

**Expansion, Exploration, and Encounters****Lesson 6**

# The Atlantic Slave Trade

## Key Terms and People

**Atlantic slave trade** buying and selling of Africans for work in the Americas

**indentured servitude** a system of labor by which a person could work to pay off the cost of coming to the Americas

**triangular trade** European trade between the Americas, Africa, and Europe involving slaves and other goods

**Middle Passage** voyage that brought captured Africans to the West Indies and the Americas

## Before You Read

In the last lesson, you read about how different European nations settled in North America.

In this lesson, you will read about the slave trade that brought Africans to the Americas.

## As You Read

Use an outline to list causes and effects of the Atlantic slave trade.

### THE CAUSES OF AFRICAN SLAVERY

#### **What was the Atlantic slave trade?**

Slavery has had a long history in Africa and in the world. In the seventh century, Muslim rulers in North Africa enslaved non-Muslim Africans. Muslim traders also started to take many slaves to Southwest Asia.

Most worked as servants, and they did have certain rights. Also, the sons and daughters of slaves were considered to be free. The European slave trade that began in the 1500s was larger. The enslaved Africans also were treated far more harshly.

In the Americas, Europeans first used Native Americans to work farms and mines. When the native peoples began

dying from disease, the Europeans brought in Africans. The buying and selling of Africans for work in the Americas became known as the **Atlantic slave trade**. From 1500 to 1870, when the slave trade in the Americas finally ended, about 9.5 million Africans had been imported as slaves. The African slave trade differed from another colonial system of labor called **indentured servitude**. Indentured servants came to the Americas voluntarily and worked for an employer for a certain period. African slaves were brought to the Americas against their will and were slaves for life.

The Spanish first began the practice of bringing Africans to the Americas. However, the Portuguese increased the

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demand for slaves. They were looking for workers for their sugar plantations in Brazil.

1. Why were slaves brought to the Americas?

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ships, beaten, and given little food. About 20 percent of the people on these ships died.

2. What was the triangular trade?

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**SLAVERY SPREADS THROUGHOUT THE AMERICAS; A FORCED JOURNEY**

**What kinds of trade included human beings?**

Other European colonies also brought slaves to work on tobacco, sugar, and coffee plantations. About 400,000 slaves were brought to the English colonies in North America. Their population had increased to about 2 million in 1830.

Many African rulers joined in the slave trade. They captured people inland and brought them to the coast to sell to European traders.

Africans taken to the Americas were part of a **triangular trade** between Europe, Africa, and the Americas. European ships brought manufactured goods to Africa, trading them for captured Africans. They carried the Africans across the Atlantic to the Americas, where they were sold into slavery. The traders then bought sugar, coffee, and tobacco to bring back to Europe.

Another triangle involved ships sailing from the northern English colonies in North America. They carried rum to Africa, Africans to the West Indies, and sugar and molasses back to the colonies to make more rum.

The part of the voyage that brought captured Africans to the Americas was called the **Middle Passage**. It was harsh and cruel. Africans were crammed into

**SLAVERY IN THE AMERICAS; CONSEQUENCES OF THE SLAVE TRADE**

**What was life like for the slaves?**

Life on the plantations was harsh as well. People were sold to the highest bidder. They worked from dawn to dusk in the fields. They lived in small huts and had little food and clothing. Africans kept alive their traditional music and beliefs to try to maintain their spirits. Sometimes they rebelled. From North America to Brazil, from 1522 to the 1800s, there were small-scale slave revolts.

The Atlantic slave trade had a huge impact on both Africa and the Americas. In Africa many cultures lost generations of members. Africans began fighting Africans over the control of the slave trade.

The Africans' labor helped build the Americas. They brought skills and culture, too. Many of the nations of the Americas have mixed-race populations.

3. How did Africans change the Americas?

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**Lesson 6, *continued***

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As you read this lesson, write notes to answer questions about the causes and consequences of the enslavement of Africans.

<b>How did each of the following contribute to the development of the Atlantic slave trade?</b>	
1. European colonization of the Americas	2. Portuguese settlement of Brazil
3. African rulers	4. African merchants

<b>What were the consequences of the Atlantic slave trade for each of the following?</b>	
5. African societies	6. Enslaved Africans
7. American colonies	8. Present-day American cultures