost two centuries later by a great-great-grandson of Cato, one of the slave leaders. What does one learn from each account? from reading both accounts? What is the primary tone and message of each account? What accounts for their differences? (A third perspective is included here: see photos of the South Carolina historic marker on page two.)

African Culture

Only 10% of slaves lived north of Maryland
  Blacksmiths, House servants, small farm hands
  Might buy freedom over time

Southern Colony Slaves
  Very little interaction with white colonists
  Kept the customs of West Africa
    African grass baskets to sift rice
    Spoke Gullah, dialect of West Africa (dialect, not language)
A'min - Amen (Wolof)
be - to cultivate, to clean, to remove debris (Temme)
bid', bidi - small bird, small chicken (Kongo)
buckra - white man (Ibidio)
da (dada) - mother, nurse, or elder woman (Ewe)
dash away - to get rid of a bad habit
dayclean - dawn
de - to be (Igbo)
differ - a quarrel
e - pronoun for he, she, it
eh - yes (Igbo)
fanner - a large shallow basket made of wild grass and palmetto, used
to thresh rice from its hull.
hudu - to cause bad luck to someone (Via)
kuta - tortoise, turtle (Mende)
nyam, nam - to eat
nanse - spider (Temme)
nana - elderly woman, grandmother (Twi)
oona, hoona - you, singular or plural, from the word "ona," meaning
one or a single person
plat-eye - a prowling ghost or evil spirit
shut mout' - secretive or withdrawn
tata - father (Kongo)
tote - to pick up (Kongo)
toti frog - frog (Via)
tuni - you, your (Ibo)
yam - sweet potato (Mende)

Another striking similarity between Gullah and the languages of West
Africa is the use of proverbs to teach and advise.
"Take no more on your heels than you can kick off with your toes."
"Every grin teeth don't mean laugh."
"Day is jes an arm long, you can reach clean across it."
African Culture

Slaves in colonies like Virginia and Maryland, were less isolated from white society, but still kept some of their African traditions.

Craftworkers created fine quilts, furniture, carved canes, etc. using African styles.

African music was displayed in the rhythm of drums.

African folk tales spread.
Question - Economic affects on Society

1. What was the Triangular Trade?
2. Why did white colonists create slave codes?
3. What was the significance of the earliest slave revolts?
4. How did the plantation system and the lack of indentured servants affect the status of Africans in America?